

Transitions in Socio-Economic Dimensions of Adivasi Landscape*

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ABSTRACT

There are 705 communities officially classified as Scheduled Tribe but popularly known as Adivasis. The total population of Adivasis is 104.55 crores constituting 8.6 per cent of India's population (as per the 2011 census). They are known by various names such as ST, Adivasi, Janjati, Indigenous Communities, Aborigines, Girijans etc. They live at the bottom of the pyramid in terms of socio-economic developmental indicators. The paper explores the identity and ethno-regional politics of the Adivasi community, their alienation from the forest, land and the consequences of development-induced displacement, their involvement in forest protection through Joint Forest Management, and the implementation of the Forest Rights Act for their upliftment. It further explores their socio-economic status, the reasons for it being poor even after so many years of independence and the role played by governmental and non-governmental organizations in improving their economic status and livelihood. It has been argued that rather than focusing on ethno-regional politics, it will be more advantageous for the Adivasi community to focus on land and forest rights and make sure that resettlement and rehabilitation of the tribal communities are accorded priority over developmental projects. The agricultural universities should focus on understanding the Adivasis' agricultural production systems and should strengthen interlinkages with the forest and water resources in the Adivasi areas. The supply chain for both agricultural products such as millets and minor forest produce needs to be strengthened. The Adivasi areas are rich in organic matter and the focus on the Adivasi agriculture and production system may increase the production of millet crop and organic crop, leading to a third green revolution in India. The experiences of several NGO's working with the Adivasi community have found that the Adivasis are adoptive, innovative and have strong learning aptitude. With supportive public policy and institutional mechanisms, it is possible to integrate and assimilate Adivasis' with the mainstream of the society.

Keywords: Adivasis, Socio-economic development, Forest rights, Joint Forest Management, Institutional mechanisms

JEL classification: O15, Q23, Q56, R58

I

INTRODUCTION

Generally, in our society's annual conference thematic or area-specific issues are chosen for the discussion. The issues pertaining to a particular community or sections of the community¹ are not part of the annual discussion of the conference. To that extent, it is a welcome step by society to discuss the socio-economic changes among the Adivasi communities who by and large as a group are living at the bottom of the pyramid (Ballabh and Batra, 2015). The outline circulated by the society for inviting papers on the theme is quite comprehensive and covers various dimensions of social, cultural, and economic life of Adivasi communities, their farming systems, and their livelihood. In 1992 conference of the society the discussion on the issues of tribal (Adivasi) and hill economy had concluded that the unidimensional approach cannot *fully explain the complexities of socio-economic and cultural changes of tribal societies* (emphasis mine). It was emphasised that a multi-disciplinary approach involving inputs from agricultural scientists, anthropologists, economists, political

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scientists, sociologists, etc. were needed to understand the institutional arrangements, property rights regime, and functioning of the tribal economy in its various stages of development (Marothia,1993). This paper is prepared keeping these points in consideration and varied literature on the topic.

My experience in working with the scheduled tribe communities goes back to 1989 when I took a group of twenty students to the field area of N M Sadguru Water and Development Foundation (Dahod, Gujarat) for the induction field work of the Institute of Rural Management Anand to acquaint them about rural development issues. The students were divided into four groups consisting of five students. A village was allotted to each group for the study. Everything was going well but, on the fifth day, five of our students were retained by the villagers and the local community threatened them with dire consequences. It took enormous effort on the part of a local NGO and its staff to persuade the community that the students have come to learn about their problems, culture, and issues of development. However, later we came to know that all this happened due to a rumor that the students were there to kidnap children from the villages. This had happened due to over-excitement and certain behavior on the part of the students themselves who were visiting the village first time and had never been to such a landscape. Since then, I have been associated with the issues of scheduled tribe community development as a research consultant and participant observer. In this keynote paper, I would like to share some of these learnings and corroborate through the review of literature on issues that concern the development of Adivasi communities.

The paper is organised as follows: After the introduction, Section II presents the identity and ethno-regional politics and its relevance in the current context. Section III of the paper highlights the alienation of Adivasis from the forest, land, and their displacements. To correct these historical mistakes, the Government of India changed the forest policies in 1988 and enacted the Forest Rights Act 2006. The issues pertaining to their implementation are discussed in Section IV. The Socio-Economic status, livelihood, and the role of Governmental and Non-Governmental Organisations are discussed in Section V. Finally, Section VI summarises the overall discussion and brings out important policy issues related to the development of the Adivasi community.

II

SCHEDULED TRIBES (STS) IN INDIA: IDENTITY AND ETHNO-REGIONAL POLITICS

There are 705 communities officially classified as scheduled tribes popularly known as Adivasi. They are known by various names like Adivasi, Indigenous Communities, Aborigines, Janjati, Girijans, etc. Seeking to answer, 'who are tribes.' The focus is generally on these communities and the way they differ from caste or peasant communities. However, as per the constitution, Article 366 (25) defines the STs are those communities who are scheduled under Article 342, while Article 342 defines a scheduled tribe as a community that has been notified by the President of

India. The Constitution does not specify the methodology to differentiate between tribes and non-tribes. However, based on the various committees constituted² from time to time for the purpose, tribes are differentiated on the basis of their (i) way of living; (ii) social customs, religion, and religious practices; (iii) dialect, and (iv) educational and economic status (see for details Sundar, 2016). Though administratively classified as ST, there are a lot of variations among them based on their region of living and other characteristics and also as stated above by different terminology and names. For example, only Northeast Tribes like to be called scheduled tribes (ST). Most scheduled tribes live in the Central Indian Belt- from the West Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, to the East in West Bengal, Odisha, and Jharkhand and are popularly called Adivasi. These constitute about 73 per cent of the total Adivasi population in the country. The remaining live in the deep south (Nilgiris Hills) or in North -Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh or the small island of Andaman and Nicobar, Lakshadweep and Dadra and Nagar Haveli (see Table 1). So only Northeast tribal communities (12 per cent) preferred to be called scheduled tribes, the remaining are known as Adivasi, Janjati, etc. In fact, they consider calling them as scheduled tribe means relegating them with backwardness and disassociating them with their cultural roots. The aborigines and indigenous people are of recent origin and imposed by western institutions and writers. Indian writers like André Beteille (1998) and Roy (1996) reject such claims.

There are two arguments for invoking indigeneity (i)The community should be the original settler in the area and (ii) exploitation of Adivasi communities by the dominant class/peasant and their cultural differences. Often in Indian cases, the original settler's aspect is not emphasised. Since it is difficult to trace who is the original settler in the Indian context. Moreover, the term "indigenous people" neither is helpful as an analytical tool nor as a basis for policy interventions (Bowen, 2000). It merely adds to ethnic polarization. This creates obstacles in democratic decentralized distributed governance. The present conflict in Manipur is a case in point. Kukis and Meitis -both claim that they are original settlers. Northeast India for example is more complex and it may be difficult to produce separate viable homelands for each ethnic group. However, more recent historical work has found that the Adivasi groups were not and may not be the original settlers in some of the area where they are found now and many of them have migrated from the neighboring areas and were preceded by others, some even had well-developed kingdoms and were and are amalgams of different ethnic groups (See for details Sundar, 2016).

As stated earlier 73 per cent of Adivasi communities live in the Central Indian Belt of Rajasthan in the west-to-West Bengal in the East, which is also not free from ethno-regional politics. The struggle for separate Adivasi states and restoration of Adivasi economy dates back more than a hundred years. There are four arguments for ethno-regional politics (Corbridge, 2004). Firstly, the argument of sons of soil theory argues that the Adivasi land needs to be restored to them because they were the first clearers of land and have been displaced by the colonial and post-colonial independent

TABLE 1: STATE/UT WISE OVERALL POPULATION, ST POPULATION, PERCENTAGE OF STS IN INDIA/STATE TO TOTAL POPULATION OF INDIA/STATE AND PERCENTAGE OF STS IN THE STATE TO TOTAL ST POPULATION¹ AS PER 2011 CENSUS

Region	India/State	Total Population (in Lakhs)	ST (Adivasi) Population (in Lakhs)	% (Adivasis) in India/State to total Population of India/State	% STs (Adivasis) in the State to total ST Population in India	Sex_ratio	
						Overall India ²	Among tribes ³
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	India	12108.55	1045.46	8.6	-	943	990
	Gujarat	604.4	89.17	14.8	8.5	919	981
	Maharashtra	1123.74	105.1	9.4	10.1	929	977
	Rajasthan	685.48	92.39	13.5	8.8	928	948
	Madhya Pradesh	726.27	153.17	21.1	14.7	931	984
Central India Belt – West to East	Chhattisgarh	255.45	78.23	30.6	7.5	991	1020
	Jharkhand	329.88	86.45	26.2	8.3	948	1003
	Odisha	419.74	95.91	22.8	9.2	978	1029
	West Bengal	912.76	52.97	5.8	5.1	950	999
	Bihar	1040.99	13.37	1.3	1.3	918	958
	Sub Total	6098.71	766.76	12.57	73.34	944	989
	Haryana	253.51	NST ⁴	NA	NA	879	NA
	Himachal Pradesh	68.65	3.92	5.7	0.4	972	999
North West	Punjab	277.43	NST	NA	NA	895	NA
	Delhi	168.88	NST	NA	NA	868	NA
	Uttarakhand	100.86	2.92	2.9	0.3	963	963
	Uttar Pradesh	1998.12	11.34	0.6	1.1	912	952
	Sub Total	2866.45	18.18	0.63	1.74	915	971
	Arunachal Pradesh	13.84	9.52	68.8	0.9	938	1032
North East	Assam	312.06	38.84	12.4	3.7	958	985
	Manipur	28.56	11.67	40.9	1.1	985	984
	Meghalaya	29.67	25.56	86.1	2.4	989	1013
	Mizoram	10.97	10.36	94.4	1.0	976	1007
	Nagaland	19.79	17.11	86.5	1.6	931	976
	Tripura	36.74	11.67	31.8	1.1	960	983
	Sikkim	6.11	2.06	33.8	0.2	890	960
	Sub Total	457.74	126.79	27.7	12.13	953	993
	Andhra Pradesh	493.87	26.31	5.3	2.5	993	993
South	Karnataka	610.95	42.49	7.0	4.1	973	990
	Goa	14.54	1.49	10.2	0.1	973	1046
	Tamil Nadu	721.47	7.95	1.1	0.8	996	981
	Telangana	351.94	32.87	9.3	3.1	DNA	DNA
	Kerala	334.06	4.87	1.5	0.5	1084	1035
	Sub Total	2526.88	115.96	4.59	11.09	1004	1009
	Lakshadweep	0.64	0.61	94.8	0.1	946	1003
	Puducherry	12.48	NST ⁴	NA	NA	1037	NA
	Chandigarh	10.55	NST ⁴	NA	NA	818	NA
	Daman & Diu	2.43	0.15	6.3	0.0	618	977
Union Territory	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	3.44	1.79	52.0	0.2	774	1010
	J&K	125.41	14.93	11.9	1.4	889	924
	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	3.81	0.29	7.5	0.0	876	937
	Sub Total	158.76	17.77	11.19	1.70	745	970.2

