Democracy of the Oppressed

Democracy of the Oppressed:

Adivasi Poverty and Hunger

By

Ramdas Rupavath

To

Grandfather and Mother
Shri. Venkatiya Naik Rupavath
Smt. Bheemini Bai Rupavath

This study has been carried out to assess the impact of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) on the socio-economic status of tribals in Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. The book takes a tour of the history of democratic decentralisation in India and charts how it has caused issues among different sections of society, often benefitting the rich and leaving the poor even more marginalised. Professor Rupavath looks in detail at the many development programmes in India which have been designed to alleviate poverty and examines, through empirical research, the role of the state and the socio-economic impact the programmes have had on the Adivasis. Interviews held in the field have contributed to this study which presents a rich resource for future policymakers, as well as researchers and students in this very complex and intricate area. Findings of the present study point out the inefficiency and rampant corruption involved in the implementation of the MGNREGA over the years. It can be hoped that the study will contribute to raising awareness on the part of the targeted groups and, above all, showing officials the importance of transparency and responsible governance for the effective implementation of this scheme and others.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FOREWORD

As a South Asia specialist and editor of *South Asia Research* since 2003,[1] I have been privileged to learn about multiple voices from below in South Asia for many years. In this context, I first encountered the earlier work of the esteemed author of the present book in about 2014. I took his critical writings seriously, despite the fact that a major argument of his article focused on the model of a vicious circle of disadvantage for tribal communities in India.[2] The fieldwork conducted for that article of 2016 had clearly identified many bottlenecks of development in tribal children's education but also began to show possibilities of change. I found the glimpses of hopeful evidence inspiring and could recognise them as reflections of emerging transformational change, also in tribal environments of India.

In contrast, the model of a vicious circle was something that I instinctively opposed for several reasons. The image itself suggests an interlinked ring of factors that operate to prevent change. It reflects fatalistic submission to disempowering oppression, a strategy that my activist, development-oriented mental frame of reference does not accept as healthy or productive. Use of such images risks constructing depressing barriers for any hope of real change. It discourages the voices from below and suggests to the victim(s) of oppression or disadvantage that there is no hope for relief since so many changes need to happen before there could be any real progress. I was happy to discover that in this book, the vicious cycle model does not feature.

My own research on South Asia and on India, in particular, has consistently suggested that studying India is not the same as examining earlier stages of development in Europe. There may be many points of comparison, but especially the demographic and socio-cultural realities of the subcontinent have generated very different conditions for any form of discourse about socio-economic development. Also, intimately connected to this, law-related core issues such as protection of basic social and economic rights need to be tackled in light of South Asian conditions, with plurifocal historical consciousness, and in massively different ways than in sparsely populated states of the Global North.[3] It is also far too simplistic to treat India as a common law country and to build on such misguided premises elaborately constructed arguments and impressively formulated

assertions that all India needs to do is follow 'the West'.

It might help here to understand my comparative approach and academic stance if I indicate briefly what I remember from growing up in a small village in North Germany. In the mid-1940s, with very immediate reverberations at least into the early 1950s, Germany was flooded with huge numbers of refugees from former parts of Germany that are now Russia and Poland. My father, who was 19 years old in 1945 and thus conscripted into the army at a late stage, on his return from being a prisoner of war in 1948, found that his home in Eastern Prussia was now in Poland. Facing complete disruption, he started work on a farm, just for food and shelter. A few years later, I observed as a child that many people still worked for food. A farmer's wife, assisted by several young women, would have to prepare cooked lunches, plus coffee and cakes for late afternoon, every day in busy periods for dozens of people engaged in harvesting and other agricultural work. If the food offered was not good enough, people would gossip and go to work for another farmer.

A few years later, though, German farm workers expected money rather than food. Still, some years later, most of them had abandoned agricultural work and found full-time jobs in various branches of the economy. Well before the arrival of machines that replaced most agricultural helpers, in the era of booming post-war German reconstruction, rapid changes were experienced by those willing to work hard. In fact, soon there was a severe scarcity of labour, and Germany famously began to recruit foreigners as 'guest workers', from far-flung places such as Turkey, Spain and Portugal, Greece and Italy. Many of these migrant workers simply stayed on and made Germany their home.

