

2005  
DURGABAI DESHMUKH MEMORIAL LECTURE



Dr. Durgabai Deshmukh  
1909-1981

**GLOBALISATION AND THE  
CHALLENGES OF  
TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT**

Prof. Ram Dayal Munda

COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT  
AND  
INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

## **DURGABAI DESHMUKH**

A brief life-sketch

### **PERSONAL**

Date of Birth : 15 July 1909 (At Rajamundry, Andhra Pradesh)  
Maiden Name : Durgabai Rao  
Date of Death : 09 May 1981 (at Hyderabad)  
First Marriage : At the age of eight (separated after three years)  
Marriage with : 22 Jan. 1953  
Dr. C. D. Deshmukh

### **ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS**

1939 : M. A. Political Science, Andhra University  
1941 : B.L., Madras University

### **SOCIO-POLITICAL ACTIVITIES**

1921 : Protest against status of Devadasis,  
Muslim women and widows  
1930 : Salt Satyagrah Movement  
1931-33 : Imprisoned thrice, Insisted on staying in class C  
1946 : Member of Parliament

### **IMPORTANT INSTITUTIONS BUILT**

1922 : Balika Hindi Pathasala Kakinada (at the age of 13)  
1937 : Andhra Mahila Sabha, Chennai/Hyderabad  
1944 : Blind Relief Association of Delhi, New Delhi  
1953 : Central Social Welfare Board, New Delhi  
1964 : Council for Social Development, New Delhi

### **AWARDS/DISTINCTIONS**

1946 : Member, Constituent Assembly  
1952 : Member, Planning Commission  
1963 : Doctorate *honoris causa*, Andhra University  
1971 : Nehru Literacy Award  
1975 : Padam Vibhushan  
(Dr. C. D. Deshmukh also received this award  
in the same year)

### **INTERNATIONAL AWARDS**

1978 : Paul G. Hoffman Award  
1978 : UNESCO Award

## **COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

The Council for Social Development (CSD) started as an informal group of social scientists, social workers and planners committed to the national ideals of social justice and equality. Late Dr. (Smt.) Durgabai Deshmukh, the guiding spirit of the CSD, organised a Study Group of Social Welfare to review the situation in the developing countries and suggest ways for promoting social development. The CSD was given a formal status as an affiliate of the India International Centre (IIC), New Delhi, in 1964. When the activities of the CSD increased, the Board of Trustees of the IIC decided that the CSD should be an autonomous organisation and accordingly the CSD was registered in 1970 under the Societies Registration Act of 1860. It, however, continues to have a special relationship with the IIC.

The main objectives of the CSD are :

- (a) to undertake and/or promote the study of social development;
- (b) in furtherance of that end, to undertake studies;
  - (i) in the national/regional policies of social development;
  - (ii) in the process of planning in social development; and
  - (iii) in the interaction between social and economic development at various stages of national growth in developing countries; and
- (c) in particular to plan and promote;
  - (i) studies in techniques of social planning and programming;
  - (ii) inter-disciplinary research;
  - (iii) socio-economic/occupational surveys;
  - (iv) motivation for social change; and
  - (v) socio-psychological studies in rural areas.

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## DURGABAI DESHMUKH MEMORIAL LECTURE SERIES

<b>Year</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Topic</b>
1992	Dr. Suma Chitnis	The Institutionalisation of Social Purpose*
1993	Dr. Vina Majumdar	Women and the Political Process*
1994	Dr. Karan Singh	Population and Social Development in India
1995	Dr. Kiran Bedi	Concept of Management in Government
1996	Dr. Vandana Shiva	Trading our lives away: Free trade, women and ecology*
1997	Ms. Leila Seth	The Girl Child and Social Development*
1998	Swami Agnivesh	Towards a Spiritual Society* (text in Hindi)
1999	Justice Shri M. N. Venkatachaliah	Human Rights and Women in India
2000	Professor Leela Dube	Social Development and Social Research*
2001	Dr. N. H. Antia	Women and Health*
2002	Professor Mushirul Hasan	Islam, Culture & Politics: Awadh society in 20th Century*
2003	Dr. Pushpa M. Bhargava	The promise and problems of today's Biology and Biotechnology and their applications*
2004	Professor Anil Sadgopal	Globalisation : Demystifying its Knowledge Agenda for India's Education Policy*