Source: 1: <https://tribal.nic.in/downloads/Statistics/Statistics8518.pdf>; 2: <https://www.census2011.co.in/sexratio.php>; 3: <https://www.census2011.co.in/scheduled-tribes.php>. Note: NST: No Scheduled Tribe Community; NA: Not Applicable; DNA: Data Not Available.

Indian Government policies. By controlling means of production, they do not have to compete with the non-Adivasi, nor do they need to suffer the humiliation of being subservient to outsiders generally known as 'dikus' among the Adivasi. Secondly, the rise of ethno-regional politics in different tribal areas is due to the legacy of the government support provided to these regions and it is being used by individuals and groups to advance their interests at the expense of the wider needs of the community. Thirdly, it is argued that the state (both central and state governments) purposely keeps these areas underdeveloped in the sense that the resources extracted from the tribal areas are much higher than the funds provided for the welfare of Adivasi communities (Jones, 1978). Fourth, the state maintains the *status quo* and does not remove the power of non-Adivasi traders, money lenders, and other elite rural powerful who exploit the innocent tribals. This argument was also advanced by Elwin. Elwin had observed that the Adivasi group who had been living in close proximity to the 'Hindu caste' and peasant society were poorer and more miserable than those living in the interior areas (Elwin, 1949, cited from Rath, 2006). For this reason, he argued for the isolationist and park-type approach for the tribal communities. Elwin Verrier who was an Anthropological Advisor to the Government of India, considered the relationship between Adivasi and caste/peasant society as exploitative and subservient. The caste was considered organic, and the Adivasi was segmentary. The landholding structure in tribal society is kinship-based and land transfer is limited within kinship. However, the then first Prime Minister Nehru considered that the caste society does not have such a boundary with the Adivasi communities (Rath, 2006). Nehru considered the difference between caste and Adivasi is not subservient and is a matter of settlement at different times in the historical period. He therefore emphasized the integrative approach to development (Rath, 2006). The other Indian sociologists like Srinivas (1944), took recourse to cultural dynamism to counter that every social group, however primitive it might be, had a certain inbuilt potential to adopt a new technology for survival. He argued that the Adivasi communities in India could not be an exception to this generic phenomenon.

Looking back to ethnic identity and politics after the formation of Jharkhand state, Corbridge (2004) questioned ethno-regional politics on the grounds that (i) The funds were allocated to the Adivasi development wide sub-plan areas, where the Adivasi are rarely in majority and (ii) whatever little amount goes to the Adivasi communities is generally appropriated by those who have necessary skills and capabilities to appropriate the benefits and the large masses continue to suffer as before. Furthermore, rapid development and transformation, at least in some areas, have led to the breakdown of old patterns of livelihood and ethnicity leading to class differentiation within the Adivasi community. Thus, the government may find it difficult to change the direction of resource allocation because of political threats from the Adivasi elite who have benefited from such programmes, while the large masses of Adivasi communities continue to remain impoverished.

Furthermore, Table 1 also reveals that only in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland, the tribal communities are in the majority, and these four states are classified under Schedule Six; all other states are put under Schedule Five (Table 1). This is a contentious point, to be classified as a state in scheduled six, the state needs to have 60 percent or more Adivasi community. This was also one of the reasons for demanding the creation of a greater Jharkhand state by merging present Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and part of Odisha. Still, it would be difficult to meet the above requirement. Whether or not this is possible by reconfiguring districts from each of these states to constitute a tribal (Adivasi) configured state is difficult to say but politically it seems difficult given the diverse aspirations and expectations even within the Adivasi communities of these states. Jharkhand statehood movement was anchored in 'Jharkhandi' identity and recently this agenda has been reintroduced in the state politics by demanding separate religious status for 'Sarna' and 1932 land records as the basis for *moolvasi* and reservation of jobs in State Government offices (Kumar 2023). However, to what extent it would benefit large masses of Adivasi community is still a big question.

III

FORESTS AND LAND ALIENATION AND DEVELOPMENT INDUCED DISPLACEMENT

Forest Alienation

The misery of the Adivasi community began with their alienation from the forest and land rights. The Forest Act of 1878 removed centuries of customary rights of people all over India (Pathak, 2002). The act provided an instrument to the Forest Department to classify the forest as they deemed fit. As a result, from time-to-time forest settlement was done in different parts of the country, and the forests were classified as (i) reserved forest, (ii) protected forest, and (iii) village forest. Often the reserved and protected forest boundary reached to the doorsteps of the forest dweller, leading to hardship and shrinking of the available forest resources for the survival and sustenance of the forest-dwelling communities. Baden-Powell the maker of the Forest Act of 1878, recognised the widespread use of forest by the local people but argued that this difficulty had to be surmounted, the local people had no right but in practical terms local people considered themselves using it since time immemorial (Pathak 2002).

In the Indian administration this has led to a debate about Adivasis, as they are portrayed by the forest officials to be the ones responsible for the destruction of forests whereas according to the social scientists, they are the ones to be most affected by the loss of forest and have always been concerned about the environmental protection (See for details Sundar, 2016). The British administrators described the Adivasi communities particularly those living on the hill areas 'as rude' (Pathak, 2002). The British colonial officers were mainly concerned about the supply of timber and therefore forests needed to be conserved and protected. This was evident from the

various scholarly works of environmental historians, that the main concern of the conservation of forests during the British period was to ensure the supply of timber for the expansion of railways (Guha, 1989). The forests thus were treated as government property and all the local use rights were at best-considered privileges and concessions. The forest dwellers were considered as the main culprits for the destruction of the forest.

Unfortunately, this continued even after the independence. As a result, several uprisings and movements took place during the colonial period, and it continued even after India became independent.³ The concern over the deteriorating forest led to the passing of Forest Conservation Act in the year 1980. The Act gave wide-ranging powers to the central government and without their approval forest land could not be diverted to non-forest purposes. The Act provided importance to conservation and environmental protection. The claim over forest use, and the environment received priority over forest dwellers' needs and requirements. Thus, the Adivasi communities living in and around the forest struggled and protests continued, and the forest continued to deteriorate and degrade.

Land Alienation

In addition to the loss of forests due to settlement and reservation, the Adivasi communities' lost control over their landed property and cultivation area. To begin with, many kings locally known as Raja (local rulers during the British period) allocated the Adivasi land to upper and backward caste people who migrated to the forest areas and cleared them for cultivation. They paid a small token tax to these rulers known as *Nazrana*. This system was more prevalent in the erstwhile *zamindari* era (Shankar, 2006). Those who migrated employed the Adivasi people as bonded labourers. At the time of independence, as the *zamindari* system abolition was on the cards, these local rulers parcelled the land under their control and allocated it to those who paid the '*nazrana*'. Thus, depriving the local Adivasi communities of their rights to landed properties, they continued to remain as bonded labourers to these newly emerged migrant landowners. Some favoured Adivasis were also allocated land by these local kings. This altered the relationship of Adivasis' from being owners of the resources to becoming master-servant of the new landowners in the area. Thus, the Adivasis' completely lost the support and existence of the forest and other land resources which were their only means of sustenance (Ballabh and Thomas, 2002, Gadgil and Guha, 1995, Guha, 1989, Shankar, 2006).

After independence, the development of hydroelectric and irrigation projects was high on the agenda. Many of these projects not only displaced the Adivasis and other poor people but also the land in the command areas of the canals was appropriated by the non-Adivasi once their expected productivity was presumed to have increased. A few legislations were passed both during the colonial period and post-independent India, but the local non-Adivasi inhabitants illegally occupied the government and Adivasis land, claiming that these lands were occupied by them much before these laws

were passed (Kumar, 2006). There were different ingenious mechanisms to appropriate Adivasi land by non-Adivasis' which includes among others (i) the transfer of land by an Adivasi to another Adivasi who worked for a non-Adivasi. This amounted to a *benami* transfer, (ii) the non-Adivasi man married to an Adivasi woman for the sake of property and (iii) the non-Adivasi landowners forcibly occupying tribal land on one pretext or other. One common mechanism appears to be that the non-Adivasi first advances the loan to a poor Adivasi farmer at an exorbitant interest rate, once he is unable to repay the loan, his land property would be mortgaged and gradually appropriated by the non-Adivasi owner. Concerned over the exploitation of the Adivasis' by the non-Adivasis tribals, Elwin insisted on a separate approach for the development of tribes: 'leave them alone', 'National Park' or 'isolationist' approach (Elwin 1939). Elwin considered caste and peasant communities are the root cause of Adivasis' exploitation and underdevelopment. G.S.Ghurye however had criticized the National Park approach and countered that the 'Hindus' were responsible for the poverty and misery among the Adivasi. In fact, he argued that individual property rights, the creation of a land market, laws restricting forest use, and exploitative excise policies were the creation of the British. The Landlords, money lenders, and liquor contractors took the lead from these laws and exploited the Adivasi. The Hindus and Adivasi otherwise had lived symbiotically (Ghurye, 1943). Singh (1986) in fact argued that the Adivasis and non-Adivasis' poor peasants both were exploited by the zamindars, moneylenders, and local officials but the movement against these exploitations differed at least in one aspect that the Adivasis were not well integrated, their resistance were numerous, patchy and scattered, making their resistance by and large ineffective.

