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“Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override.”

- John Rawls

The preamble to our Constitution speaks of “We, the People of India,” making a solemn resolve to constitute India into a “Sovereign Democratic Republic” securing for all its citizens Justice, Liberty and Fraternity. Justice means harmonization of interests between individuals, between groups and between the individual and the community. The concept of Justice in the Preamble is indeed very wide, defined or elaborated as social, economic, political, again giving precedence to social and economic issues over political Justice.

Social justice implies that all citizens are treated equally irrespective of their differential statuses. Article 38 enjoins the state to strive to promote the welfare of people “by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which Justice social, economic and political shall inform all the constitution of the nation life.”

After independence, the Government of India, to fulfill the infrastructural needs, introduced the five-year plans with multifaceted objectives in which social justice and economic equality occupied an important place. One of the components of planning involved the installation of heavy industries or infrastructure projects, like the construction of dam, most of which were located in inaccessible tribal and rural areas. These programmes were elitist where needs of the local population and their problems were never considered in designing and implementing such projects. Though these projects were envisaged for the welfare of the entire society, they affected the local population in an adverse way, unleashing devastating consequences for them. This is where the aspect of social justice was not given due consideration while dealing with local people. It was a mere imposition of development on local community. After independence, the late Prime Minister Jawaharlal Lal Nehru said that big dams were India’s ‘secular temples’. While seeking to realize Nehru’s vision, India has become the
world’s greatest dam builder (Morse, 1992). These dams have created a situation, where more and more people are being displaced from their communities and traditional ways of life (Patnaik, 2000). How many of them co-opted into the new economic order and how many remain victims of the new model of development, remains unknown.

In social anthropology, the issue of displacement and the impoverishment of those displaced has become a major concern (Patnaik, 2000). Many of the studies on dam-based displacement have reported that there is a growing discontent among people towards the government’s policy. Why does development-induced displacement so often cause impoverishment? How can resettlers’ basic rights and entitlements be protected and their impoverishment prevented?

In this connection, with the issue of impoverishment, the aspect of social justice has become important. The government and the developing agency generally employ compensation as a means of restitution for project-caused asset-dispossession, economic disruption, and income loss. But in many instances, compensation as a tool has failed to provide economic recovery to the people (Cernea, 1999). Although compensation is not just important in resettlement, it is indispensable: full compensation for losses is one of resettlers’ rights and entitlements. Yet in the practice of resettlement, despite compensation, most resettlers end up worse off and impoverished. This is where resettlers have been denied social justice and policy goals have not been fulfilled which were to improve or at least restore their prior livelihoods and incomes.

Coming to the second aspect which is economics of resettlement, broadly speaking, it must articulate the full economic rationale and the tools for achieving the overall recovery and improvement of resettlers’ livelihood, rather than dealing selectively with only one or another component of the economic processes inherent in displacement and successful resettlement.

Re-examining the economic conceptualization of resettlement means several things. First it would require economic research on resettlement process, research that would place compensation within the specific economic, cultural and financial canvas of displacement and resettlement. It also demands re-examining the set of analytical methods and techniques employed in calculating the economics and financing of resettlement
operations in development projects. This also implies overcoming the limitations of wholesale CBA\(^1\), and analyzing the distribution of costs and benefits among project stakeholders (Cernea, 1999). Such redesigned economics would help create consistency between the economic/financial means and policy goals in resettlement.

1.1. Anthropology and Displacement

Research on development related resettlement issue began barely half a century ago. Anthropologists, who during their field studies observed first-hand the disruptive effects of dams and other projects on the displaced people, pioneered this research (Mathur, 2000). In India, anthropological studies on displacement and rehabilitation started around the late 1950s and early 1960s. Two important studies of this period are worth mentioning. Roy Burman’s (1961) study of displaced tribals of Sundergarh district of Orissa due to construction of Rourkela Steel Plant highlighted various factors affecting the process of displacement. Karve and Nimbakar’s (1969) study of Koyna Dam project dealt with the impact of displacement and rehabilitation on family and kinship system of the uprooted communities of Maharashtra. In the 1980s, other social scientist became interested in this issue. Mahapatra (1999) also studied the rehabilitation process and problems of the displaced tribals of Orissa in a comparative perspective of the situation in some other states in India.