Such rapid socio-economic changes reflect the increasing ability of the industrial and service sectors of early post-War Germany to absorb the surplus rural workforce. This transformational capacity as an early and swiftly expanding developmental factor in Germany has definitely been missing in India's early postcolonial economic reconstruction, which was further complicated by refugee movements in and after 1947 and significant general population increases also in rural areas. As this book confirms, in line with many other studies, Nehru's focus on industrial development studiously side-lined concerns for the rural unemployed and underemployed masses. This may not be seen as a more or less unwitting oppression of vast numbers of people, rather a deliberate forgetting, or 'oublierring', as a recent study on caste discriminations has called this,[4] the presence of disadvantaged village people in India, despite Mahatma Gandhi's constant reminders, which of course fell silent in 1948.

In the rural Germany that I experienced a few years later, nobody seemed to talk about the right to work as an entitlement. Initially, simply the need to secure work in order to survive was dominant. It was clear to the numerous landless people in the villages that one had to build a future for oneself and one's children, who initially also worked with their parents on the fields when they were not in school. A perspective from below, through this lens from 1950s Germany, indicates the presence of disadvantaged groups of people, refugees in this case, who knew that they had to help themselves to rebuild their lives and could not expect state handouts to secure their day-to-day survival and economic progress. Fortunately, increasingly ebullient market forces swiftly took care of the basic needs of such people. But I remember also that the collection of minor forest produce, as it is called in India, was still widely engaged in, mainly collecting firewood, herbs, berries or mushrooms, largely for domestic consumption rather than for sale.

The conditions in post-War Germany are, of course, very different from post-colonial India. And yet there are notable similarities, too. In both cases, an early government policy focused on industrialisation was promoted. If in Germany, this soon led to the vanishing of agricultural labour and a general scarcity of labour, the opposite has been the predicament of India. Here demographic developments have been such that the population has meanwhile mushroomed to over 1.3 billion people. As a result, a massive challenge for Indian perspectives from below has remained how to break into the labour market, a kind of glass ceiling predicament faced by hundreds of millions of young Indians today at different levels. In post-1990s conditions of economic liberalisation in India, reinforced by a notable move towards privatisation, which may also be described as a withdrawal of the stressed-out Indian state from certain domains, the competition for meaningful jobs has become a somewhat mad race on many tracks.[5]

 If the above observations apply mainly to urban Indians and to some extent also to the general rural population, for many tribal people of India, these changes at higher levels and largely outside their traditional habitat did not remain without ramifications. However, the implications have often not been positive at all. Non-tribal people migrated to and encroached on tribal habitats. Numerous huge infrastructural state projects, supported by assertive use of the 'eminent domain principle', simply took away the tribals' forest lands and ruined their traditional livelihood patterns. At the same time, the erratic and often precarious sustainability of self-sufficient small-scale agriculture and collection of forest produce that used to sustain most tribal people of India could all too often not alleviate the constant risks of hunger and even starvation. Meanwhile, in addition to massive land

alienations, various impacts of what one may broadly speaking call climate change have impacted even on remote forest dwellers. All of this, as we know, has led to mass movements to urban centres, in the hope of finding employment and decent means of survival.[6] Such distress migration, which quite a few authors are seeking to portray these days as a form of climate refugee movement, causes yet more problematic congestions in India's already overcrowded and heavily polluted major conurbations and other urban centres. It would clearly not be sustainable in the long run to simply watch such manifestations of rural-urban migration without any state intervention. But how does one prevent rural citizens from leaving their habitat if the law guarantees a right to freedom of movement within the nation?

The present book examines the impacts of a massive rural employment scheme, under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) of 2005. The book is based on based on extensive in-depth field studies and questionnaires, administered to tribal populations in various districts of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. In the later, fieldwork-based chapters of this book with their detailed findings, one locates amazingly rich evidence of what may be achieved with some forward-looking rights-focused rural employment planning. However, state involvement in such scenarios is not only designed to benefit the historically oppressed and neglected sections of India's population, such as India's tribal communities or Scheduled Tribes, probably many more than 100 million people now. It addresses country-wide all kinds of rural communities at risk of starvation and seeks to prevent them from moving to the big conurbations.

The present book is not a legal study, yet it conveys very clearly the message that India's sound constitutional framework has firm pillars of support for such wide-ranging policies and measures of poverty alleviation. These solid signposts dictate that pro-poor and pro-rural policies need to be devised and constantly refined by those who put themselves in charge of development issues or were appointed to deliver results. The focus on rural development work risks becoming an elistist growth industry, a self-interested domain of specialists, forgetting or deliberately ignoring that public interest demands that the legitimate expectations of disadvantaged citizens are the main concern, and that their perspectives from below must not be ignored. Crucially, such development measures will therefore need to be monitored for effectiveness, ultimately to fulfil the solemn promises of the Preamble of the Constitution of 1950 and other relevant provisions.

