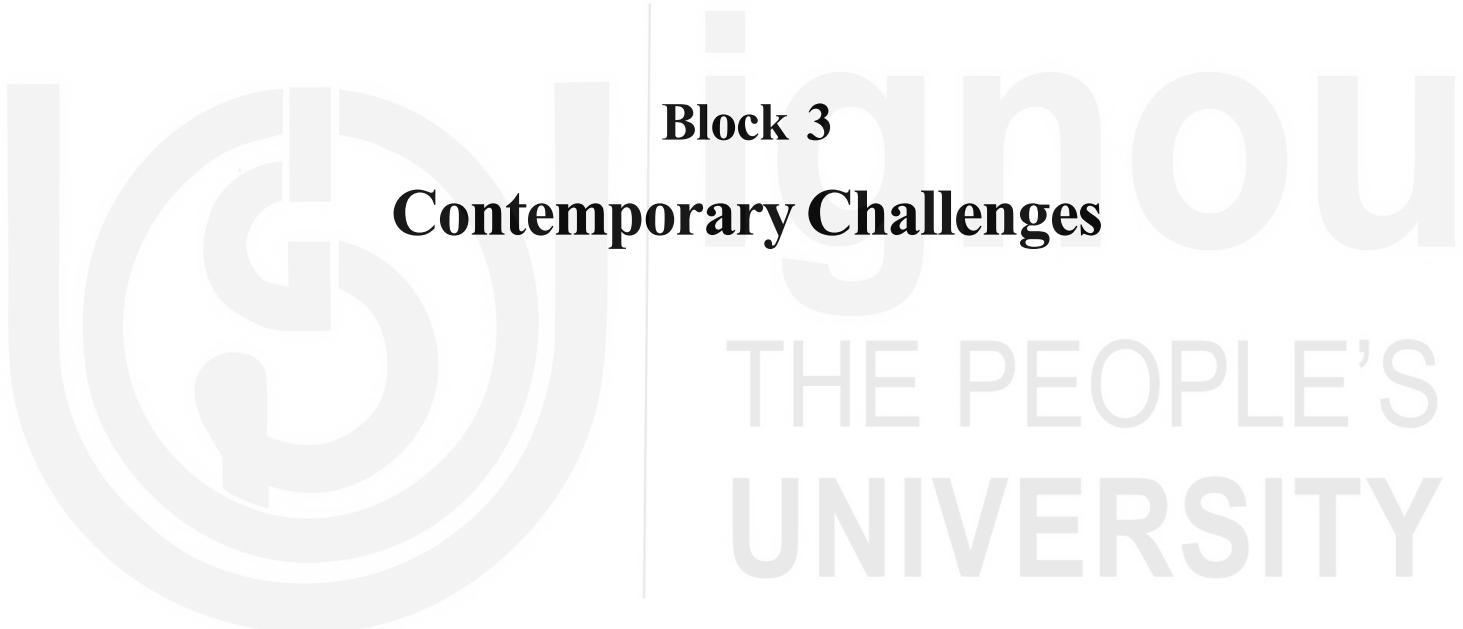


The background of the slide features a large, light gray watermark of the Open University logo. The logo consists of a stylized 'U' on the left and the text 'Open University' on the right, with 'THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY' written in a smaller font below it.

**Block 3**

**Contemporary Challenges**



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## UNIT 9 TRIBAL DISPLACEMENT AND REHABILITATION\*

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### Structure

- 9.0 Introduction
- 9.1 Displacement
- 9.2 Tribal Displacement
- 9.3 Resettlement and Rehabilitation
- 9.4 Impacts of Displacement on Tribals
  - 9.4.1 Social-Cultural Impacts
    - 9.4.1.1 Social Disorganisation
    - 9.4.1.2 Loss of Self-esteem and Identity
    - 9.4.1.3 Loss of Culture and Religion
    - 9.4.1.4 Loss of Political Institutions
  - 9.4.2 Psychological Impacts
  - 9.4.3 Economic Impacts
    - 9.4.3.1 Landlessness and Change in Land-holding Pattern
    - 9.4.3.2 Joblessness and Occupational Shifts
    - 9.4.3.3 Homelessness
    - 9.4.3.4 Loss of Access to Common Property Resources (CPRs)
    - 9.4.3.5 Loss of Livelihood and Impoverishment
    - 9.4.3.6 Impacts of Displacement on Women
  - 9.4.4 Health Impacts
  - 9.4.5 Environmental Impacts
- 9.5 Summary
- 9.6 References
- 9.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- develop a broad understanding on the concepts of development, displacement and rehabilitation;
- learn about the impact of displacement on tribal communities; and
- understand the various social-cultural impacts, economic impacts, health impacts, psychological impacts and environmental impacts caused by development projects.