Besides these there are those who have attempted to build models to comprehend this framework on resettlement. One of the most influential discussions about the ill effects of resettlement is presented in Cernea’s model of the risk of resettlement popularly known as the Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction (IRR) model. This model points to the tendency for resettlement to cause eight negative impacts on resettlers all of which will, if left unremedied, radically disrupt and undermine their ability to maintain their livelihood and standards of living. These risks are broadly grouped as landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, social disarticulation, loss of access to common property resources, marginalization, increased morbidity/mortality and food insecurity. Later on, he also added formal education to it. On the other hand, Scudder (in 1985) came out with a longitudinal conceptualization; his approach, being interdisciplinary, took into account

\(^1\) CBA refers to cost benefit analysis.
the cultural and psychological dimension of displaced community and their ability to cope with the new situation. Now days there are greater emphasis on the Cernea’s Impoverishment model than Scudder as it is able to address all the risks involved in displacement. Mahapatra(1999) used this model to determine India’s experience with involuntary resettlement from 1947-97, examining each of the IRR risks in turn. He confirms empirically and theoretically the validity of the conceptual model of risk and reconstruction as an analytical, explanatory, and strategic tool.

Thangaraj’s chapter (1996) has also employed this model to analyze resettlement operations in two Indian projects- the Upper Indravati Hydroelectric Project and the Orissa Water Resources Consolidation Project. Lassailly-Jacob’s chapter (1996) has looked specifically at land-based resettlement strategies in African dam projects and argued that such strategies must include not only land on which to resettle, but also common lands, adequate productive farmland, full title for lands (rather than tenant arrangements), and resettler-directed (rather than top-down imposed) development programs.

1.2. Development Induced Displacement: India’s Case

1.2.1. Pre-Independence

The displacement caused by development is very old, existing for centuries. In pre-independence period, due to plentiful availability of land, people did not face much problem to relocate and rehabilitate themselves. The issue of displacement started becoming serious only after the onset of the colonial administration. The British came with the objective to turn South Asia as a source of capital and raw material for the industrial revolution in England and wanted to convert it in to a market for their finished products. The colonial power established their economic control by opening coal mines in Raniganj, tea gardens in Assam and coffee plantations in Karnataka and other industries at several places (Mankodi, 1989: 140-3). In this pursuit, they needed to acquire land at low price and for this, they introduced various legal measures beginning with Permanent Settlement of 1793 and provisions such as the Assam Land Rules of 1838 that gradually led to the Land Acquisition Act (LAA) of 1894 (Bora, 1986), which is based on the principle of state’s eminent domain. This Act empowers the state to take
away people’s land without much recourse to their right to livelihood that the acquired land provides them. In this, the state has only the right to define public purpose and deprive individual’s land and secondly, all the forest land, natural vegetation and land without individual little belongs to the state (Ramanathan, 1999: 19-20).

The LAA provides compensation for individual’s land but not for CPRs\(^2\) like forest land, water bodies, common land on which the tribal and the other community rely for their survival (Upadhyay and Raman, 1998), and not even to the landless agricultural labourers and the other caste communities which provide services to each other for their livelihood (Dhagamwar, 1989). Therefore, people who rely on CPRs for their survival are treated as encroachers and the land which was the source of people’s livelihood turned into a commodity (Fernandes, 2004).

However, displacement does not often involve physical relocation in colonial times but large sections of society got impoverished due to the loss of livelihood (particularly the dalits\(^3\) and tribes). There have been various revolts and agitations across the country against this process of displacement, which has directly attacked their survival. Tribal revolts like Santhal rebellion in the 1830s to uprising in Andhra Pradesh in the 1920s (Singh, 1985), non-tribal revolts like the one of Mulshi-Peta near Pune in the 1920s (Bhuskute, 1997: 170-2) had been witnessed.

1.2.2. Post-Independence

There has been hardly any change in the colonial policy of LAA. The government in the post-independence India followed the similar principle of eminent domain and also strengthened them to facilitate the acquisition of land for development agencies. There was only a shift or transition in the form of government but not in its policy. In the name of democracy, the government continued to follow the colonial pattern of development displacing a large number of people in the name of nation building. In the first Five Years Plans, various infrastructure projects were conceived such as dams, industries, roads, mines and power plants. Large dams were built for irrigation and power

\(^{2}\) CPR refers to the common property resources in the community.