The sub-tile of this book, 'Democracy of the Oppressed', seems to indicate that more consciously targeted and democratically inspired strategies are now at work to redress traditional and customary imbalances

that could easily have fatal consequences for the lives and well-being of many millions of Indians. Together with India's Fundamental Rights guarantees, the solemn preambular promises of 'JUSTICE, social, economic and political', together with LIBERTY, EQUALITY and FRATERNITY, have constantly risked being violated and discarded, so that it often appeared, taking a perspective from below, that they exist only on paper or as pious symbols. However, the Indian state, whatever that entity precisely means, is seriously charged with putting these solemn promises into practice, to the best of the state's abilities. One learns this from a detailed study of the increasingly intensive interaction of the Constitution's provisions on Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy, a topic that is repeatedly referred to within the present study. This is Indian democracy at work, very different from what it was like in the early postcolonial era, but also noticeably quite different from various models of the Global North for how to manage a nation state of such massive dimensions that involve so much inequality and asymmetrical socio-economic structures.

To what extent India's constitutional promises include a full-fledged and straightforward 'right to work' has remained open to various ideologically coloured interpretations. There is no doubt, however, that Mahatma Gandhi's inspiring early leadership is reflected in the relevant key provisions of the Directive Principles of State Policy. Article 39(a) provides that 'the State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing – (a) that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means to livelihood'. Article 41 reinforces this and makes this important principle even clearer:

> 41. Right to work, to education and to public assistance in certain cases.-
> The State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want.

This kind of provision certainly does not mean a basic right for all Indians to a stable, somewhat cushy, well-paid job with certain formal privileges. In training seminars for young academics in India, we have sometimes had to comment that this does not mean a right to a post-doctoral placement. However, the Constitution clearly demands that the State shall take seriously not only the evident needs of persons who are physically or otherwise prevented from engaging in paid work, but also those, tellingly, who suffer from 'undeserved want'. The subtle language of this kind of provision can therefore easily be activated, if there is a will, to imply an

obligation for the State to provide certain classes of disadvantaged people with sustainable opportunities for paid work.

I suggest that by connecting this element of 'work' to Article 21 of the Constitution, whether as a right, or in fact as a duty of every able-bodied Indian citizen, as we know since the protracted debates in India's Constituent Assembly, we may get some further guidance. Notably, this is also proposed and highlighted in the extensive introduction of an important earlier study on the working of the MGNREGA.[7] By guaranteeing the right to life in Article 21, in all its various dimensions, the Indian Constitution also suggests an obligation on the state to create, or at least to endeavour to provide and even guarantee, an environment in which every person protected by this Constitution has a basic right to survival. In a spirit of state welfarism, this may be interpreted as a basic obligation of the state to provide needy people at least access to some food and potable water. As a matter of rules, or even basic values, this may be clear-cut in principle, though it may run into problems of practical execution or may be counteracted by questionable assertions that such support is not possible, or not affordable. Such political obfuscations apart, more critical are debates over what should be the appropriate process(es) for the Indian state to implement and/or make such basic provisions available.

I have argued for many years that since India is not Switzerland or Singapore, assumptions that state welfare may be handed out to all those who claim to need it would simply not be feasible for a massive nation such as India. India's leaders of government, but also the higher judiciary, seem to know this very well, but may not speak about it in much detail. They have formulated policies of social welfare, though, especially obvious in family laws, that rely on people's and families' self-controlled ordering and mutual support structures, rather than promising that the welfare state will pick up the bills. Indeed, such fiscally prudent policies seem to be protecting India's welfare state from excessive expectations and potentially fraudulent claims, by throwing the welfare burdens back to the social realm and the respective families.[8] Insufficient attention has been given to such connections in India's 'progressive' family law and personal law debates. Elsewhere, arguments driven by rich countries with small populations, such as Finland, that a basic wage for every citizen would take sufficient care of everyone's immediate needs of survival, and would thus address the requirement of guaranteeing the right to life for everyone, have been debated at length, but dismissed as fallacious by experienced Indian experts.[9]