At the onset of independence, India embarked on rapid industrialisation which requires resources. The states like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Odisha have huge amounts of mineral resources like iron ore, coal etc. (see Ballabh and Batra, 2015). These resources were required for the industrial development. At the same time, the Adivasi community protested for the separation and constitution of separate states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, and Odisha where Adivasi communities were relatively in higher number. In November 2000, the states of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh were divided into two separate states each, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh, for the Adivasi people but the Adivasis' do not constitute the majority in either of them. Both these states are classified in the fifth schedule state (Ghose, 2021). Even after bifurcation, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh continue to pursue the path of rapid industrial development. The successive state governments in the newly formed states, considered the land as a 'pure financial asset' and a large majority of tribes are unable to use the land for economic development. Hence the dominant paradigm of state led development is that these Adivasi communities need to be motivated to use land more productively. It is also argued that agriculture represents a backward economy and industrialisation would bring prosperity to the state and to the Adivasi communities. Thus, the conflict between the Adivasi communities, state, and corporations looking to

acquire the land and mineral resources continues (Pingali, 2023). The issues related to the community led alternative development paradigm and concern about the displacement rehabilitation for justice, equity, and welfare of Adivasi communities continue to occupy the subservient space.

Developmental Induced Displacement

The actual number of people displaced as a consequence of the various development projects like hydroelectric and irrigation, mines, super-thermal and nuclear-power plants, industrial complexes, etc. have been quite controversial and hence these data are not collected in a systematic manner. The conservative estimates have however suggested that a minimum of 60 million are Displaced Persons or Project –Affected Persons (DP/PAP). Among the different states a maximum of 7.5 million people has been displaced in West Bengal followed by Andhra Pradesh 5 million; in Gujarat 4.2 million; in Jharkhand and Orissa 3 million each; in Assam 2 million and in Kerala about 1 million and so on. The Centre for Culture and Development (Gujarat) points out that about one-third of the DPs by planned development projects have been resettled in a planned manner. For the other two-thirds, there is no evidence of any organized resettlement. For instance, in Orissa, 35.27 per cent of the DPs from 1951-95 have been resettled, in Andhra Pradesh, 28.82 per cent and in Goa 33.23 per cent of the 1965-95 DP West Bengal has resettled only about 9 per cent of its 3.7 million DPs (Fernandes *et al.*, 2006: p.92), and in Assam, it was found the signs of resettlement in fewer than 10 projects (Fernandes and Bharali 2006: 98). Of the total displaced households, over 40 per cent are Adivasi and another 20 per cent consist of Dalits and other rural poor who live on and off on common property resources and scarcely 20 per cent have been rehabilitated as per the WGHR report (Nandi, 2012). They have been uprooted from their homes and huts, displaced from their farms, jungles and rivers, and sacrificed at the altar of national interest. These millions bear witness to the destruction of their own lives, livelihoods, and lifestyles.

Many research articles have been published about the plight of displaced and project-affected people (Ahmed and Dutt, 2006; Areeparampil, 2010; Asthana, 2012; Dhru, 2010; Fernandes, 2007; Goyal, 1996; Kabra, 2003; Mishra, 2002; Mohanty, 2011; Negi and Ganguly, 2010; Pandey and Kumar Rout, 2004; Ray, 2000; Sarkar, 2007; Sen, 1995; Sharma and Singh, 2009). Most of these studies have found that the displaced people have suffered unprecedented risks not imagined at the time of implementation of the project. Since the Adivasi communities are affected maximally from these projects, therefore, protests and contestations against any project that involves the displacement of people have become common and they are named as anti-development.

Many scholars and activists have questioned the developmental projects that displace, marginalise, and impoverish thousands of poor. A consensus seems to have emerged that development-induced displacement causes considerable social, economic, and cultural disruption and losses to both individuals and communities

(Dreze *et al.*, 1997; Dwivedi, 1999; Parasuram, 1993; Thukral, 1992; Scudder, 1993; Oliver-Smith, 1991; World Commission on Dams, 2000). Michael Cernea argued that the onset of impoverishment can be represented through a model of eight interlinked potential risks intrinsic to displacement: landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalization, food insecurity, increased morbidity and mortality, loss of access to common property, and social integration. The forced displacement and being ousted from one's land and habitat carries with it the risk of becoming poorer than before (Cernea, 2000). In addition, Muggah (2000) and Downing (2002) add loss of access to community services and violation of human rights to the model.

In the case of Adivasis', the experience of displacement is more monstrous. It all begins with landlessness and slowly turns into joblessness, loss of income, lack of access to healthcare, and to other forms of deprivation, it forces the parents even to pull school-going children out of it. In most cases, impoverishment itself forces the parents to put their children to work full-time to maintain the family. As per studies, 49 per cent of the displaced or deprived families in West Bengal and 56 per cent in Assam (Fernandes and Bharali, 2006: pp.125-126) have pulled their children out of school to turn them into child labourers. The Adivasis' encounter tremendous odds in dealing with the market economy. Their unfamiliarity with modern technology and skills coupled with official indifference to their entry into the mainstream economy, pushes most of them into conditions of servility and bondage. As stated above, access to work declines after the project alienates the land; if the project gives jobs, it goes almost exclusively to men considered heads of families and there is gender bias in job provisions. If they are rehabilitated, land is allotted to men. So, the domestic power passes fully to the man and from him to his son (Thekkekara, 1993: 92). As a result of displacement, joblessness is higher among women than men. Most of the rehabilitation policies provide a job per family or self-employment. Besides one job per family is not an alternative because after land alienation the remaining members do not have resources for self-employment. So, women from the families that are excluded are bound to be doubly marginalised. The woman shifts to being a housewife and depending on the man's single salary who spends the maximum part of his salary on alcohol. One study reported that out of 700 persons from 13 projects who were interviewed in Andhra Pradesh, monetary income had improved in less than 30 cases. It deteriorated in the remaining cases, at times by more than 80 per cent (Ray, 2000). It has also been argued that even when monetary income rises, the lifestyle of the displaced people does not necessarily improve. Some of them who measure the change through the improvement of monetary income ignore the fact that before displacement a large number of the DPs belonged to the non-monetized and many of these communities sustained themselves on the Common Property Resources (CPRs) or by rendering community services to the village or as agricultural labourers. Their lost livelihood is not compensated or replaced. So even when monetary income rises after displacement, they tend to become insolvent because the CPRs and other sources of their non-monetised livelihood are not replaced. Likewise, a study of the 28000

families to be displaced by the proposed Polavarem dam in Andhra Pradesh shows that the cost-benefit analysis is limited to not more than 20 per cent of their livelihood and the rest is ignored (Maheshwari, 2006).

People and forest traditionally had a symbiotic relationship. People use to protect forests and maintain good ecology because from the forests they used to collect everything they needed- food, fuel, fodder, rope, gum, and minor forest produces for their sustenance. In times of scarcity and failure of rains etc., they used to turn to the forest, ponds, etc. for their survival. However, when they are displaced, they live like migrant coolies and on the fringes of modern developed cities (Gadgil and Guha, 1995), where the market would be full of commodities, but they do not have money to purchase anything from it. Thus, the alienation from the forest land of the Adivasi communities which began during the colonial period continues even today in the name of development. In order to compete in the globalised world, one needs to have competitive advantages, this requires cheaper resources, and in the process the poor get more marginalized. This may lead to higher return to capital but not with an associated increase in real wages and employment (Bhaduri, 2007). Therefore, the Adivasi communities continue to suffer, and their struggle are seen at three levels (i) policy making where the Adivasis' and their leader continue to demand pro-community policies, (ii) politics associated with the policy implementation where the interpretation of the rule and laws differ and (iii) the day today politics associated with survival and sustenance of the community. Within this multilayered political game, the community continues to struggle for survival. The Adivasi movements and uprising were, in fact, tailored towards secure rights over forest and land tenure.

IV

CORRECTING THE HISTORICAL MISTAKE: INVOLVING ST'S IN FOREST PROTECTION

The introduction of the New Forest Policy 1988 and enactment of the Forest Right Act 2006 are watersheds as far as Adivasi and forest-dwelling communities are considered. The Forest Policy 1988 envisages the involvement of the local community in forest protection. The Forest Right Act 2006 goes one step further to recognize the rights of the forest-dwelling communities as their property, if cultivated by them in and around the forest areas. The issues and achievements of functioning of these two programs are discussed in this section.

Joint Forest Management

The Government of India introduced the concept of Joint Forest Management which paved the way to involve the forest-dwelling communities in the protection and management of forest resources. Among the several provisions, the order issued by the Government also agrees to share a certain proportion of final timber sales revenue with the forest-dwelling communities. Besides the communities will have rights over the minor forest produce in their jurisdictions.