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## 9.0 INTRODUCTION

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In the course of evolution, the concept of development has assumed a definitive meaning. In the current usage of the word 'development' means: improvement of the economic

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status of the society, widening of the individual's life opportunities and betterment of the quality of life. Development is globally defined in terms of industrial and technological growth, the means which become the goal. It is just another form of social change; it cannot be understood in isolation. The analysis of development actions and of popular reactions to these actions should not be isolated from the study of local dynamics, of endogenous processes, of 'informal' processes of change. Hence development cannot be dissociated from social change.

Economic development does not always bring positive impacts on human societies. The multidimensional nature of development interventions, affect socio-cultural, economic, health and environmental aspects of human societies.

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## **9.1 DISPLACEMENT**

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Displacement is a process that uproots or forces to uproot the communities and individuals out of their homelands. Due to many development activities such as mining, creation of military installations, airports, industrial plants, weapon testing grounds, railways, road developments, sanctuaries, and construction of dams and so on, human beings are forced to migrate and resettle at other sites against their wishes. This is called involuntary resettlement because people have no choice other than to move or migrate.

Development induced displacement means forcing the communities and individuals out of their homes, often also their homelands, for the purpose of economic development. Displacement is deemed to be a necessary price to pay for development by those to whom development means only economic growth.

There are two types of displacement:

- Displacement affected by natural disasters in the form of draughts, floods, earthquakes and cyclone;
- Displacement due to developmental projects like dams, mines, thermal power plants, industries, rail-ways, roads, ports and others.

Among these two, former one is not subject to human control but the latter is purely a human made phenomena and this type of displacement is pre-planned or forced displacement. In both the types of displacement, the victims are poor and weaker sections of the society who do not either have economic stability or educational accomplishments to migrate to safer areas. The worst sufferers by displacement are indigenous tribal communities.

The effects of the displacement spill over generations in many ways, such as loss of traditional means of employment (livelihood), change of environment disrupted community life and relationship marginalisation, a profound psychological trauma. It destroys the existing modes of production, affects kinship, brings about impoverishment, and threatens cultural identity of tribal and ethnic minorities. In addition forced resettlement tends to be associated with increased socio-cultural and psychological stresses and higher morbidity and mortality rates. Population displacement, therefore disrupts economic and socio cultural structures.

- 1) What is displacement and explain the causes for displacement?

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## **9.2 TRIBAL DISPLACEMENT**

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Development projects every year involuntarily displace one million people in the developing countries from their land and homes. Development and displacement have direct link with Scheduled Tribe population. The question becomes more relevant when it concerns the tribals because they often adversely affect the environment making the life of the tribals more difficult and responsible for tribal migration. Even the health, food and nutrition of the tribals are also adversely affected.

Development projects, particularly dams, have always generated serious controversy in India as they are the major source of tribal displacement. Estimates of national resettlement forced by development projects shows that during 1950-90 the number of people affected were 18.5 million. According to the Central Water Commission, over 3,300 dams have been built since independence and some 1,000 more are under construction. In order to achieve rapid economic growth, India has invested in industrial projects, dams, roads, mines, power plants and new cities. According to the data of Indian Social Institute, government acquired massive land and subsequently displaced 21.3 million people.

The Sardar Sarovar dam across the Narmada River in Gujarat State displaced more than 41,000 families (over 200,000 people) in the three states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh. Over 56 per cent of the people affected by the Sardar Sarovar dam are tribals. The indigenous tribal communities displaced by in the 1950s and 1960s by the Hirakud dam in Odisha, Bhakhra dam in Himachal Pradesh and other projects still struggle to get the paltry compensation promised to them at that time.