The Indian Constitution does, however, as shown above, demand focused action to save the country's most deprived citizens from starvation. One might cynically connect this to attempts to garner votes, yet such

unproductive politicking distracts from the seriousness of this problem. The predicament of avoiding mass starvation has been shared by all parties and governments seeking to rule India, ever since independence, and seems reflected in the subtle wording of the pertinent constitutional provisions cited above. Significantly, Indira Gandhi's slogan 'Garibi Hatao' about banishing poverty echoes in this book, but the challenges for India in the twenty-first century have risen to much higher dimensions and infinitely larger scales. This has demanded more attention for well-planned state action with a long-term perspective, not some one-off fire-fighting here and there. This book shows well, despite some reservations about such centralising powers, that this planned action seems to arise right from the federal centre and its financial resources, which are now handed down for distribution more or less directly to the local level. This method, it seems, is deliberately bypassing the states of India to a large extent, since the involvement of state bureaucracies would risk further leakages of the assigned funds and provisions.

The current rural employment policies and schemes under MGNREGA that this book examines in depth through extensive field studies, for parts of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh, are therefore truly innovative, and as yet incompletely understood. Such policies clearly originated in the Congress era, but are being implemented now in ways that seem to make significant advances in encouraging Indian tribal people's active participation in democratic decentralisation, giving them not only day-to-day support, but also a voice and platforms for making themselves heard, in ways that did not exist before.

It can certainly not be claimed that the job is done, and that everything is 'hunky-dory' in India, as a critical friend of mine, who is also a retired professor, tried to put in my mouth recently. Yet the author of the present study is quite correct to portray the MGNREGA as a partial victory for a full-fledged right to employment and, especially, as a valuable form of empowerment for women as the most visible effect of this scheme. There are grave continuing challenges along this route, though. Given that, as the present study confirms, so many tribal people remain uninformed or insufficiently involved in the operation of such schemes for rural work programmes, important chances are still being missed to make such projects as productive as possible. It is encouraging to read that there are many recent initiatives to promote self-help groups (SHGs) and low level self-employment schemes. As the tribal people presented in this book seem to have more disposable income now as a result of targeted local work programmes under MGNREGA, wise decisions about how to spend the new earnings are crucial. Frittering one's income away in frivolous ways will

raise new risks of precariousness. The book does not say much about this, but probably the role of women in this particular context will be crucial.

This study makes especially valuable suggestions about the need for deeper consciousness of India's tribal people in terms of their involvement as empowered stakeholders in the planning, execution and auditing of MGNREGA projects. This, then, means tribal people are not only encouraged to claim their right to work. They are also empowered to practise self-controlled ordering for themselves and their environment. They are encouraged to take more control and to plan their own future and the sustainable future of the precious environment they live in. One of the most significant benefits of the MGNREGA schemes seems to be that it does encourage local people, including India's tribals, to stay in their respective locality, thus slowing down the frightening scale of urbanisation in India. If the prolonged involvement of MGNREGA can alleviate tribal poverty in India in the long run, and also avoid the much-lamented and still observed snatching of state benefits by advanced people, then a truly effective revolution of the relationship between the Indian central state and the most peripheral citizens has been achieved. India needs to develop its own pro-active measures to cultivate a democracy of the oppressed. This book indicates significant progress on that road and its findings should be widely publicised.

Werner Menski
Emeritus Professor of South Asian Laws
SOAS, University of London

Notes

1   See http://journals.sagepub.com/home/sar.
2   Ramdas Rupavath (2016) 'Tribal Education: A Perspective from below', *South Asia Research*, 36(2): 205-28, at p. 226.
3   Werner Menski (2006) *Comparative Law in a Global Context. The Legal Systems of Asia and Africa*. Second edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
4   Aniket Jaaware (2018) *Practicing Caste: On Touching and Not Touching*. New York: Fordham University Press.
5   The literature on this is of course huge. Sameer Kochhar (ed.) (2010) *India on the Growth Turnpike. Essays in honour of Vijay L. Kelkar*, New Delhi: Academic Foundation, captures the macro-dimensions and also discusses issues of equity and financial inclusion of underprivileged people. Dilip Hiro (2015) *The Age of Aspiration. Power, Wealth, and Conflict in Globalizing India, New York and London: The New Press*, reports on Indian struggles with the impacts of globalisation. Snigdha Poonam (2018) *Dreamers. How*

Young Indians are Changing the World. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, captures more of a bottom-up perspective, though with an urban focus.

6 For examples of various motivations, see Rajib Lochan Dhar (2014) 'Job Search Processes for Tribal People from Jharkhand and West Bengal', *South Asia Research*, 34(3): 191-208.