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**GLOBALISATION AND THE  
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TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT**

by

**Prof. Ram Dayal Munda**

15 July 2005



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## PROFESSOR RAM DAYAL MUNDA

- **BIRTH:** 1939. Vill. Diuri , P.O. Tamar, Ranchi.
- **EDUCATION:**  
Lutheran Mission School, Amlesa, Tamar. Ranchi, 1946-53.  
S.S High School, Khunti, Ranchi, 1953-57.  
Ranchi University, Ranchi, 1957-63, **M.A. (Anthropology)**. University of Chicago, USA, 1963-70 M A. **Ph.D. (Linguistics)**.
- **RESEARCH AND TEACHING:**  
**Research Assistant**, South Asian Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago, 1963-70.  
**Assistant Professor** - Associate Professor, South Asian Studies, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1970-81.  
**University Professor**, Tribal and Regional Languages, Ranchi University, 1981-99.  
**Visiting Professor**, Australian National University Canberra, 1983, Visiting Professor, Tokyo University, Japan, 2001.
- **FELLOWSHIP:**  
American Institute of Indian Studies, 1977-78.  
United States Education Foundation in India, 1996.  
Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, Tokyo, 2001.
- **FIELD OF RESEARCH AND TEACHING:**  
Indian Languages and Literatures.  
Tribal Peoples of India.  
World Indigenous Movement.
- **PUBLICATIONS:**  
13 books (3 edited) and 51 papers,  
Translation (7 books) from Hindi, Sanskrit, Bengali and English.
- **ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE:**  
**Vice-Chancellor**, Ranchi University, 1985-88.
- **MEMBERSHIP IN NATIONAL / INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEES / ORGANISATIONS:**  
Committee on Jharkhand Matters, Government of India, 1989-95.  
Anthropological Survey of India, 1988-91.  
National Educational Policy Review Committee, 1990.  
Steering Group, Planning Commission, 1996.

Contd./...

Expert Committee, National Commission on Women, 1997 - Present  
Indian Confederation of indigenous and Tribal Peoples, 1993 - Present.  
National advisory Board, International Labour Organisation. 1997 - Present.  
Executive Committee, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1990-95.  
Executive Committee, North-Eastern Hill University, 1993-96. Jharkhnad Peoples Party, 1991-98 (Chief President).  
Adimjati Sewa Mandal, 1990 - Present (President).  
Jharkhnad Sanskritik Morcha, 1998 - Present (President).  
Jharkhand Buddhijiwi Morcha, 1998 - Present (President).  
Ranchi University PG Teachers Association, 1998 - Present (President).  
Bharitiya Sahitya Vikas Nyas, 1998 - Present (Secretary).  
Binrai Institute if Research, Study and action, 1997 - Present (President).  
Standing Committee, Human Rights Education.  
University Grants Commission, 1998 - Present.  
National Committee for Promotion of Social and Economic Welfare, 1998 - Present.  
Expert Committee, Sahitya Academy, 1999 - Present.  
Working Group on Empowerment of Scheduled Tribes Planning Commission 2001-2005 (Chairperson).  
National Council for Teacher Education, 2001.

● **PARTICIPANT IN INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS/CONFERENCES:**

Festival of India in the USSR, 1987 (Leader of Delegation).  
International Music Workshop, Bali, Indonesia, 1988.  
International Dance Alliance, Manila, Philippines, 1989.  
International Folk Dance Festival, Taipei, 1990.  
Adivasi Campaign in Europe, 1993.  
Dalit Campaign in Europe, 1994.  
International Conference on Indigenous Economy, Copenhagen, Denmark, 1997.  
United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations, Geneva, 1990 - Present (Leader of delegation).  
International alliance of Indigenous Peoples of the Tropical Forests, Nagpur, 1998.  
Asian Indigenous Peoples 'Workshop on Permanent Forum' Indore, 1999.  
International Conference on Indigenous Peoples, Upsala, Sweden, 2000.  
International Conference on Hunting & Games, Berlin, 2000.

● **TRAVELS:**

North America, Europe and Asia-Pacific.