Joint Forest Management program was suggested by the Government of India (GOI) as a means to protect and conserve the forest and its produce, which had depleted over the years due to increased use of fuel-wood, fodder and timber; allotment of forest land to non-forest use by the government without any provision for afforestation and environmental safeguard; and looking at forest only as a source of revenue generation (MoEF, GOI 1988). Under the JFM program the state forest department was asked to support the local forest-dwelling and forest fringe communities in protecting and managing the forest and share the costs and benefits from the forest with them. Under the program, JFM communities protect and manage the nearby forests, guided by the locally made byelaws and micro plans. Main benefit of the JFM is that the communities have direct control over the use and sale of most Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP); share the income from timber; and other intangible benefits from local ecosystems services- like water recharge, pollination, wildlife habitat etc. (JFM handbook, MoEF).

Table 2 shows the state-wise number of JFM committees and forest area under the JFM program in 2011. It can be seen from Table 2 that there is a total of 118213 JFM communities in India covering 22938814 hectares of forest land across different states. The Central belt having the most forest cover has the highest number of JFM committees, 71633, covering an area of 17661292 hectares, with Madhya Pradesh having the highest, that is 15228 followed by 12665 in Maharashtra and 12494 in Odisha. The composition of committee members based on caste shows that in case of all India, 50 percent of the members belonged to the general category, 18 percent to SCs and 32 percent to Adivasi. However, this ratio varies from state to state. In case of Madhya Pradesh the composition is 38 percent general households, 15 percent SC households and 47 percent Adivasi households. Similarly, in case of Maharashtra 67 percent are general households, 13 percent SC households and 20 percent Adivasi households. In the north-western India, Uttarakhand has the greatest number of JFM committees 12738, covering 564221 hectares of forest land (Table 2). This is because all old van Panchayat have been brought under JFM. Here, 80 percent of families belong to the general category, 17 percent are SC and 3 percent are Adivasi. In north-east, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh have the highest number of JFM committees, 1184 and 1013 covering an area of 52499 and 100377 hectares respectively. In Arunachal Pradesh, all the families belong to Adivasi category. In South, Andhra Pradesh has the most JFM committees, that is, 7718, covering an area of 1519000 hectares, consisting of 34 percent general category households, 27 per cent SC households, and 38 per cent Adivasi households. Amongst all the states, North-eastern states, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura, and Nagaland, and states in the central belt, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan have the highest percentage of Adivasi households in the JFM committees (see Table 2). This is not surprising since Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland belong to scheduled VI states and the majority population is Adivasis’.

TABLE 2: STATE-WISE NUMBER OF JFM COMMITTEES AND FOREST AREA UNDER JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT (JFM) IN INDIA – 2011

Region	India/State	JFM committees	Area under JFM (in hectare)	Number of Families Involved			Total
				General	Scheduled Caste (SC)	Adivasi (ST)	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	India	118213	22938814	7228301 (50)	2597604 (18)	4692314 (32)	14518219 (100)
	Gujarat	3067	414151	147302 (35)	29068 (7)	240662 (58)	417032 (100)
	Maharashtra	12665	2403344	1820640 (67)	358097 (13)	529860 (20)	2708597 (100)
Central India Belt – West to East	Rajasthan	5316	858614	238015 (42)	73802 (13)	259234 (45)	571051 (100)
	Madhya Pradesh	15228	6687390	645000 (38)	255000 (15)	800000 (47)	1700000 (100)
	Chhattisgarh	7887	3319000	313000 (28)	190000 (17)	614000 (55)	1117000 (100)
	Jharkhand	9926	1721700	236388 (55)	64469 (15)	128939 (30)	429796 (100)
	Odisha	12494	114676	726102 (44)	271139 (17)	645741 (39)	1642982 (100)
	West Bengal	4368	646084	225309 (45)	159425 (32)	120415 (24)	505149 (100)
	Bihar	682	462333	92606 (43)	80586 (38)	39482 (19)	211674 (100)
	Sub Total	71633	17661292	4443362 (48)	1481586 (16)	3378333 (36)	9303281 (100)
	Haryana	2487	41188	53026 (80)	13010 (20)	-	66036 (100)
	Himachal Pradesh	1023	205056	190000 (72)	65000 (25)	8024 (3)	263024 (100)
North West	Punjab	1224	178333	70696 (77)	21140 (23)	14 (0)	91850 (100)
	Uttarakhand	12738	564221	501000 (80)	110000 (17)	18000 (3)	629000 (100)
	Uttar Pradesh	3426	183393	450251 (64)	241689 (34)	14110 (2)	706050 (100)
	Sub Total	20398	1172191	1264973 (72)	450839 (26)	40148 (2)	1755960 (100)
	Arunachal Pradesh	1013	100377	-	-	33048 (100)	33048 (100)
	Assam	1184	52499	148074 (50)	27392 (9)	119368 (41)	294834 (100)
	Manipur	665	166767	7884 (33)	132 (1)	16086 (67)	24102 (100)
	Meghalaya	285	17245	-	-	39210 (100)	39210 (100)
	Mizoram	613	55990	-	57 (0)	80628 (100)	80685 (100)
North East	Nagaland	951	42929	-	-	159587 (100)	159587 (100)
	Tripura	920	241138	19561 (25)	14643 (18)	45241 (57)	79445 (100)
	Sikkim	219	88518	29000 (63)	-	17000 (37)	46000 (100)
	Sub Total	5850	765463	204519 (27)	42224 (6)	510168 (67)	756911 (100)

TABLE 2 (CONCLD.)

Region (1)	India/State (2)	JFM committees (3)	Area under JFM (in hectare) (4)	Number of Families Involved			
				General (5)	Scheduled Caste (SC) (6)	Adivasi (ST) (7)	Total (8)
South	Andhra	7718	1519000	492000	395000	551000	1438000
	Pradesh			(34)	(27)	(38)	(100)
	Karnataka	3848	808020	185290	55480 (20)	32035	272805
	Goa	26	10000	-	-	336	336 (100)
	Tamil Nadu	3487	756446	354002	98298 (20)	29969	482269
	Kerala	576	207404	47407	9708 (12)	21386	78501
	Sub Total	15655	3300870	1078699	558486	634726	2271911
Union Territory	J&K	4173	38736	236388	64469 (15)	128939	429796
	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	4	262	360 (100)	-	-	360 (100)
	Sub Total	4177	38998	236748	64469 (15)	128939	430156
				(55)	(30)	(100)	(100)

Sources: 1: <https://indiastat.com/table/others/selected-state-wise-number-jfm-committees-forest-a/20790>. 2. For the State of Telangana and the Union Territories (except J&K and Andaman & Nicobar Islands), there are no JFM Committees formed.

The JFM programme was launched in order to protect the forests and improve the forest cover by involving the local communities living in that area for long and were dependent on it for their livelihood. Many studies have found that the JFM program did have positive effects on the forests. According to a paper by Prasad and Kant, 2003, the involvement of communities in forest management has improved the health and natural regeneration of the forests; number of trees per hectare have increased from 153 plants/ha before JFM, to 900 plants/ha after 6 years of JFM in the jurisdiction of Badwani JFM committee, Madhya Pradesh; an improvement in forest density was seen from 0.3 to 0.6 in the forest managed by Khumi Forest Protection Committee, Harda Forest Division; the dependence of forest-dwelling communities on NTFPs has reduced in many areas due to improvement of irrigation facility, soil and water conservation measures and introduction of high yielding variety seeds; many households have shifted to cultivating high value crops like soyabean, gram, wheat etc. instead of the low value crops like

Kodo, kutki, etc.; formation of JFM committees has led to organised sale of NTFPs by eliminating the middle-men, leading to more income in the hands of the forest dwellers; the JFM committees have had a positive social impact as well, the participation of women and other marginalised communities in the decision-making process has empowered them and states like Himachal Pradesh, Orissa, Madhya

Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have provisions for equal representation of men and women in the committee. A study by Lal *et al.* 1994, found that JFM led to an improvement of forest health in Joypur and Kotulpur ranges in Bankura North Forest Division of West Bengal. Sarker and Das, 2008, observed that with the involvement of the forest fringe communities in the protection, regeneration, and development planning of forest resources, have not only improved the income of these communities but also led to an increase in revenue of the state Government. Bhattacharya *et al.* 2010, also found that JFM led to improved natural regeneration, reduced biotic pressure, better water regime and reduced forest offences.

Even though the above studies point out that JFM program has improved the otherwise deteriorating forest condition before its implementation. There are still many issues in the JFM program that needs to be addressed for better implementation of the program to maximise its benefit to the forest dwellers. According to Bhattacharya *et al.*, 2010, in some cases the JFM programmes are so much incentive driven that people are more interested in the income generation activity rather than forestry aspect and are interested in protecting the forest only for monetary benefits; the institutional arrangements under the JFM program give more power to local forest department staff and president of JFM committees, who have an unspoken understanding with each other in terms of managing the funds, decision-making, and distribution of benefits; there is no proper demarcation of the forest patches protected by a particular JFM committee which leads to conflict over forest use rights and sharing of usufructs; there is no legal credibility for the memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the forest department and local community giving more power to the state forest departments. The study by Biswas and Rai, 2021 observed that institutionalisation of the JFM program has not yet materialised; there is no voluntary participation from the village people in the overall developmental activities without regular intervention from different agencies; there is no proper monitoring and evaluation mechanism in order to get regular feedback so as to ensure remedial measures in between. Murali *et al.*, 2003, points out that the major issue with JFM program is that it is not brought under a legal framework, this gives more power to the Forest Departments, they have the rights to dissolve a forest protection committee (FPC) as and when they want but they are not legally bound to fulfil their commitment under JFM program; there is no fixed criterion for becoming a member of the FPC, for example in Gujarat a FPC cannot be formed till 60% of the village families are willing to join, in Madhya Pradesh a women and men from each household from 5km radius of degraded forest areas and fringe villages can become members, in Nagaland only land owning families can become members of the FPC, this creates a problem in terms of how to share the benefits with the non-members?; there are no guidelines or norms in order to ensure equality in sharing of benefits from forest produces like NTFPS, honey wax, cashew, Sal seeds, tendu leaves etc. among the community members, the members are in charge of collecting these forest produce but do not have any right in the sale of it.