7 Ashok, K. Pankaj (ed.) (2012) *Right to Work and Rural India. Working of the Mahatma Gandhi National rural emlpoyment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)*. New Delhi: SAGE Publications, p. 9. Pankaj also indicates the proactive position taken by the Indian Supreme Court in this context (p. 10).

8 See already Werner Menski (2000) *Modern Indian Family Law*. Richmond: Curzon, a study which has been republished by Routledge in India.

9 See Ashok K. Pankaj (2016) 'The Fallacies of "Basic Income". Review Article', *South Asia Research*, 36(3): 397-405.

INTRODUCTION

POOR ADIVASIS:
THE CAUSES OF POVERTY

Development is supposed to be a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. In other words, it is the process of expanding human freedoms which means the capacity of an individual to avoid deprivations such as starvation, under-nourishment, morbidity and mortality. Therefore, development may not happen unless an individual's deprivation is removed. Poverty, unemployment, forced displacement and alienation reduce the capabilities of individuals to enjoy their freedoms.[1] But the current socio-economic scenario in India is witnessing displacement and alienation as a foundation stone for development. Several developmental projects involve the introduction of direct control by a developer over land which was previously owned by a subaltern individual or group. This displacement is not only in a physical form but affects the socio-cultural sphere too. According to a report by the World Commission on Dams,[1] it refers to not only the loss of livelihood and means of production but also one's favourable socio-cultural milieu.[2] The displacement caused by dams in India is as high as that caused by other developmental projects. Taneja and Thakkar (2000) point out that estimates on displacement in India from dam projects alone range from 21 million to 40 million.[3] The Narmada Sardar Sarovar Dam Project in India, which has displaced 127,000 people, has perhaps been the most widely researched and discussed project in history involving forced resettlement.[4] Due to the emergence of the New Economic Policy in 1991, the process of forced displacement and land alienation went at a fast pace in India. Areas ranging from tribal hamlets to urban slums lacked the government's support. The inclination of the state towards market forces undermined any pro-people development policy. Forced displacement and land alienation adversely affect children and women in addition to men, owing

---

[1] Amartya Sen (2000), Development as Freedom, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

to their unanticipated migration and involuntary resettlement. They lose their livelihood, ongoing education, existing health care facilities and nutrition. Therefore, displacement and land alienation may not be fully explained until outcomes such as people's migration and involuntary resettlement are explored explicitly. Jean Dreze says that displacement has been a history of failures (*Report of the workshop held at the India International Centre on September 12 and 13, 2002 organised by the Institute of Development Studies*). The total lack of transparency, especially the blockage of information from the project authority to the displaced community, has led to failed resettlement and rehabilitation.[5] In his view, displacement should be voluntary, and a resettlement policy should ensure that people's views are sought before being resettled. Therefore, it is imperative to define displacement, land alienation, migration and rehabilitation policies.

Non-traditional security threats have now assumed enormous importance. Contemporary challenges like environmental degradation, poverty and extremism differ from traditional military ones. State-centric traditional security issues which determined the crucial paradigm during the Cold War era are being challenged these days. Traditionally, national security is defined in terms of the ability of a state to protect its interests, broadly defined as territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of the nation from external threats. Human security is a people-centred notion of security, which is threatened by non-traditional challenges in the present time. This includes economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security. The traditional security paradigm does not include within its ambit such issues as rapidly increasing non-traditional threats to security like the struggle for energy resources and the depletion of other resources, food shortages, increase of infectious diseases, cross-border environmental degradation, forced migration, international terrorism, insurgency, ascendancy of non-state actors in drugs, arms, money laundering and financial crime organisations.[6] High economic growth has not lessened the extent of food insecurity and malnutrition, because the distribution of economic benefits has remained deeply unequal. Not all growth is development, nor is it equally distributed to cater to the minimum needs of the common people. This is because, in a country like India, the contradiction of poverty in the midst of plenty is prevalent. Poverty is deepest among members of Scheduled Castes and Tribes in rural areas. A major cause of poverty among India's rural people, both individuals and communities, is a lack of access to productive assets and financial resources. High levels of illiteracy, inadequate health care and extremely limited access to social services are common. The

development of micro-enterprises, which could generate income and enable poor people to improve their living conditions, has only recently become a focus for the government.

People's participation is a key component of democracy. Democracy is never complete unless people's participation and active involvement are assured. Particularly in this modern age where it is said that t power belongs to the people, the government is supposed to be? their welfare agency. People come into direct contact with the government through a decentralised system, at a local level, more so in rural and remote areas.