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## GLOBALISATION AND THE CHALLENGES OF TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT

Prof. Ram Dayal Munda

Hon'ble Chairman, revered elders and distinguished participants — seeing and imagining around me a gathering of some of the best minds of the country engaged in the business of development, is a somewhat humbling experience for me. Yet it is the elders who have taught me “tyakta lajjah sukhi bhaveta” (Happy is the one who abandons modesty). So, gathering courage, I stand here before you with the hope of learning and being enlightened.

I feel greatly honoured to have been associated with this special occasion commemorating late Dr. Durgabai Deshmukh, one of the most brilliant among the personalities of her times. My ready willingness to accept the offer made by the Director, CSD, Dr. Kurian, to deliver the lecture was for a very personal reason, that is, my remembrance of Dr. Durgabai Deshmukh and her husband Dr. Chintaman Deshmukh as the most distinguished guests at my high school function, organized under a tree half a century ago in 1956 at Khunti, a small sub-divisional town 40 kms south of Ranchi. I vaguely remember my then Hindi guruji Shri Jagdish Trigunayat introducing the couple as most extraordinary. Both of them were then associated with the Planning Commission. I distinctly remember Dr. Deshmukh in his speech having announced a gift of getting constructed two additional rooms for my high school to mark their visit. I remember the promise was kept, and with the completion of the project, the school building getting its present E-shaped look. Moving about in the country, I see so many such projects having been completed as reminders of this extraordinary public couple. Over the last fifty years there have been many occasions when these names have flashed in my memory inducing in me a great sense of reverence towards them. The present formal occasion inspires me to rededicate myself to relate to the wider world around me. I gratefully thank CSD for having given me this opportunity, and by doing so, binding me even closer to their activities of connecting people in a most creative manner.



## **BACKGROUND**

The title “Challenges of Tribal Development” would have been sufficient for my presentation. However, in order to accentuate the present phenomena of the whole world coming closer to the extent of erasing geographical and national boundaries, the global character determining local and regional developments has necessitated a re-phrasing of this title to include the process of ‘globalization’. In fact the challenges mentioned here in Section 6 of this presentation can be considered an important aspect of a proposal for future tribal development.

My presentation has seven sections covering

1. Tribal identity and worldview
2. A history of avoidance and non-recognition by the dominant society
3. A peoples’ framework for understanding tribal development
4. An Adivasi development panchsheel
5. The PESA Act: a historic breakthrough
6. Globalisation: new challenges for tribal development
7. A special reference to Jharkhand

### **1. TRIBAL IDENTITY AND WORLDVIEW**

The main concern of our discussion here is the tribal people of India numbering above 10 crores, variously known as aborigines, Scheduled Tribes, Adivasis, Girijans and, of late, Vanwasis, geographically located in the hill regions of the central belt of the country extending from Gujarat to Arunachal Pradesh. The tribal population around the Nilgiris in South India and that of the Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadwip islands falls outside this central Indian belt. The Constitution of India calls them Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Janjati (in Hindi). The United Nations and the ILO call this kind of people Indigenous Peoples. The Government of India, however, is reluctant to equate the Scheduled Tribes with indigenous peoples and has repeatedly been saying in international fora that practically everyone in India is indigenous and technically there are no indigenous people in India, that India is a great melting pot and the indigenous and non-indigenous identities have all disappeared in the process of the evolution of the Indian people.

The Constitution, however, makes a clear difference between the tribal and the other economically backward segments in that the former have a distinct cultural identity and worldview determined by their geographical isolation, historical

antiquity, and customary laws. This makes them unique even if all Indians are considered indigenous.

The natural habit of collective/community living has contributed to the development of a distinct worldview with the following characteristics.

- A relatively more egalitarian social system;
- An economic life of sharing and caring;
- A polity of consensus decision-making ;
- Art and aesthetics as a celebration of collective joy; and
- Spirituality based on a symbiosis between nature and culture.

