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18. Globalisation



### GLOBALISATION AND MARGINALISATION: THE CONTEXT OF TRIBALS AND JESUITS IN INDIA

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**W**hen Jharkhand, my home state, was carved out of the erstwhile parent state Bihar on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2000, there was euphoria, mainly among us local tribals and indigenous peoples. The Jharkhand Movement for a separate state, one of the longest in history, was a dream that had taken more than 150 years to be realised. We hoped that the new state would facilitate our all-round development. We had everything to be one of the most prosperous states in India. About 40 percent of the total mineral wealth of the country is available in Jharkhand.<sup>1</sup> Jharkhand is also endowed with other resources such as surface and ground water, land with immense bio-diversity, a moderate climate, disciplined and skilled manpower, adequate availability of power, all the basic essentials in fact for the growth and development of industries. Jharkhand also has many industries such as the Muri Aluminium Factory, Bokaro Steel Plant, Tisco, Telco, and others.

Soon after the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) formed the government in the State, however, our dreams were shattered and our hopes belied. The very forces which had been against the Movement all these years were at the helm of power claiming to be true *Jharkhandis*, having participated in the long battle for statehood. The policies of the new government have accelerated the exploitation of natural and human resources at the cost of tribals and indigenous peoples.

The Industrial Policy-2001 of Jharkhand is a glaring example of the way in which we are exploited. The new policy emphasises the need "to optimally utilise the available resources" for the State's "expected industrial growth." The underlying philosophy is to maximize capital investment for accelerated economic development generating employment opportunities, for which a "conducive" atmosphere must be created. The inner contradictions in the policy, however, are sure to go against us and lead to unemployment.

The new state industrial policy relaxes the land laws and seeks to prevent delays in land acquisition by constituting a "Land Bank" at District level to make the land required available to entrepreneurs. There is a plan to create a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) to make land, power, water and communication facilities available to investors. This zone would also have an IT Park, Bio-Tech Park, Hotels, Recreation facilities, Housing, etc.

with state of the art technology. The Government intends to set up an SEZ along both sides of the Jamshedpur-Ranchi National Highway corridor – the area within 5 kms. on either side. The policy envisages IT for all by 2010 by accelerating the rate of computer penetration so that there will be one computer per 50 people by the year 2010.

This policy, which appears to have been prepared in an air-conditioned chamber, has little to do with the reality of day-to-day life. And the reality of Jharkhand is that its literacy rate is only 40.7 percent (rural 38.1 percent & urban 67.8 percent). The percentage of agriculture labourers in the state is 31, out of which 25.7 percent are male and 37.8 percent female. The total tribal population of the State according to 2001 census is 7,087,068 of which 6,500,014 are rural and 587,054 urban.

Rampant privatisation is recommended by the industrial policy at every phase for every single enterprise, whether it is road construction and maintenance of roads and bridges, commercialised use of specified roadside lands, water, tourism, telecommunication, or information technology. Various measures are proposed to boost export of various commodities from the State, including flowers, metals, *tussar*, handicrafts, automobiles, and computer software. The Government wants to encourage research and development for minor forest produce, such as *mahua* seed, *sal* seed, *lac*, *kendu* leaf, *harra*, and *bahera*, increase their production and provide marketing assistance to boost this sector. But the Government does not say how exactly we tribals, who depend primarily on this forest produce, will benefit from it. Despite the rosy promises made by the State.

there is a cynical feeling among us that only the rich and powerful industrialists, will make profits.

#### Implications

While acknowledging the contributions of globalisation in the areas of human rights violations, gender bias, social justice, illiteracy, health, education, development, scientific and technological progress, displacement, ecological degradation, and so on, we need also to see that marginalisation and globalisation are intrinsically related. The most acute common problem across states with all their diversity is the backwardness of tribals, a backwardness rooted in neglect.

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<sup>1</sup>The State is the sole producer of cooking coal, uranium and pyrite. It ranks first in India in the production of coal (37.5 percent), mica (90 percent), kainite, copper (40 percent), and iron-ore (22 percent), besides bauxite, quartz, ceramics and other minerals. The geological exploration and exploitation of gold, silver, base metals, decorative stones, and precious stones are potential areas of the future.

Tribal identity comprises different facets of tribal life – geographical, societal, economic, historical, political, religious, philosophical – and is inscribed in its literature, art and music. One of the reasons for demanding a separate Jharkhand state was to safeguard our tribal identity and culture, but the apathy of the government has disillusioned us. The globalisation process deliberately sidelines our distinctive identity. The Chotanagpur plateau has been the habitat of the 30 tribal groups living in Jharkhand, but in the last 60 years or so a swelling influx of outsiders coming to make a livelihood has virtually displaced us in our homeland. The present policies of the Government have only accelerated the disintegration of our culture that started in the colonial period. Exploitation of our land, water, forest and environment now proceeds unchecked for commercial purposes of which we are not the beneficiaries. Worst of all, middle class tribals and even some Jesuits are being co-opted by the forces of globalisation.