\(^{3}\) The term ‘Dalit’ literally means “broken people”, who are at the bottom of Indian Caste System and referred as outcaste people as per Indian Varna Model.
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generation. Seeking to realize Nehru’s vision, as said earlier, India has become world’s largest dam builder. 15% of world’s largest dams, between 1947 to 1979, were built in India (Nag, 2002: 40) and at present the numbers of dams in India goes over 4000. These dams have created a situation, where more and more people are being displaced from their communities and the traditional ways of life causing enormous change in the pattern of land use and also in their lives. The number of PAPs\(^4\) has been rising continuously due to the commencement of these infrastructure projects. In India, there is no official data base about the exact number of displaced persons or PAPs. This clearly reflects the government’s lack of seriousness towards the resettlement and rehabilitation of displaced persons and the PAPs. In addition, there is no National Rehabilitation Policy till date which shall speak for the plight of these powerless and voiceless communities. However, there have been extensive studies on displaced communities documenting the episodes of their impoverishment. Studies for the period during 1951-55 in Orissa PAPs (Fernandes and Asif, 1997), Jharkhand (Ekka and Asif, 2000), Kerala (Murickan et al. 2003), 1965-95 in Goa (Fernandes and Naik, 2001), 1947-2000 in West Bengal (Fernandes et al. 2006) and Assam (Fernandes and Bharali, 2006); and 1947-2004 in Gujarat (Lobo and Kumar, 2007) may be mentioned. These studies point to an all India estimate of 60 million of DPs\(^5\)/PAPs between 1947 and 2004. In this figure, there has been no method of including the indirect PAPs caused due to environmental degradation, pollution making land unfit for agriculture. These studies also revealed the discrepancies in official data projecting lesser number of DP/PAPs in various state development projects. This undoubtedly speaks of the neglect, the displaced communities suffer. Among the DPs/PAPs in India, 40% of them belong to tribal communities and 20% of them come from dalit communities (Fernandes, 2008).

In a constantly changing world order, the issue of development vis-à-vis displacement has come to acquire special significance. While 60 years of Indian independence have seen numerous urban development and hydroelectric projects and industries coming up, not enough attention has been paid to the costs paid in terms of increasing deforestation, diminishing agricultural land, dwindling natural resources, extinguishing flora and

\(^4\) PAPs refers to project affected people.

\(^5\) DPs refers to the displaced people.
fauna and the resultant degradation in the lives of people, not to mention the increasing
disempowerment and impoverishment of the poor.

In an effort to understand better the plight of those displaced by development projects, in this work, the researcher attempts to examine the socio-economic status of the PAPs in post-displacement scenario and the effect of displacement and the issue of resettlement and rehabilitation will be explored keeping in mind the issue of social justice and economics of resettlement. Moreover, there would be an attempt to identify the challenges in handling such crucial aspects like evolving appropriate methodologies for resettlement and rehabilitation by social scientists in general and anthropologists in particular, in a way contributing to the formulation of citizen-centric policies which would help in making development a reality rather than a planned calamity making people poorer than before.

1.3. An Overview of the Thesis

The thesis consists of eight chapters. In the first chapter; Introduction, the basic outline of the development induced displacement has been given. Besides this the researcher has raised some arguments in relation to the topic of the research. The second chapter is on “Reviewing Dam and Displacement: Theory and Practice”, in which the researcher has described the existing body of literature. The magnitude of displacement (a global overview) has been covered followed by a discussion of key concepts and issues pertaining to displacement. The researcher has also elaborated on the theoretical framework, concepts and practices. The subsequent chapter (i.e. “Researching development induced displacement”) talks about the conceptual framework of the research along with the present study, objectives of the study, fieldwork, selection of the study village, theoretical paradigm, methods and limitations of the study. Chapter four elaborates on the universe of study, i.e. the area and the people, where the geography and demographic indicators of Himachal Pradesh, District-Kangra, Block-Pragpur, along with brief description of the study village Ghamroor has been given.

Chapter fifth describes about the Project; in which a brief introduction of the Pong Dam along with its history, various reports till its completion have been covered. This chapter also describes the necessity, purpose and scope of the project, extent of land
acquisition and displacement along with the benefits of the project. The next chapter, i.e. “Socio-economic status of PAPs in post-displacement scenario and the effect of displacement describes the socio-economic status of the oustees and the effect of displacement both through the statistical results and case study. Then the researcher discusses the findings in light of the existing literature.

The subsequent chapter is on “Examining the economics of compensation in the framework of social justice”. This chapter includes the discussion of the statistical findings along with the case study of Patwari, interview of project officials and description of the decision of the Session Court, Dharmashala, Himachal Pradesh. In this chapter, the researcher attempts to identify certain themes out of the findings and has discussed them in light of the existing body of literature. The last chapter is on “Summary and Policy Recommendation”. In this, the findings of the study have been summarized and discussed in light of the policy issues and its components. Based on the findings and experiences gained, the researcher has suggested certain points with respect to the planning and practice of resettlement.