## **2. HISTORY OF AVOIDANCE AND NON-RECOGNITION BY THE DOMINANT SOCIETY**

While the epic and mythological literature are not treated as history, the ideas expressed therein have contributed to forming the attitudes of the dominant groups. The linguistic and semi-racial categories of Aryan, Dravidian, Kirata (the Mongoloid) and Agneya (the Austric) have acquired validity and are significant in determining the interrelationship between these groups and sub-groups within them. Literary trends are set by the dominant Aryan groups expressed through their Sanskrit and Prakrit languages. Their relationship to the Indo-European languages, globally the most influential language group, has added to the attitude formation. A four level hierarchy can be seen among the ancient Indian literary characters:

1. Super human (sura, narayana, deva, yaksha)
2. Human (nara, manava)
3. Sub-human (vanara, kinnara)
4. Inhuman/unhuman (asura, rakshasa, danava)

The tribal people are relegated to the last two categories in this scheme. As can be seen, the identity is basically pejorative. Their physical and cultural attributes are denigrated.

Yet the influence of these people on the development of what became known as the Indian culture is profound though rarely acknowledged. The Sanskrit and the Prakrit languages were gradually Dravidianized and Austricised as has been pointed out by Burrow (1969), Emeneau (1998), Kuiper (1948) and Abbi (1997), as these languages traveled to the south and the east respectively: the

coming in of retroflex sounds (for t th d dh n r rh), loss of aspiration of some consonants, development of vowel harmony rules (as in Bengali), reduction or loss of gender distinctions (in all Eastern Aryan languages), word formation through onomatopoeia and reduplication in the modern Indo-Aryan languages are some of the most noticeable changes under the influence of Dravidian and Indo-Austrian languages.

Some of the most prominent cultural elements that can be considered as the tribal contribution to Indian culture are

1. Development of a new set of non-Vedic gods: Lakshmi-Narayana, Shiva-Parvati, and the avatars of Vishnu, particularly in the literature based on the indigenous motifs, the Mother goddesses and Pasupati as is evidenced by the remains of the Indus civilization;
2. Minimization of the anti-social Indra and Brahma;
3. Sacred groves, saligrams, phallus worship;
4. Role of ancestral spirits;
5. Introduction of new cultural elements like rice, turmeric, vermillion, iron-bangles;
6. Domestication of animals like the dog, buffalo and elephant;
7. The great body of stories found in the Puranas, the Kathasaritsagar;
8. Village republics, confederated in Asokan and Gupta times, and their continuity even to this day.

These are but a few illustrations of the contribution of these people to the Indian culture. However, these belong to the remote past. The attitude of avoidance and non-recognition, the refusal to acknowledge these contributions continues and has taken on a new dimension amounting almost to a hidden agenda of annihilation of these people by the dominant, ruling society through the following methods:

#### **a. Denial of Identity Rights**

The Government of India and a section of the dominant society avoid use of the word Adivasi (the earliest inhabitants) which is acceptable to the tribal people, and instead push for usage of Vanvasis, a term that suggests wild forest dwellers and includes various animal species or sub-humans. They are not

recognized as STs outside their home states or Scheduled Areas. Their languages are not recognized - it took 50 years for India to put Santali and Bodo in the Eighth Schedule. The National Policy for Education recommends free and compulsory education through the medium of mother languages at primary school level. However, even in the Ashram Schools, tribal children are not taught in their own languages.

Tribal faiths are not recognized as distinct religious systems but as part of Hinduism and are recorded as such or as 'Others'. Judging from the 1991 Census reports, only 54 lakhs people are enumerated as adherents of tribal faiths. This means that even if most of the Christians were to be considered converts from the tribal groups, about 7 crore tribal people could be assumed to have been recorded as Hindu. Tribal ritual practices may in many ways look Hindu but looking Hindu and being Hindu are not the same thing. The basic tenet of tribal faith is symbiosis between nature and culture. That is why formal structures like temples, mosques, churches or mutths are not required. Hills, forests, rocks and rivers are the abodes of the tribal spirits, gods and goddesses. Similarly, the concepts of heaven and hell are alien to the Adivasi who believes that the spirit of the deceased returns 'home' after the person's death. The idea of ancestors being present in the home and watching one's behavior has a tremendous impact on one's upbringing. Righteousness becomes a part of one's behavior. Equally alien is the idea of avatar/incarnations/messiahs, and the notions of sin and merit. A socially approved behavior is meritorious and an anti-social behavior sinful. All these distinctive features of the tribal faiths could be put under what we propose to be called the Adi-Dharma (the earliest faith).