After India's independence, democracy and development became interrelated in the process of modernisation. In the context of participatory development, decentralisation widens the scope of people's participation in the developmental process.[7] Decentralisation, in a general sense, refers to the transfer of authority and power from a higher level to a lower level, from the powerful to the powerless. It follows a path whereby the centralised power gives way to the distribution of power among the people at the grass-roots level. The debate supporting decentralisation always advocates that people situated at the grass-roots level are better equipped to take care of themselves than the ones devising their policies, who are located far away geographically and have no idea about the local dynamics.[8]

Food Insecurity and the Disadvantaged Sections

Deprived people are disproportionately affected by non-traditional challenges such as food insecurity. Food scarcity is a major problem for underprivileged sections of society. Their vulnerability to multiple adversities means that people require specific help in order to benefit from development on their own terms. Food insecurity is the limited or uncertain availability or access to nutritionally adequate, culturally appropriate and safe foods. It may result in an inadequate and insufficient dietary intake, which leads mostly to malnutrition and may create a significant health burden on the population, and this may be concentrated in socio-economically disadvantaged localities that would be mostly urban.[9] Food insecurity is associated with a lower household income, poorer general health and depression. It is more often prevalent in urbanised disadvantaged areas. Moreover, it can be seen that the government's initiatives to deal with food insecurity reflect its failure to grasp the realities of exclusion faced by the marginalised or disadvantaged sections of society, especially in rural areas?

The Public Distribution System (PDS) evolved as a system to manage scarcity and to distribute food grains at affordable prices. Over the years, PDS has become an important tool in the government's policy in terms of food security management. PDS is supplemental in nature and is not intended to make available the entire requirement of any of the commodities distributed under it to a household or a section of society. The PDS system is also an attempt to improve food availability for the population living in the most vulnerable areas (remote, tribal and drought-prone regions). In an attempt to limit the mounting cost of food subsidies and at the same time, ensure that people below the poverty line do get subsidised food grains, the PDS started to target only those people below the poverty line.[10]

Major commodities distributed under the scheme include staple food grains such as wheat, rice, sugar and kerosene, through a network of public distribution shops, also known as Ration shops established in all states across the country. Both the central and state governments share the responsibility of regulating the PDS, with the central government being responsible for procurement, storage, transportation and bulk allocation of food grains, and the state governments tasked with r distributing the same to the consumers through the established network of Fair Price Shops (FPSs). State governments also have operational responsibilities including allocation and identification of families below the poverty line, the issue of ration cards, plus supervising and monitoring the functioning of FPSs. Under the PDS scheme, each family below the poverty line is entitled to receive 35 kg of rice or wheat, and those above the poverty line are entitled to receive 15 kg of food grain on a monthly basis. Under Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) the poorest of the poor families in the state have been supplied with 35 kg of rice per family per month at Rs 3 per kg since September 2011. It is evident from our field study that 91 per cent of respondents are receiving benefits from the Yojana, and the rest are not using this benefit as they belong to the APL group.[11] It can be observed in the study that all families below the poverty line (BPL) are receiving subsidised rice as per government norms.

Governmental Measures and Critical Estimate

The Public Distribution System (PDS) is, however, in a woeful condition. The 1997 BPL lost its validity in 2002, and the last BPL survey was undertaken in the Telengana state in 2002. Although the survey was conducted at the national level and comprised of all the States and union territories, but the 2002 BPL list has not yet been published publicly.

Although the rules stipulate that the BPL survey has to be conducted every five years. Another setback to the poverty amelioration programme in the region has been the erroneous identification of the poor, with corruption playing a big role in the faulty distribution of BPL cards. People who are Above the Poverty Line (APL) such as government schoolteachers, owners of big houses, middle-class traders, big farmers, and contractors, have obtained BPL cards through manipulation. No one has doubted the utility of the PDS in the supply of food grains to the poor of the country at affordable rates. Procurement and distribution of food grains is a huge task, but the whole system is degraded by corruption. There are more leakages and maladministration. Hence benefits to the poor are low. Inefficiency and corruption have made the PDS weak at several levels. The system lacks transparency, accountability, monitoring and enforcement. Surveys are not being conducted regularly and properly, with the result that APL people have been issued with BPL cards while those eligible for BPL cards have been ignored. Bogus cards are in abundance despite the fact that even in the contemporary times most or all of the people have Aadhar cards. Immediate measures are required to stop the diversion of food grains. Delivery systems under the PDS have to be improved so that the real beneficiaries get their due entitlement at a fixed price, fixed quantity, fixed time and wholesome quality. Innovative methods are required to improve the system. The whole system must be totally revamped, and modern technology would appear to be the only solution, and the its rate has been reduced due to the advancement in the technological growth, lots of fake beneficiaries have been weeded out due to the launching of the Aadhar which mostly depends on biometric authentication.