The article by Thampuran, 2021 also points out that institutional weakness and gaps in legal provision were the major challenges in JFM. The Adivasi community faces an uphill task to negotiate with the Panchayati Raj institutions and Gram Sabhas. The Gram Sabha and JFM now coexist, and the Gram Sabha has legal rights to protect and manage the forest. Therefore, the JFM committee consisting of Adivasis not only has to negotiate with the Government and Forest officials but also of the people not part of the JFM committee in the Gram Sabha. This puts them in double disadvantages for managing their forest resources.

Overall, thus it may be concluded that the JFM programme has benefited the environment since the forest cover has increased and the forest-dwelling community including the Adivasi communities have also benefitted. But the unequal power between the Forest Department and FPC members are cause of concern and often it was found that the Forest Department officials and FPC heads collude with each other leading to breakdown of larger participation of community members. Another problem is that many NTFP products are nationalized such as Sal seeds, tendu leaves, etc., and therefore the community does not have sales rights and it has to be sold through the Forest Department only leading to various kinds of manipulation. Further, there are many non-nationalized NTFPs for which the FPCs depend on local traders and contractors. They often collude with each other and therefore the FPCs do not get fair price of their products. The disadvantages to the Adivasi communities are disproportionately higher due to their inability to deal with the complexity of administrative power structure.

Forest Right Act, 2006

The demand for a comprehensive law to recognise the pre-existing rights of the Adivasis' and other forest dwellers, over both the cultivated lands and customary forest resources, and empowerment of village assemblies to protect, conserve, and manage such resources (Sarin, 2016) led to the passing of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. According to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA), Government of India, the Scheduled Tribes and Other Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, also known as the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, "*recognizes the rights of the forest-dwelling tribal communities and other traditional forest dwellers to forest resources, on which these communities were dependent for a variety of needs, including livelihood, habitation and other socio-cultural needs.*" The FRA, 2006 includes, Individual rights like self-cultivation and habitat; Community rights such as grazing, fishing and access to water bodies; Habitat rights for particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs); Traditional and seasonal resource utilization of Nomadic and Pastoral community members, biodiversity access; Community right to traditional knowledge and intellectual property, acknowledgment of traditional customary rights; Right to defend, regrow, preserve, and manage community forest resources for sustainable usage; and Right to

allocation of forest land for development purpose to fulfil basic infrastructural needs of the community (MoTA, Governmentt. of India). The FRA along with the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Settlement Act, 2013 protect the Adivasi population from eviction without rehabilitation and settlement.

The main objective of the FRA, 2006 are (MoTA, Government. of India): (i) To correct the historical injustice done to the forest-dwelling communities; (ii) To guarantee land tenure, livelihood and food security of the forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers; and (iii) To support the conservation regime of the forests by including the responsibilities and authority on Forest Rights holders for sustainable use, conservation of biodiversity and maintenance of ecological balance.

Though the FRA was passed in the year 2006 by the parliament, it was implemented only in 2008 all over India. Even after more than 15 years of enactment of this ACT, its implementation has been very poor. Many Adivasi communities have still not been granted their traditional rights over the forests, be it individual or community. In order to file a claim under FRA, the individual or community has to go through a three-tier approval system. First, the claim has to be filed at the gram Sabha level, after which it is passed to the sub-divisional level committee (SDLC) and then to the district level committee (DLC), both headed by government officials (Tripathi, 2022). In case of incomplete paperwork or missing documents, the SDLC has the authority to send back the claim. However, the legal authority to accept or reject a claim is with the DLC. Also, according to the FRA, rejections should be conveyed to the claimant without any ambiguity, after which the claimant can re-appeal for it within 60 days of receiving the rejected claim (Tripathi, 2022).

Table 3 below gives the State-wise number of Claims received and Distribution of title deeds under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 as on March 2022. It can be seen from Table 3 that, of the total claims made by both individuals as well as community, in most states only around 50 percent title deeds were distributed. The central belt had the highest number of deeds distributed with the highest number being by Odisha, which distributed 72 per cent of individual claims, 50 per cent of community claims and overall 71 per cent of total claims received. In this region, West Bengal has the lowest, 31.76 per cent total title deeds distribution. The north region consisting of states Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh have the least title deeds distribution of only 5.4, 2.77 and 20.17 per cent respectively of the total claims received by the committees. The state of Tripura in the Northeast region has the highest title deeds distribution of 64 per cent in total and 64 per cent and 20 per cent for individual and community respectively. In the south, Andhra Pradesh, followed by Kerala and Telangana had the highest title deeds distributed of the total claims received, that is 76.67, 60.41 and 47.12 per cent respectively. Goa and Karnataka had the least, 1.47 and 5.44 per cent total title deeds distributed under the FRA in the south. Though, in

TABLE 3: STATE-WISE NUMBER OF CLAIMS RECEIVED AND TITLES DISTRIBUTED UNDER SCHEDULED TRIBE AND OTHER TRADITIONAL FOREST DWELLERS (RECOGNITION OF FOREST RIGHTS) ACT, 2006 IN INDIA (AS ON 31.03.2022)

Region (1)	India/State (2)	No. of Claims Received ¹			Extent of Forest Land for which Titles Distributed (in Acres) ²		
		Individual (3)	Community (4)	Total (5)	Individual (6)	Community (7)	Total (8)
	India	4260247 (50.05)	168818 (60.46)	4429065 (50.45)	4547165	11365528	15912693
	Gujarat	182869 (50.14)	7187 (63.96)	190056 (50.66)	156925	1236490	1393415
Central India Belt – West to East	Maharashtra	362679 (45.50)	12037 (58.85)	374716 (45.93)	392929	2736661	3129589
	Rajasthan	85243 (52.95)	2016 (17.91)	87259 (52.14)	63788	12290	76078
	Madhya Pradesh	585326 (45.55)	42187 (66.31)	627513 (46.94)	902751	1463614	2366365
	Chhattisgarh	866955 (51.40)	50806 (89.17)	917716 (53.49)	898010	473047	5681057
	Jharkhand	107032 (55.93)	3724 (56.50)	110756 (55.95)	153396	103759	257155
	Odisha	627988 (72.00)	15282 (49.89)	643280 (71.48)	666089	337043	1003132
	West Bengal	131962 (33.68)	10119 (6.78)	142081 (31.76)	21014	572	21586
	Sub Total	2950064 (53.24)	143358 (66.78)	3093422 (53.86)			
	Himachal Pradesh	2746 (4.70)	275 (12.73)	3021 (5.43)	6	4742	4748
North West	Uttarakhand	3587 (5.13)	3091 (0.03)	6678 (2.77)	0	0	0
	Uttar Pradesh	92577 (19.50)	1162 (74.10)	93739 (20.17)	19190	120776	139966
	Sub Total	98910 (18.56)	4528 (19.81)	103438 (18.62)			
	Assam	148965 (38.48)	6046 (24.43)	155011 (37.93)	NA/NR	NA/NR	NA/NR
North East	Tripura	200696 (63.74)	277 (19.86)	200973 (63.68)	460182	91	460274
	Sub Total	349661 (52.98)	6263 (24.23)	355984 (52.47)			
	Andhra Pradesh	274078 (76.92)	3294 (55.31)	277372 (76.67)	436606	526454	963060
	Karnataka	288357 (5.09)	5938 (22.62)	294295 (5.44)	19989	36340	56329
South	Goa	9758 (1.41)	378 (2.91)	10136 (1.47)	299	17	316
	Tamil Nadu	33755 (24.13)	1082 (41.59)	34837 (24.67)	9626	NA/NR	9626
	Telangana	204176 (47.72)	2808 (3.63)	206984 (47.12)	310916	3631	314547
	Kerala	43466 (61.53)	1109 (16.50)	44575 (60.41)	35448.94	0	35449
	Sub Total	853590 (41.94)	14609 (26.77)	868199 (41.68)			

Source: 1: <https://indiastat.com/table/others/selected-state-wise-number-claims-received-title-/1429448>.

Notes: 1: Figure in the parenthesis is the percentage title distributed. 2: Numbers are rounded off to the nearest full number. 3: NA/NR means not available or not reported. 4: For the States of Bihar, Haryana, Punjab, Northeast (except Assam and Tripura), and the Union Territories, there were no claims received and title deeds distributed under Scheduled Tribe and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 in India.

total Andhra Pradesh had the highest percentage of claims distributed among all the state in this region, the extent of forest land for which title deeds were distributed was only 9,63,060 acres. Chhattisgarh had the highest extent of forest land for which the titles were distributed followed by Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Odisha, that is, 56,81,057, 31,29,589, 13,93,415 and 10,03,132 acres respectively.

Issues with Implementation of FRA:

Proper implementation of FRA is important for the well-being of the people living in these areas to realise the potential and opportunity created by the Act. It has potential to improve the social status of the Adivasi community and other forest dwellers, get access to various government schemes like Indira Awas Yojana, assistance for school going children, BPL cards, etc. It will also make it easy for these households to get caste, tribe, and residential certificates from government offices without any hassle.