#### **b. Denial of Political Rights**

States were reorganized during the mid-fifties along linguistic and cultural lines. However, little thought was given to the existence of tribal languages and culture and tribe majority areas were dissected and distributed over several states making the tribal groups into a minority in whichever state they were in. This happened particularly in the central Indian belt. Thus the Bhil cultural area was divided into four and distributed over Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra; the Gond area was divided and distributed over Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra; Jharkhand tribal area was divided and distributed over Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh; the Nilgiri tribal area was distributed over Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu; the Naga area between Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh and there are Naga tribes even in Burma.

The scheduling was done in such a manner that a Scheduled Tribe would be recognized as such only in the area in which it is scheduled. Thus about 60 lakh Jharkhandi Adivasis living in Assam are not considered ST since they are not scheduled as such. There has often been misuse of the constitutional provisions for STs through manipulation of government records which has resulted in the increase of fake tribal people. This has happened particularly in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. The same kind of manipulation is involved in reserving seats for Schedule Castes in ST majority areas in elections to state assemblies and Parliament.

In terms of the special funds allocated for tribal areas, the benefits rarely reach the tribal population they are meant for. The Tribal Sub-plan is used as area plans diverting funds meant for tribal areas to other areas. There has also been widespread corruption in the use of funds meant for the tribal areas.

The Governors are the special caretakers of the Scheduled Areas on behalf of the President of India. However, no governor ever uses these special powers to protect tribal interests.

### **c. Denial of Human Rights**

While right to life is directly impacted through the practice of sterilization among vanishing tribal groups and putting tribal persons in confrontational situations in the name of law and order or in the name of controlling Naxalism, destruction in the name of national development is the greatest threat to the Adivasi's right to live. The large-scale so-called 'national development' projects in mining, hydro-power and industry have caused disruptions of thousands of communities, and once they have broken up, tribal groups have no chance of survival as individuals with a distinctly tribal identity. They are lost like driftwood in the great mahasagar that is India!

## **3. A PEOPLE'S FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT**

The basic issue confronting tribal people globally is dispossession, a separation from the life-supporting resources of land, forest, water, and their indigenous culture. It so happens that the natural resources globally are located mainly in areas where the indigenous/tribal people reside. This is true for India also. There was exploitation of mineral and forest resources in pre-independence India which contributed to the treasury of the British Empire but the process has accelerated during the post-

independence period to the extent that it has already sent alarm bells ringing for survival of the indigenous/tribal communities nationally. About one-tenth (one crore) of the tribal population is displaced by large development projects so far as the works of Fernandes and others have shown. There being no resettlement and rehabilitation policy till 2004, the rehabilitation of displaced people is insignificant. As villages and forests have been drowned, communities have dispersed, with people moving out to metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Calcutta and Chennai where they are not counted as tribal people anymore.

The root cause behind this is the attitude of internal/neo-colonialism which results in expropriation of natural and cultural resources without caring for or safeguarding tribal interests. This makes tribal communities poor people in a rich area. The people coming in from outside get richer and richer and the local people become poorer and poorer. The lands, the waters and forests in such areas are totally devastated, unfit for human habitation. This is what has happened in the mineral rich tribal areas of Jharkhand, Orissa, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. In recent years this process has expanded to Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and to the North-east.

One remedy for dispossession is tribal autonomy on the lines of the Sixth Schedule Areas in the North-east. Free, prior, informed consent and participation of the people concerned in all development activities is another. This is possible through education/awareness-raising/solidarity building, and mobilization of the masses to draw the attention of the establishment to their plight. Adivasis must negotiate from a position of strength – it was the economic blockades called by the pro-Jharkhand groups that brought the Bihar and central governments to the negotiating table and finally led to the creation of Jharkhand state.

#### **4. AN ADIVASI DEVELOPMENT PANCHSHEEL: THE EARLY BEGINNINGS**

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's introductory remarks in his Foreword to Verrier Elwin's *A Philosophy for NEFA* (1959) can be considered the earliest rudiments of a tribal policy. Nehru enunciated the 'five fundamental principles' within whose framework developmental activities should be pursued in the tribal areas:

- i) People should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional art and culture.
- ii) Tribal rights in land and forests should be respected.