Decentralisation is seen as a means of empowering local people by involving them in the decision-making process that affects them. It is one of the best means of promoting efficiency at the grass-roots level of local self-government. In India, local self-government (Panchayati Raj) institutions came into force to widen the scope of democracy and the socio-economic and political development of the people at the grass-roots level. The Panchayati Raj institutions have an important role in the community development programme.[12] The welfare programmes are basically implemented through the three-tier Panchayati Raj system. The Gram Panchayat implements the programme at a rural level by the participation of rural folk. The success of the programme depends upon effective democratic participation at the grass-roots level, which is an effective tool by which the socio-political forces in the society can

articulate their ideas, present their demands and programmes, and influence the decision-making process.

Local government has existed in India since ancient times. Village Panchayats used to exist in India during the days of the Mauryas, Guptas and other kingdoms of ancient India. This continued during the Sultanate and Mughal period. The British, however, destroyed the village Panchayat in India and instead established rural local governments. Officials from different governments were brought under the district level and entrusted to a collector who was made responsible for good governance in the country. The provincial governments had complete control over the district administration.[13]

After independence, Indian leaders tried to establish the dream of local government or Gram Swaraj by changing the nature of district administration. The most important initiative for local government was the implementation of Panchayat Raj for the all-round development and local administration in the villages. A three-tier local government was established in nearly all the villages. This included Gram Panchayat at the village level, Panchayat Samiti at the block level, and Zilla Parishad at the district level.[14] The elected representatives of the people at the local level designed and implemented the development plans. Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan were some of the first states to launch the Panchayati Raj institutions. The creation of these institutions was dependent upon the state government. In 1993, with the passage of the Panchayati Raj Act by the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution, this became part of the law of the land. Panchayat Extension Scheduled Area Act, 1996 is a further Act enacted by the Parliament of India for ensuring self-governance govern through Adivasi Gram Sabhas for tribal living in the Scheduled Areas of India (PESA Act). The Forest Rights Act of 2006is an Act to recognise the forest rights and occupation in the forest land of forest-dwelling Adivasis who have been living for generations on such lands, and whose rights have been recognised by the government of India. The creation of the Panchayats received constitutional status and has been made mandatory in all states.[15]

The post-independent state had, at first, been following almost the same policy as the erstwhile colonial state. While it could bring in a few changes to suit its constitutional needs, it has taken care to see that these changes did not come in the way of the exploiting class. In the name of protecting the interests of tribals stringent laws were enacted by the colonial and post-colonial government under popular pressure, but here were always loopholes in these legislations, leaving room for the well-to-do non-Tribals to continue the historical process of exploiting the Tribals non-Tribals were encouraged to enter into these areas mainly to satisfy the

increased revenue demands of the state. The traders and the cultivating non-tribal peasantry, therefore, entered these areas only to fulfil the demands of the state, and their entry deprived the tribals of their land.

Further, the introduction of community development programmes in the plain areas improved socio-economic conditions there. The tribal societies, however, could not reap the full benefits of the programmes, and could not catch up with the fast progressing plains people because of their traditional economic and cultural drawbacks. The age-old differences in the social and economic life of the Tribals and non-Tribals could not be wiped out. Even after the implementation of multiple developmental programmes, the tribal could not escape the gap and catch up with the plains people, as their pace of progress was not fast enough. The introduction of numerous development programmes and their haphazard implementation confused the ignorant Tribals, necessitating radical reorientation of tribal development programmes to suit the needs of the Tribals

State repression of the tribal movement and resistance paints a picture of an obnoxious mode of exploitation reinforced by the state, and the dominant classes. At the same time, the process also indicates an intense urge of the tribal communities in India, to assert and organize themselves on par with the other millions of oppressed Indians. The Tribals were able to express resistance and sporadic retaliation, which is a testimony to their courage and is an apt characterization of the development system practiced by the state in spite of its apparent objectives of welfare, constitutionality and so-called socialism.

The resistance offered by the various movements and other tribal forces had an impact on the state and dominant classes. It has resulted in certain modifications of the position of the Tribals, while the state with all its repressive machinery was compelled to adopt transitory liberal strategies of welfarism. Tribes, on the other hand, organize their efforts relentlessly to fight the injustice affecting their life patterns and demand the constitutionally and as well as socially valid recognition of their identity and existence.