From a social point of view as tribals, we cherish our identity as an ethnic group; as Jesuits we cherish our community life. Our social affirmation is in our togetherness and solidarity. Globalisation is a deviation from our central values in relation to nature (land, forest, water), a relation characterised by harmony, co-existence, accommodation and symbiosis. Our attitude and life style are now marked by relationships of exploitation and oppression, and our values, which once emphasised coexistence, seem to have made a compromise with the idea of subjugating the earth. The notion of collective ownership of land, its non-‘commodifiability’, has now taken a back seat among both tribals and Jesuits.

In tribal as well as Jesuit societies, there has generally been an economy of collectivity. Values such as social responsibility, decentralisation, egalitarianism, communitarianism, are central to their economic relationships. But globalisation introduces individualism into our life and culture, and unfortunately, personal gains, competition, centralisation and hoarding have all become part and parcel of most of our tribal and Jesuit consciousness. The relative equality of men and women in tribal society is slowly giving way to the hierarchy and ranking that are the hallmarks of the larger Indian society. Our mutual solidarity through village cooperatives is on the verge of disappearance.

Turning to political relationships, our historical consciousness in Jharkhand is being ignored today, and our rootedness in our land overlooked by the policy-makers and the custodians of the law. Tribal society has traditionally been characterised by self-rule and participatory governance or federalism, with decisions

taken by consensus. Globalisation, on the other hand, emphasises the centralisation of power and decisions by a few. We have no participation in the decision-making process today. Economic globalisation is always supported politically by military might; and political power supports and promotes the rich and their economic interests.

As regards tribal culture, the globalisation process facilitates the growing gap between the rich and the poor. The disadvantaged majority is excluded from any role in society, not even recognized as fully human and certainly not as equal. They internalise the cultural system through the media, and powerless to confront an impersonal system, they sometimes seek security in fundamentalist or alienating forms of religion. In the name of science and objectivity ethical values have been set aside. A spirit of individualism and competition is emerging and the sense of the common good is no longer seen as important.

#### Our Response

Even before the bifurcation of Jharkhand, various groups of tribals and non-tribals were busy discussing their strategy to gain maximum for their own respective groups on the basis of ethnic and religious affiliations. A joint workshop that was organized by *Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Vikas Parishad*, Ranchi and *Vikas Maitri*, Ranchi, in collaboration with the Scheduled Tribe/Scheduled Caste (ST/SC) Commission, Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India (CBCI), New Delhi is worth recalling. There was a sense of achievement but also a fear whether their hopes and aspirations would be fulfilled by the new government as there was a strong feeling that the new rulers (NDA) of the new State were ‘not their own.’

Ranchi, March 12, 2001! A group comprising the Sama (a generic name for unconverted tribals professing traditional religions in the Chotanagpur plateau), Christian working and retired officers including Sub-Divisional Magistrates (SDMs), District Inspector Generals (DIGs), and Sub-Divisional Officers (SDOs), together with two Jesuit priests were seen visiting the MLA quarters in Ranchi in an attempt to mobilise the sympathetic Members of the Jharkhand Legislative Assembly for the next day’s meeting at Hotel Birsa. Those contacted were the Christian and the Sama MLAs, mainly of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and the Congress parties. The group went from door to door, introducing its members, seeking time to discuss some “extremely” urgent issues. The team then held the meeting, explaining to the MLAs the intricacies and adverse impact of the new policies of the Government. The group also apprised them of the ‘evil’ designs of the right-

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wing-controlled Jharkhand Chamber of Commerce to pressurise the Government into formulating anti-tribal policies.

At the three-day workshop held at the Social Development Centre (SDC), Purulia Road, Ranchi, from 12-14, 2002, there emerged very strongly a holistic idea of development, encompassing politics, economics, education and culture. For the reconstruction of Jharkhand the locals expected a holistic, and not merely an economic, approach to development.

The Church had been supporting and reinforcing all the pro-tribal rallies, demonstrations, bundhs, and gheraos jointly organized by the Sarnas and the Christians in Ranchi to press the demands for tribal rights. These demands centred around a host of issues.<sup>2</sup> The recent coming together of the Sarnas and Christians over tribal issues confirms the fact that there was a growing consciousness in both the communities of their common identity. Not all the institutions, however, of the Church in general and the Society of Jesus in particular, are actively involved in movements for identity assertion. This is left to social action groups and a few interested individuals. The consequence is that the elite in the Church and in the Society not only do not oppose the process of globalisation; in fact, they promote it.