- iii) We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside will no doubt be needed in the beginning, but we should avoid introducing too many outsiders into tribal territory.
- iv) We should not over-administer the area or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through, and not in rivalry to, with their own social and cultural institutions.
- v) We should judge results not by statistics or the amount of money spent but by the quality of human character that is evolved.

This philosophy led to the formation of Special Multi-Purpose Tribal Blocks for community development in tribal areas. As an idea this was welcomed but in practice only the requisite infrastructure was created; the 'communities' were not strengthened enough to enable them to develop themselves.

The second phase of tribal development began with the Fifth Five Year Plan when the concept of Tribal Sub-plan was introduced. The emphasis was on area development and focused only marginally on tribal development. The seeds of an enlightened policy for tribal development were all there but they were never elaborated and operationalised.

## **5. THE PESA ACT: A HISTORIC BREAKTHROUGH**

The Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, or PESA act, an exception to the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment of the Constitution, can be said to be the best measure that could be taken at the level of Parliament to safeguard tribal interests in the country. It gives the Gram Sabha a legal sanctity and recognizes it as the basic unit of administration. It gives all powers needed for self-reliant communities including control over resources and taking care of all their activities at the levels of planning, execution and evaluation. The Gram Sabha's consent must be taken in all matters pertaining to development projects that affect the concerned communities, for example, in matters of land acquisition, compensation and rehabilitation. It can settle land disputes, regulate money lending, restore illegally transferred tribal lands and issue utilization certificates for projects undertaken within its boundaries.

The states with Scheduled Areas were instructed to frame operationalizing laws in conformity with the central Act within a year, that is by December 1997, failing which the central act would be in operation automatically. Unfortunately,

this historic step of the Parliament to bring participatory democracy all the way down to the grassroots did not suit the bureaucracy and the common politician. As a result all states with Scheduled Areas have in varying degrees watered down the PESA Act (which itself was a watered down version of the Bhuria Committee's recommendations) when they set out to formulate the operationalizing laws. This has led to ineffective implementation and wasteful delays. Tribal representatives were not consulted by the bureaucrats and special interests when the state conformity acts were being drafted. Due to this, depending on the level of awareness among the tribal groups, there have been public interest litigation cases filed against various provisions of the acts in all concerned states. This has been more so in a state like Jharkhand where the traditional panchayat system has been in informal operation in some form even to this day. These PILs have given the present administration a pretext to not hold the panchayat elections which are overdue for the last 25 years.

## **6. GLOBALIZATION: NEW CHALLENGES OF TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT**

Contentwise there is nothing new in the current development strategy being pursued in the resource rich tribal areas, nothing that has not already been happening under 'nationalization' thus far. What is new is the pace and the intensity of exploitation and the zeal of the bureaucracy and even certain NGOs in expediting the process. What a national agency would have taken, say, one hundred years to achieve, is being accomplished in less than a decade by the process of globalization, liberalization and privatisation. The extent of devastation in tribal areas and marginalization, displacement and pauperization of the Adivasi people that has already taken place has been pointed out by Dr. B.D. Sharma (1995), Walter Fernandes (1992) and others. One-fifth of the total Adivasi population (about 2 crores) is already displaced and has ended up in the slums of the metropolitan areas of the country. This is not an imagined fear but something that is already happening here and in other parts of the world as well, in South America and South-East Asia where this process has been given a full play. The indigenous peoples of the concerned area having lost their command over resources are heading towards total disintegration, some even towards extinction.

Globally there has been an explosion in the quantum of mining and prospecting for minerals, fossil fuels and other energy sources in the last twenty years. In India, with the opening up of the mining sector to foreign players, governments



of the mineral rich states are vying with each other to woo foreign investment in the extractive industries. The Government of India has also set itself a target of doubling energy production by hydropower within the next decade. These policies, which entail opencast mining on an unprecedented scale and construction of numerous dams in the fragile river valleys and hills of the North-east, will severely impact the last remaining homelands of tribal populations in these states.