Even after so many years the implementation of FRA has been far from satisfactory due the lack of awareness on the parts of the beneficiaries and the officials who are supposed to implement it on ground-level (Bandi, 2016). The beneficiaries are not aware about the proper procedure to apply for their rights, many are not aware of the provisions in the Act and hence many potential beneficiaries are excluded from it (Sarap et. al., 2016, Bandi, 2016). According to Vajpeyi and Rathore, 2020, the district of Kinnaur has the highest number of claims in the state of Himachal Pradesh, but not a single individual or community title deed has been awarded. This is mainly due to the bureaucracy and their knowledge and understanding on the term Adivasi. They do not acknowledge that the people in the district belong to the Adivasi communities or as forest dwellers. Vajpeyi and Rathore, 2020 argue that lack of training and awareness programs amongst the state officials is the reason for such thinking of the people incharge; also, many offices still have the old copy of the act and not the amended versions, therefore the officials do not recognise and acknowledge the various clarifications, crucial rules, and guidelines issued by the MoTA. Various studies have found that in many instances, the individual forest rights (IFR) are rejected on vague reasons and insignificant errors made by the claimant at the time of filing them (Kumar, 2020; Sarap et al., 2013; Bandi, 2013; Vajpeyi and Rathore, 2020). Another issue with the implementation of FRA is, the representation of women in the Forest Right Committees, in many states there is no or negligible representation, even though women contribute the most in the Adivasis' economy through minor forest produce. Many studies have found that under the FRA, community claims have been very less and it has become a means of granting forestland to individuals (Bandi, 2013; Sarap et. al, 2013; Kumar, 2020). According to Bandi, 2013 the reasons for low community claims was that the forest departments threatened the communities, that they will lose their joint management funds if they claimed rights on forest resources. Another issue

with the implementation of FRA is that the SDLC should support the individuals as well as the community at the time of filing the claims, which is missing in many cases.

According to a study by Singh, 2019 in Rawas and Banspattar Gram Panchayat of Kanker district, at the time of filing community forest rights claims, villagers requested the SLDC to help them with the filing of claims. But the SLDC committee was missing from claim verification in Rawas. The SLDC is also supposed to provide forest and revenue map to gram panchayat but Singh, 2019 found the document missing from the application form for filing claims. Singh, 2019 also found that a few families in Mandbhari village in the year 2015 were booked by the forest department for illegally cultivating the forest land, even though these families had been cultivating there before the enactment of the FRA and they had also filed their claims for individual forest rights. This led to a legal battle between the two, in which the forest department could not prove that these families were illegally cultivating the forest land.

The above instances indicate that the implementation of FRA 2006 is far from satisfactory because the bureaucracy is not interested in implementing it in letter and in spirit. The recent amendment to the Forest (Conservation) Act 2023 further compounds the problem. The amended act recognizes the role of forest in the improvement of forest-dwelling communities, but it has failed to reconcile it with FRA 2006. Furthermore, it excludes certain categories of the forest and limits the forest conservation land to forests as (i) declared and notified under the Indian Forest Act 1927 and (ii) Land recorded as forest in the government records. This nullifies the supreme court order, which had directed that 'forest land' would include any area recorded as forest irrespective of its ownership (Punj, 2023). The title of the New Forest (conservation) amendment act is admirable, as it incorporates not only the commitment to conserve but also enrich and augment it, but it fails to recognise the role of forest-dwelling communities in conserving, preserving, and management of forests (Punj, 2023). Thus, in the future serious issues may emerge between the FRA 2006 and FCAA 2023. Furthermore, the FCAA 2023 not only emphasizes on increasing the tree cover but also gives emphasis on providing impetus to economic growth for which infrastructure development is important. Thus, forest land could be acquired if considered important by the Government and the only requirement is that the compensatory afforestation has to be done for the loss of forest cover in any area. Thus, it creates a contradiction in two ways (i) For the loss of forest in Western Ghats, compensatory plantation may be carried out in Rajasthan. How could this protect climate or even forest cover in an area and (ii) How to protect forest dwellers' rights in such a situation and what kind of compensation do they need to be given in order to protect their livelihood. Overall, thus, it may be concluded that the FRA has a lot of potentials to improve the livelihood opportunities for forest-dwelling, particularly in Adivasis,' but the poor implementation of the program prevents its potential from being realized. The poor implementation of the FRA is on the main due to (i) unwillingness of the Forest Department to give up the tile of land, (ii) conflicting laws and programmes without any resource to resolution, (iii) lack of awareness among

beneficiaries, (Adivasis) Gram Sabha and SLDC and DLC about the process and procedure.

v

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS, LIVELIHOOD, AND THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

Having explored the historical aspects of Adivasis' development and the root causes of their misery and poverty, this section is devoted to their current status, livelihood, and the role of Government and Non-Governmental organisations in the upliftment of Adivasi communities. The section begins with the socioeconomic status of Adivasis', which is followed by livelihood issues. The migration is used as one of the strategies to cope with livelihood issues and also it leads to a new form of exploitation of migrants, particularly women migrant. Finally, the section ends with the role of Government and Non-Governmental Organizations in the upliftment of the Adivasi community.

Socio-Economic Status

There are a number of studies which point out that the Adivasi communities lag behind the other social groups. In 2015, we presented a paper at the society's annual conference on the socio-economic transformation of Adivasis' in central India and considered five parameters: (i) percentage of the population living under poverty line, (ii) literacy rate, (iii) infant mortality rate, (iv) under-five mortality rate and (v) life expectancy at birth. On all counts tribal communities were far behind the overall rural population (see for details Ballabh and Batra, 2015). Our attempt to update this data failed since the segregated data for the tribal community is not updated. Only corroborating fact was found that the situation in the Northeast is not different than what we observed for the central Indian belt. However, in absolute terms, the Adivasi communities of the Northeast appear to be somewhat better than those of the Central Belt or elsewhere in terms of education and poverty. Thus, as per the erstwhile Planning Commission in the year 2011-12, the overall poverty ratio in rural India was 25.7 percent whereas this figure for Adivasi communities in the Central Belt was 45.3 per cent and in some states like Odisha and Maharashtra the poverty ratio among the Adivasi community was above 60 per cent. Relative to it the percentage below the poverty line among Adivasi in Arunachal Pradesh was 38.9 per cent; Meghalaya 12.53 per cent; Nagaland 19.9 per cent; Tripura 16.5 per cent; Manipur 38.8 per cent and Assam 44.4 per cent. Similarly, the health facilities and accessibility to health services could be poor in the Adivasi areas and this must be the reason as to why the infant and under-five child mortality is greater and life expectancy at birth is low among the Adivasi communities. As a result, the human development index in the Adivasi areas is weak relative to overall population. This has been demonstrated from the micro-level

study of a few Adivasi and non-Adivasi villages in Jharkhand and Odisha (Ballabh and Batra, 2014).

It was also found that the HDI among Adivasi communities was better in those villages where the population of Adivasi and non-Adivasi was mixed compared to those villages which were solely inhabited by the Adivasi community. Notwithstanding, the findings of the erstwhile Planning Commission in Human Development Report showed that the conditions of the Adivasi community had improved in terms of the human development index (Planning Commission 2011 cited from Srinivasan and Srinivasan, 2017). However, the Adivasi community continues to live at the lowest standard of living when compared to other social groups including scheduled caste communities (Bhagat, 2013). Based on the Census 2011, Bhagat found a clear regional pattern in terms of quality of life in Adivasi areas and their accessibility to concrete roofs, tap water, electricity, toilet facilities and connection with drainage facilities. The number of households that possess TV, telephone, scooter/motorbike, car/van and mobile are relatively lesser in Adivasi communities than even the scheduled caste communities (Bhagat, 2013).

The alienation from the forest and land must be the reason as to why the Adivasi communities could not fare as best as the other communities, more particularly their performance is relatively lower than even the scheduled caste (SC) communities. Over a period the gap between SC and Adivasi vis-a-vis other forward communities, OBC, etc., has increased. Within the marginalized communities, that is, between SC and Adivasi, Adivasi communities are not doing as best as another marginalize communities. The constitution provides protection and positive discrimination to both Adivasi and SC communities through (i) there has been reservation of seats in Parliament and State Legislative; (ii) there is reservation in jobs for these communities in government and semi-government services; and (iii) there have been reserved seats for them in educational institutions particularly institutions of higher learning (Xaxa, 2016). The extent of reservation has been kept in proportion to their population, 15 percent for SC and 7.5 per cent for the Adivasi community. In all the three counts the SC community have been able to better utilise their share of quota than their Adivasi counterparts. The reasons for their differential utilization of the reservation quota should be seen from the historical perspectives, though the SC community was segregated and discriminated by other forward castes, but they were a larger part of the society and their interaction and exposure with the other segments like forward and OBC communities were stronger (Xaxa, 2016). Unlike the SC, the Adivasi communities were isolated and were fighting for their land and forest tenure rights, they were neither integrated in the society nor perhaps they were interested in it. As a result, they were considered outsiders and spoke different dialects and this created several bottlenecks and constraints in realizing the benefits offered to them through reservations in education and services (Xaxa, 2016). There has been debate about the approaches to develop the Adivasi community since Independence. These approaches varied from (i) isolationist and protectionist, (ii) integrative and (iii) assimilative.

However, the political leadership of the Adivasi communities failed to mobilize them and capitalize it for the upliftment of the community. In spite of these failures, some Adivasi communities achieved much more than others in their community, for example the Mina in Rajasthan and Khasis in Mizo's in the Northeastern states.