What is needed is a democratic theory that accepts the great diversity of human situations, yet provides coherence to them through an active political process, opens up new and creative spaces within the framework of civil society, and at the same time restructures the state for realizing these ends. The government of India should look at the glass of Adivasi movements for the motherland that is Bharat, rather than the Maoist movement.

References

1. Amartya Sen (2000), Development as Freedom, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.
2. Dams and Development (2000), New Framework for Decision Making, the report on world Commission Dams, first published in the UK and USA by Earthscan Publications Ltd.
3. Stanley, Jason (2016). How Propaganda Works, Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersery.
4. Dams and Development (2000), New Framework for Decision Making, the report on world Commission Dams, first published in the UK and USA by Earth scan Publications Ltd.
5. Dams and Development (2000), New Framework for Decision Making, the report on world Commission Dams, first published in the UK and USA by Earth scan Publications Ltd.
6. New Economic Policy of 1991: Objectives, Features and Impacts, New Economic Policy of India was launched in the year 1991 under the leadership of P. V. Narasimha Rao.
7. Engendering Resettlement and Rehabilitation Policies and Programmes In India, Report of the workshop held at the India International Centre on September 12 and 13, 2002 organized by the Institute of Development Studies and ActionAid, India with support from DFID.
8. Anthony Saunders &Marcia Millon Cornett (2008), Financial Institutions Management Published by McGraw-Hill/Irwin, a business unit of The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1221 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY, 10020.
9. Ramdas Rupavath (2015), (Ed), Democracy, Development and Tribes in India Reality & Rhetoric, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi.
10. Venkatesu. E, (2016) (Ed), Democratic Decentralization in India: Experiences, Issues and Challenges. Routledge, Tailor & Francis Group, New York, USA.
11. Nolan M[1?], Williams M, Rikard-Bell G, Mohsin M.(2006), Food insecurity in three socially disadvantaged localities in Sydney, Australia, Health promotion journal of Australia: official journal of Australian Association of Health Promotion Professionals.
12. Ramdas Rupavath (2015), Edi, Democracy, Development and Tribes in India Reality & Rhetoric, Gyan Publishing House, 23, Main Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi, India.
13. Ramdas Rupavath (2015), Edi, Democracy, Development and Tribes in India Reality & Rhetoric, Gyan Publishing House, 23, Main Ansari Road, Daryanani, New Delhi, India.
14. Venkatesu. E, (2016) Edit, Democratic Decentralization in India: Experiences, Issues and Challenges, Routledge, Tailor & Francis Group, New York, USA.

15.   Neelakanta Sastry: Colas, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1960 pp.487 and also See A.L. Basham The Wonder that was India, Rupa & Co, New Delhi, 1982)

CHAPTER ONE

DEMOCRACY OF THE OPPRESSED:
A PERSPECTIVE FROM BELOW

Studies on the tribes of India have gradually increased since Independence. Different scholars have interpreted tribal people in different ways. Some scholars have romanticised the literature by painting an idyllic picture of a primitive and simple life of dance and song, of ritual and colour. However, prominent social science scholars have essentially provided factual or strong empirical knowledge of socio-cultural, economic and political issues of tribal areas, highlighting different forms of exploitation, underdevelopment, poverty and vulnerability. The problem of alienation in tribal areas, as viewed by various researchers, is not a mere "structuralist-legalist" one, but a much more deeply connected phenomenon full of contradictions relating to the existing socio-economic order. The separation of natural resources from tribal communities can be understood in a more scientific way with the assistance of theoretical formulations of the concept of alienation. Hence, in this chapter, an attempt is made to analyse the problem of tribal autonomy in the light of understanding the theoretical formulations of alienation and private property. Thus, there is a reason to examine the theoretical concept of alienation in a democratic society and its application to the problem of natural resources in tribal areas.

Since Independence, many development schemes and protective measures have been attempted by the central and state governments for the tribal areas of Bharat. However, this chapter reflects the deteriorated condition of the majority of Tribals. While exploitation and backwardness are found in many communities and social groups in India, among tribes, it has also resulted in social alienation. The existence of a distinct culture and lifestyle makes the problems of Tribals different from those of other deprived groups in India.

It is confusing, as some people in society express themselves differently to others. It is equally important to examine how the Indian state responds differently to such a phenomenon. India is a country with