As a regular participant in the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations in Geneva and the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at New York, I have witnessed indigenous opinion building on these issues for the last two decades. I have listed below some of the most significant issues that have emerged from these groups which are of particular relevance in the Indian context:

1. In all industrial projects, preference should be given to those projects that do not displace or only minimally displace tribal communities. This thinking is actually in line with the stated objectives of the National Policy on R&R of the Government of India.
2. Restoration of illegally alienated tribal lands as has been done in Australia (cf. the Mabo case), New Zealand (the Maori case), Canada (the Cree nation's claims). The common feature of all these cases is that ancestral lands that were appropriated or taken away in violation of the treaties between native groups and European settlers were returned to the respective tribal groups and the courts restrained further exploitation and usurpation of tribal lands.
3. In any project involving land acquisition or land use changes, the concerned indigenous/Adivasi people be made party to the memorandum of understanding (MOU);
4. No tribal lands be surrendered for ever. Instead they may be leased out on a short-term basis (10-15 years at most). In the case of Jharkhand, the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act and the Santhal Parganas Tenancy Act prohibits the permanent transfer of such lands.
5. Lands be returned to the original owners after proper post- mining/ excavation with landscaping, filling of the pits and topsoil restoration;
6. The concerned people be made shareholders in the said project so that some amount of funds are always available for their survival;

7. There be sufficient lead time during which the concerned indigenous people can be trained to be part of the said project.
8. The affected people be culturally rehabilitated. If communities are being uprooted, communities must be resettled;
9. The fund allocations for compensation, rehabilitation and training be built into the project itself and the R&R be subjected to independent monitoring and evaluation.

Some of these demands may seem outrageous at first glance but the principles underlying them have been enunciated in a number of official documents including the Bhuria Committee Report and the Supreme Court's landmark 'Samata Judgement' of 1997 which terminated mining leases given to non-tribal private companies in the Scheduled Areas of Andhra Pradesh and encouraged the formation of tribal-owned companies or cooperatives for mineral exploitation in these areas.

## **7. SPECIAL REFERENCE TO JHARKHAND: THE UNFINISHED AGENDA**

Contrary to expectations, the newly formed Jharkhand state is experiencing great difficulties despite the promises of creating a super state. The Jharkhand movement for statehood has been seen as a movement of cultural reconstruction. It had a vision of reconstructing a state modeled after an ideal tribal state, as a self-reliant, dignified society based on social equity, economic cooperation, consensual democracy, religious tolerance, cultural coexistence, strong work ethics and collective joy.

The basic issue, as is the case with all tribal/indigenous areas elsewhere, is economic, social and cultural dispossession arising from internal colonialism leading to poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, unemployment and loss of self-respect among the people of Jharkhand, particularly the Adivasi people.

The strength of the area is its abundant natural and cultural resources. If properly exploited, Jharkhand's mineral and forest wealth would give every citizen of the state year-round employment and a very high standard of living. Its arts, village industries, traditional knowledge systems and diverse cultural traditions could be its most important contribution to world heritage.

Yet the achievement of the state in the five years since its formation has been miniscule, for the basic reason of lack of vision. A vision can only come from

the experience of living in this region and through having commitment and loyalty to the area and its people. That, unfortunately, is lacking in the present leadership, adding up to a general lack of will to lead the state to its aspired heights. The issues of dispossession from land, water and forests, jal, jangal, jamin, continue; there is a general lack of work culture; corruption is at its peak; there is a serious problem of maintenance of law and order and an unprecedented spread of communalism. The state planning effort demonstrates no sense of prioritization – it is paying more attention to urban development than to rural development and in doing so it has forgotten its tribal agenda.

Therefore, what is needed is a review of the entire phenomena, and accordingly, a beginning of an effective project formulation and an implementation process where the priority list would be to draw up a well-thought out development blueprint arrived at by consultation and debate among all sections of the population; infusion of will power in the leadership; reawakening of the cultural strength of the people; reversal of the development process from its present top-down mode to a bottom-up approach; rural/tribal development through decentralization involving participation of the people of every Gram Sabha as envisaged in the PESA Act; well planned industry and urban development ensuring minimum displacement; and a re-greening of its hills and forest tracts through community based organizations.

The vision of the promised Jharkhand will remain incomplete till this unfinished agenda is fulfilled. □

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