Globalisation intervenes mainly in following areas: science, technology, education, development, health, human rights, and social justice. But the largest question is – for whose benefit is the globalisation process – the already rich and powerful, or the powerless and the unprivileged? The set of values underlying all the indicators of development mentioned above are crucial; these indicators are related to a specific time, place, society, economic power, distribution and conflict. However, the paradox of plenty and poverty is that only a few elites with ‘plenty’ make anti-poor decisions; *their* values underlie the investment decisions. Technological choices in the world market system also depend on who controls it, and whether those choices lead to the creation of a new ‘just’ social order based on the values of justice, participation and sustainability, or of an ‘unjust’ social structure based on monopoly, homogeneity, co-option and dominance.

Science can certainly work as a positive agent of globalisation for tribals in various spheres. In the health domain it can mean more effective prevention of disease, better diagnoses and cures. The atmospheric sciences can provide rich and useful information with meteorological predictions of climatic conditions and natural calamities. Science can also help eradicate superstitious practices such as witchcraft and black magic, and globalisation can facilitate the promotion of

human rights and gender justice. However, the neutrality of science and technology is a myth created by the elite. Historical and social contexts do not show technology to be neutral. Its use is highly selective. The struggle over which technology to develop and to use depends on who controls power, who consumes what products and what services, on those who determine the centre and the periphery. Unfortunately for tribal society, many ‘elitist’ tribals and Jesuits may now be identified as anti-poor and anti-tribal.

### Conclusions

The creation of smaller states was a step forward in the right direction; it promised recognition of the problem of tribal development and identity. There were high expectations of making the tribals self-reliant and it was believed that the

bifurcation was for the sake of self-expression in the midst of so much diversity. Federalism allows decentralisation for in a federal set up ‘politics’ is for the people and not for the elite. However, the Centre has supported the processes of globalisation, privatisation and internal colonisation. The internal colonisers, who have come back with a vengeance in the form of new elites, are the ones who now control the natural and human resources and steal the Common Property Resources (CPR) of tribals. From the functioning of the NDA government in the last four years in Jharkhand it appears that whatever was given to tribals through ‘legislation’ is slowly being taken away by ‘new legislation’; that is by the Industrial Policy, the Land Acquisition Act, and by the Amendments brought about in the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act 1908. This legislation, one of the impacts of globalisation, is detrimental to the tribal societies.

The process of development (so-called) in the state of Jharkhand is taking place without much sensitivity to the articulation of the rights, survival and development of India's most marginalised communities. There is no reference whatsoever to human rights and constitutional rights in the whole question of development. The decision-making process is neither transparent,

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<sup>2</sup>Among the demands were the issues of census irregularities, dis-  
prohibition, land-alienation, reservations for tribals/indigenous people,  
prohibition on the infiltration of outsiders, restriction on the violation  
of the CNT (Chota Nagpur Tenancy) Act and the SPT (Santhal Par-  
gana Tenancy) Act, revaluation of the amendments of the Acts, teach-  
ing of the tribal languages in the educational institutions of Jharkhand,  
issuance of the domicile certificate on the basis of the 1932 *khariyan*,  
appointment of teachers for tribal languages, and inclusion of the  
recommendation of the Bhuria Committee Article 4(1), (k), (m-3).

participatory nor inclusive. It lacks consistency and shows no clear recognition of rights to ancestral lands, territories and natural resources. There is inadequate protection against forced relocation and eviction, insufficient provision for rehabilitation, no provision for Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC), and no protection or promotion of tribal customary laws, practices and governance. There is a wholly unacceptable absence of rights to self-determined development, which in effect means no protection from the adverse impact of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation.

The current development model has been adversely affecting the livelihoods and well being of tribals. Tribal languages, histories and technologies are not included in the educational system, and tribal knowledge is neither preserved nor encouraged. There is no provision to educate dominant sections of society about tribal culture or the tribal world-view. Tribal religious practices and their practitioners receive scant

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respect, while their sacred sites and institutions are neglected. The provision for equal access to general education or health support services is inadequate, and tribal approaches to health and healing have been ignored. Neither the State nor the Central Government has a clear articulated position on the question of women's rights, to say nothing of the State's obligations

regarding the rights of children and youth against negative impacts of changing social environment. There is no reference to the increasing militarization of tribal lands; no reference to the urgent and anticipated need for conflict resolution and peace promotion through tribal customary laws and reconciliation mechanisms. In the new state of Jharkhand there is no recognition of the principles of fundamental respect of difference, by which is implied respect for different societies with their distinct identity, culture, ethos and ways of life. Neither is there any recognition of the rights to life and livelihood with dignity.

I argue that in the process of globalisation, the dominance of a few powerful people and a promotion of their philosophy that what is good for them (the elite) is good for everybody does not foster the well being of tribal society as a whole. An accompanying impoverishment does not allow smaller groups to come up. The globalisation process necessarily marginalises the masses, especially tribals. A tribal/Jesuit does not

stand either for or against the forces of globalization by virtue of his identity; rather it is his socio-economic location that determines whether a tribal/Jesuit would accept or reject the globalisation process. I debunk the conventional notion that maintains that all tribals are victims of globalisation. Similarly, I also question the notion that the entire Society of Jesus is opposed to the values of globalisation.

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