Livelihood

The livelihood of tribal communities is intricately linked to forest and its land. This is one of the reasons as to why they are contesting alienation from it. Over one and a half centuries of struggle has not resulted in any kind of positive outcome. In order to survive, they followed diversification activities. The extent of diversification and number of activities they pursue varies from region to region. But there are some common features also for example jhooming or shifting cultivation, hunting and gathering, particularly collection of NTFP, cultivation of crops, animal husbandry, wage labour, artisanship, and distress migration to other areas (circular migration). The Jhoom cultivation and the ability of Adivasis' to compete with other peasant communities was highly debated at the time of independence. Jhooming practices from the beginning were considered as unsustainable, primitive, and orthodox, and therefore it was necessary to wean out Adivasis' from these old-age practices (Prasad, 2016). It is not that there were no supporters for Jhoom cultivation, the ecologists and Gandhian activists considered the Jhoom cultivation as time-tested and therefore sustainable. However, today many argue that, the Jhoom cultivation as a practice may not be sustainable as Jhoom cycle is reduced and the pressure of population has increased. Several efforts were made to resettle the Jhumia's in the northeastern states, for example the promotion of rubber plantation in Tripura, but it did not succeed due to market failures and planters did not receive fair price of their products (Prasad, 2016). Traditionally, the land was owned by the community in Adivasi areas and the pressure on land was not much exerted as a result incidence of landlessness was negligible (Maithani, 1991, Marchang, 2016) but over time various factors including the introduction of settled and permanent cultivation have led to intrusion of private ownership of land in the Northeastern region also (Marchang, 2022).

Thus, Jhoom cultivation has declined in terms of the area involved and number of families practicing Jhoom cultivation, excepting some states like Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, and Nagaland, where it is still prominent. Overall, in the NER, around 4550 km² Jhoom cultivation was practiced involving 425 thousand households in 1974 which declined to 3924 km² involving 748 thousand households in 2011. The Jhoom cycle also varies from 3 to 8 years. The NER region has a lower net and total cropped area relative to the total geographical area, but over time it is increasing the cropping intensity and the area irrigated though low is also increasing (Marchang, 2017). Both Central and State Governments in the NER launched several schemes to control the Jhoom cultivation and encourage terrace farming. These measures included soil and water conservation and the creation of irrigation facilities. As stated, several other incentives like rubber plantations and grants of land for settled farming were also given

(Shah, 1992). It was also argued that with improved technology and practices the productivity of Jhoom cultivation may be improved (Shah, 1992). Over time the pressure on land is increasing and therefore the tenurial system in NER region is becoming complex, communal and private ownership is prevalent in almost all states including in Adivasi areas (Marchang, 2017). However, cultivation alone cannot support rural livelihood. The NER continues to be a food deficient region and agricultural income continues to decline. The per capita food production in this region declined between 1990 and 2001 and thereafter it increased only marginally. The condition of Jhoom cultivation continues to be pathetic since productivity is declining due to a reduction in the Jhoom cycle (Marchang, 2017).

In central India, there are three main sources of livelihood income for the Adivasi communities (i) cultivation, (ii) The collection of NTFP, and (iii) wage employment including migration. Some 50 percent of households are engaged in cultivation and 33 per cent in wage employment. The remaining households were found to occupy livestock and non-agricultural enterprises as their primary sources of livelihood (Srinivasan and Srinivasan 2017). However Socio-Economic caste census 2011 had found much lesser proportion of households derived their income from cultivation. Analysing further, Srinivasan and Srinivasan found that, based on the socio-economic caste census data, majority of Adivasi household fall under the lowest income category, less than Rs. 5000 per month.

From the above brief description about Adivasi livelihood in states like Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and Jharkhand, one point is clear that the settled agriculture was not unknown to the Adivasi communities in these regions, as it was believed at the time of Independence. The exception might have been the few tribes who continued to be dependent on hunting and gathering at the time of Elwin Varrier. But the productivity of agriculture was lower, and it continues to be low even today. One of the reasons for this situation is that there has been neglect of the Adivasi agricultural production system by the agricultural universities and institutions. For example, the Adivasi agriculture is characterised as rainfed agriculture, they generally grow the traditional varieties and generally use less purchase inputs and therefore these regions were considered as food deficit regions. Furthermore, they continue to grow millet crops such as jowar, bajra, ragi, etc. having low productivity and they suffer from both demand and supply side constraints. Even for crops like rice the number of varieties released for rainfed upland regions are much lower than the irrigated agriculture (Pandey *et al.*, 2007). It therefore would not be an exaggeration to conclude that Adivasi agriculture was neglected by the ICAR research and extension system.

Shylendra (2023) studied the livelihood of an Adivasi village in Dahod district, Gujarat for over 25 year period and concluded that 'the more things change, the more they remain the same.' This appears to be true not only for his studied village but the Adivasi community in general. He found that due to distress conditions manifested by way mutually reinforcing factors such as the declining ability of rainfed agriculture,

growing population, financial burden, and landlessness, all contributed to distress migration. Since the Adivasi areas are considered deficit region and therefore these regions also lack marketing facilities and are deprived of remunerative prices for their products both for crops as well as NTFPs. NTFPs are one of the major sources of income and livelihood, but the community continues to depend on middlemen, traders and money lenders for its sale (Marothia, 1996) or they have to sell it in the local market. In order to overcome this issue an expert group of the State Planning Commission in Chhattisgarh has recommended that the state should constitute a state-level Price commission for the NTFPs. The primary objective of the commission should be to reduce price spread and ensure remunerative prices for NTFP's collectors, the Adivasi.

Migration As a Coping Strategy

Traditionally it was believed that there is very less landlessness among the tribal communities since the rights over land were based on kinship and were communal. However, owing to alienation from the land and forest and population growth it has not only reduced the land size per family but also increased landlessness among the Adivasi. Therefore, as a coping strategy for survival, the participation of the Adivasi communities not only increased in the casual labour market locally but also, they migrated to distant places in search of livelihood. Available evidence suggests that both the permanent and circulatory migration have increased over a period of time (see Shylendra, 2023 and Badiani and Safir, 2009). In fact, Dashingkar and Farrington, 2009 claim that Indian data on migration are highly underestimated, particularly those related to poor communities like SC and Adivasi and are of temporary and circulatory nature. Thus, the construction industry in and around metropolitan cities, harvesting in agricultural prosperous regions of Maharashtra, etc. survives on the migratory Adivasi workers. It is estimated that some 30-40 per cent of income in these households are earned from migration. Available data at micro-level indicates that, the nature of the employment the migrants face is segmentary, the wages and terms of employment vary and, in some cases, the conditions for migrant labourers is not safe particularly for the women migrant labourers, who may also be subjected to sexual exploitation.

A large majority of scholars believe that the rural-urban migration is just a survival mechanism, it does not contribute much for the migrant in upward social mobility, nor does it contribute to improving the economy of the source area (Bremen *et al.*, 1997). Furthermore, migration also does not help in the equalization of wages and income within and between regions because the returns are higher for people who are more educated and economically better-off and there are costs associated with migration and barriers in terms of information and opportunities. However, there are some evidences available that suggests that, migration helped the rural poor SC and Adivasis' in improving their consumption and in few cases even increased their assets in the source area (See Deshinkar and Farrington, 2009, and case studies included in the volume). Notwithstanding these claims and counter claims, the migrant labourers

particularly Adivasi are considered outsiders in the cities they have migrated to and are believed to create congestion there. Therefore, there is a need to create employment for them in the regions they belong to (Mukherjee, 2001). The rural employment policies are designed to check the mass outflow of labour movement from rural to urban areas, but there is no such policy for Adivasi people living in the forest areas. The Adivasi migrants suffer maximally because of their low education they are absorbed in poorly paid unskilled jobs which only helps migrants to avoid starvation. Many scholars believe that this serves the neoliberal development agenda of keeping low wages without any obligation to provide essential public utilities and services (for details review literature see Shylendra, 2023). As an alternative to migration, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) was launched, and the tribal communities again lagged behind the other social groups in utilising these opportunities and faced discrimination (See Srinivasan and Srinivasan, 2017). However, some non-governmental organisations have utilised these funds to create viable assets and also provide employment to Adivasi communities locally (Ballabh and Batra 2015, 2018).

The Role of Government and Non-Governmental Organisations

The Central and State Governments have launched several programmes for the benefit of the tribal communities. These programmes are implemented by the State Governments involving village Panchayats and are monitored by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. For this, all scheduled areas have guaranteed grants from the Central Government (Article 271(1)). However, the utilisation of these funds is poor and varies from state to state (Srinivasan and Srinivasan, 2017). Moreover, whatever amounts are spent are either appropriated by the elite section of the tribal communities or by other communities (Corbridge, 2004). The unutilised funds are either returned to the Central Government or diverted to other expenditures. Some states like Andhra Pradesh have created legislation for the utilisation of the funds allocated. It is reported that the Central and States Governments have increased the funds allocated but utilisation continues to be poor. The High-level Committee on socio-economic, Health, and Education status has identified the following reasons for the poor utilisation of allocated funds (i) the tribal communities are less demanding; (ii) they are traditionally disadvantageous and remotely located; (iii) there is language barrier and absence of administrative staffs in remote locations. This is further compounded by the presence of extremism, the poor record of displaced people, and the poor delivery system in the Adivasi areas.

In contrast, there are several NGOs working with the Adivasi communities, and they have succeeded in bringing out meaningful socio-economic changes in the lives of the scheduled tribe communities. Some notable NGOs working in the Central Indian Adivasi belts are Professional Assistance for Development Action (popularly known as PRADAN), N.M. Sadhguru Water and Development Foundation, GRAM VIKASH, Vasundhara, NIRMAN, PRAN, CINI and many more. The unifying features of these

NGOs are that they are not only concerned about the programme delivery and ensuring food security but also build Higher Human Development capabilities (Shylendra and Rani, 2004, Ballabh and Thomas, 2002, Ballabh and Batra, 2015). Some of these NGOs intervene in the Adivasi villages through the formation of SHGs, lift irrigation cooperatives, introduction of new technology crop and cultivation practices, watershed committees, or Forest Protection Committees. Thus, in the process, they ensure that their individual and collective powers are nurtured and improved. They build and inculcated accountability among members towards their collectives. For doing this, training and capacity building is an integral part of the programme delivery. Many of these NGOs have helped Adivasis' learn improved methods of cultivation and marketing of their products and break free from the clutches of the money lenders and perpetual indebtedness. Many women and men who were shy and under confident to deal with outsiders, are today confident and demanding with the public development and administrative agencies (Ballabh and Batra, 2018). Overall, these interventions have helped them not only realize their potential but also empower them and improve their capabilities. The capacity of these NGOs, however, is limited both in terms of identifying and recruiting committed professionals and also in mobilization of the funds. In one of our studies, we found that the impact of these interventions is not dependent on the number of years of interventions but on the extent of internal and external resources, particularly financial resources generated by the Adivasi community and the supporting NGOs. Most of the state Governments are unable to fully spend the allocated amount for the Adivasi sub-plans and many a times these funds are diverted towards other non-tribal communities, or the benefits only reach a few elite groups among the tribal communities. To overcome this the state governments can involve the committed NGOs which have the capability to train and enhance human capital among the tribal communities.

In the year 2012 I had an opportunity to visit the same village where I had been with my students in 1989. The village had undergone a lot of change over the years, some old people were no more, and adults had grown older but still some of them remembered the incident. They attributed that incident to ignorance and lack of education. Some houses now have concrete roofs and even have toilets. They attributed the changes to the NGO's and interactions with the outside world. They also mentioned that they now grow many crops, including wheat, vegetables, flowers, etc., which earlier was limited to maize during the rainy seasons followed by fallow. They even mentioned that some of the households sell their flowers in the Mumbai Market. Though many households were still struggling for survival, the perceptible changes, however, were visible.

VI

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Adivasi community constitute 8.6 per cent of the Indian population, in absolute terms, it is 10.45 crore (as per the 2011 census). These large numbers of people are still

not part of the mainstream Indian society and are being discriminated in several ways. The anthropological, sociological, and political literature presents *succinct* debate on this discrimination. One aspect of this debate is to demand for creation of separate state for the Adivasis'. However, these debates and discussions appear to be irrelevant in the current context for two important reasons (i) except for the four states in North -Eastern region, nowhere is the Adivasi community in majority and (ii) the Adivasi community in different parts and locality are no more homogenous and their class and ethnic identity does not match with each other. As a result, the benefits derived from ethnic politics do not reach the large masses of the community. In fact, these issues only divide them and drive their attention from socio-economic discrimination such as lack of education, health, infrastructure, etc.

The struggle of Adivasi communities began with the enactment of the Forest Act of 1978 during the colonial period. They were alienated from the forest and land resources on which they were dependent for their survival. They were termed rude, savage, and other derogatory adjectives such as unruly, uncivilised, etc. Sometimes they were isolated by the colonial administration and were considered unworthy and unremunerative to rule. Unfortunately, this continued even after India got independence and today, they are being displaced in the name of development. Of all the displaced households, more than 40 percent belonging to Adivasi communities. The settlement and rehabilitation brought only deprivation, misery, and loss of communal property rights.

The misery of the tribal community was further compounded due to fraudulent and forcible eviction by the socio-politically strong communities. During the 1960's and 70's land reform and tenancy related issues were high on the agenda of our society, but issues related to land tenure in relation to Adivasi were largely ignored. The reasons for such neglect may not be difficult to find. Since in those areas' food production was insufficient and therefore the focus was on the main agricultural areas that could increase food production and the Adivasi regions were largely considered unproductive. As a result, there are dearth of studies about Adivasi agriculture, and its production systems. This also led to less attention on the technological innovations suitable for the Adivasi agriculture and production system. The issues related to Adivasi agriculture are being introduced only recently and this needs to be strengthened. As a result, therefore it is not surprising that the Adivasi community as a group are living at the bottom of the pyramid in terms of socio-economic development and are lagging other communities. Whatever indicator one chooses, the Adivasi community lagged the persons living below the poverty line, infant, child and maternal mortality, human development and poverty index. This is true not only for the poor performing states like Odisha and Chhattisgarh but even in states that are performing better in terms of economic growth like Tamil Nadu (Sunder, 2016). The Adivasis are also not able to utilize properly and take advantages of affirmative actions of the Governments due to lack of basic education infrastructure.

The root cause of Adivasi discrimination, poverty, and misery began with their alienation from the forest, land and displacement from their natural habitation in the name of development. The change in Indian Forest Policy 1988 opened new vistas and opportunities for the forest-dwelling communities. It was expected that these communities would actively participate in Forest Protection Committees, century old conflicts would vanish, and the forest-dwelling communities and the Forest Department would work in tandem with each other. This was further boosted through enactment of FRA 2006, which envisaged that the forest-dwelling community would be given rights over land inside the forest provided they prove that they have been cultivating it for a reasonable period. However, the outcome of these two programs are not as they were expected and there are a lot of variations among the states. FRA 2006 envisages that individual and collective or group rights may be claimed, the Forest Department prefers to deal with individual claims and collective rights are generally ignored except in a few states. On paper, the performance of Uttarakhand appears to be much better relative to other states. But in this state, all van Panchayat have been brought under the JFM and village Forest Protection Committees. The Van Panchayats were earlier completely autonomous (see Ballabh and Singh, 1988) but now they are in control of the Forest Department, there are conflicts between the Forest Department and local Forest Protection committees (FPCs) about the purpose of people's involvement. The Forest Department emphasizes on silvi cultural practices and forest conservation whereas people's interests are more in their livelihood and the value of final sales from the protections. For the sale of minor forest produce in the Adivasi regions, the community continues to remain dependent on money lenders, traders, and contractors. As a result, they receive only small fractions of the share in the final value of the product. The recent amendment in the Forest Conservation Act further erodes the rights of communities, their involvement in the forest protection programme has changed to a top-down approach where peoples involvement is sought in the Government Programme leading to conflict of interest between the FRA 2006 and the FCAA 2023.

To improve the condition of Adivasi communities, the Government responses are three-fold, (i) positive discrimination through reservations in parliament, legislative assemblies, (ii) reservations of seats particularly in higher education of Government and Semi-Government institutions, and (ii) reservations in the government services. In higher education and employment in Government and semi-governments job the Adivasi communities' performance is much poor relative to the scheduled caste communities and they are unable to utilise their quota. There are two important reasons for it (i) the basic educational and health facilities in many Adivasi areas are still poor and (ii) the isolation approach as was recommended by Elwin to protect the interest of the Adivasi community could not help them as they are continuing to live at the margins. Thus, to survive they must migrate in search of livelihood. Adivasis' used migration as one of the strategies to cope with the risk and support their livelihoods, but again they are discriminated in terms of wages and in terms of employment.

In contrast, there are many non-governmental organizations working with Adivasi communities, in different parts of the country, their experiences suggest that the community once properly supported can adopt innovative technologies, crop production systems, and institutional mechanisms. Based on the review of the Adivasi community, status, and problems following issues may be discussed and appropriate public policies may be further explored for integrating and assimilating the Adivasis' in the mainstream of society. The following issues need to be further explored and researched.

- How to integrate the Adivasi community with the larger society. What are the constraints in developing educational and other infrastructure such that these communities become capable of utilizing their share of quota in education and Government services and integrate themselves with the larger society.
- The Adivasi agriculture was by and large overlooked by the agricultural researchers and there is a need to study the agricultural production systems, and their interlinkages with forest and water resources. How could the Adivasis' knowledge about natural system be integrated with the formal research institutions.
- What are supportive public policies required for the improvement of Adivasi agricultural production system and livelihood.
- There are several minor forest produce, these products are sold locally or through money lenders and contractors. Generally, collectors of these products receive small share of the value of the products. The supply chain in agricultural produce and minor forest products needs to be studied and improved.
- The Adivasi areas are rich in organic matter and many millet crops are grown in these areas. Their economic and social values are recognized only recently. The third green revolution needs to come from these areas and the agricultural universities and institutions need to develop low-cost effective technology along with the supportive public policies.

In the end, however, it needs to be mentioned that any intervention in the Adivasi areas is bound to be criticised on the grounds that it may erode the intrinsic cultural values and practices of the Adivasis'. This debate to me looks meaningless because the attempt to bring social change disrupts existing norms and practices, and every society has gone through it. The experiences of NGOs in Adivasi areas suggest that the Adivasi communities do not have incapacities; they learned new technologies and methods with proper support. Their illiteracy and other disabilities did not prevent them to learn and apply the same. We need to learn how to integrate and incorporate good practices of Adivasis in the newer context. Any attempt to polarize them and seek political autonomy based on cultural and racial discrimination will continue their deprivation and discrimination for a long. What is required is, to integrate and assimilate the Adivasis' within the larger society sooner than later.

NOTES

1. There are a few exceptions such as (i) in 1992 issues pertaining to tribal and Hill economy and (ii) Agricultural Development in the Northeast: status, Assessment, and Prospects in 2006.
2. Some important committees constituted in the context of Kelelkar Committee Reports of the first Backward classes commission 1955; Lokur Committee on the Revision of SC/ST lists 1965. Joint Committee of Parliament on the SC and ST orders (Amendment) Bill 1967 and The Chanda Committee 1969 (cited from Sunder 2016).
3. Some notable studies on Adivasi movement may be found in Guha Ranjit (ed) 1982-1987, (1983); Guha, Ramchandra (1989); Pathak (1994); Sengupta (1988); Rangarajan (1996); Sivaramkrishnan (1999) and Sunder et al (2001).

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