The development process pushes tribals from an informal to a formal economy that is new to them without any preparation. They had depended on agricultural land and forests, both of which they lose to the development projects. When they receive compensation it is monetary with which most tribal communities living in the informal economy are not familiar and in most cases the Common Property Resources (CPRs) are not compensated.

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## **9.3 RESETTLEMENT AND REHABILITATION**

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Resettlement refers to the process of settling again in a new area. Rehabilitation means restoration to the former state. Rehabilitation involves identification of a person's problems and needs, relating the problems to relevant factors of the person and the environment, defining rehabilitation goals, planning and implementing the measures, and assessing the effects. Displacement mainly hits tribal people who usually do not figure in the priority list of any political authorities or parties. When tribals are resettled

in a new area, basic infrastructure and amenities are not provided in that area. Very often, temporary camps become permanent settlements. It is also a major problem of displacement or resettlement that people have to face. Resettlement disrupts the entire life of the people. They are unable to bear the shocks of emptiness and purposelessness created in their life. Payment of compensation to the head of the family often lead to bitter quarrels over sharing of compensation amount within the family, leading to stress and even withering of family life.

The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (RFCTLARR Act, 2013) regulates land acquisition and lays down the procedure and rules for granting compensation, rehabilitation and resettlement to the affected persons in India. The Act has provisions to provide fair compensation to those whose land is taken away, brings transparency to the process of acquisition of land to set up factories or buildings, infrastructural projects and assures rehabilitation of those affected. The Act establishes regulations for land acquisition as a part of India's massive industrialisation drive driven by public-private partnership. RFCTLARR Act, 2013 replaced the Land Acquisition Act, 1894, a nearly 120-year-old law enacted during British rule.

RFCTLARR Act, 2013 exempts five categories of projects namely (i) defence, (ii) rural infrastructure, (iii) affordable housing, (iv) industrial corridors, and (v) infrastructure including PPPs where the government owns the land from the requirements of social impact assessment, restrictions on acquisition of multi-cropped land, and consent for private projects and public private partnerships (PPPs). **There is lack of clarity in defining five types of exempted projects while acquiring land in the act which may go against the tribals.**

#### Check Your Progress

- 2) Discuss the significance of Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (RFCTLARR Act, 2013)?

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## 9.4 IMPACTS OF DISPLACEMENT ON TRIBALS

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The impacts of displacement can be mainly divided into two broad categories namely positive and negative.

- i) **The positive impacts of displacement**, however, affect only a minuscule section of the affected community and comprise of impacts such as:
  - A few persons may experience improvement in their status by way of increase in the size of landholdings.
  - A rise in income may occur in certain cases by the employment opportunities created by the Project.
  - A break in some oppressive social hierarchies may also result.

ii) **Negative impacts of displacement:** However, majority of the displaced people undergo a process of dispossession and disempowerment. As an outcome of the processes of development, displacement has the potential to dismantle and destroy villages as well as socio-economic and cultural structures of the inhabitants. When people are forcibly removed from their habitat, the following situations are likely to occur:

- Production systems get dismantled.
- Productive assets and income sources get lost.
- People get relocated to environments where their productive skills may be less applicable and the competition for resources greater.
- Long established residential groups get disorganised.
- Kinship groups get scattered.
- Informal social networks and safety nets are broken.

Thus, by its very nature, displacement in general and involuntary displacement in particular, is a disruptive and painful process. Economically and culturally, it creates high risks of chronic types of impoverishment among the displaced people. According to Cernea (1995), the essence of the displacement/resettlement nexus is the development-induced impoverishment of some population segments. If proper counteractive action is not taken well in time, these potential risks as listed below can convert into actual impoverishment disasters:

- Landlessness
- Joblessness
- Homelessness
- Loss of common property
- Marginalisation
- Food insecurity
- Mortality
- Social disarticulation

Development activities are the main cause of involuntary resettlement. Among these activities, dams have been considered as one of the major causes for displacement and relocation. The multifaceted effect of coercive displacement and relocation can be observed on the affected population. Resettlement of population causes some economic and social repercussions such as extreme disruption of lives of individuals, family and communities. Resettlement is often experienced as enormously stressful, and results in anger, bitterness, loss of confidence and other problems more specifically in tribal regions.

The affected population faces not only social, economic and environmental problems, but also political and demographic problems that arise in the places of resettlement sites. The situation further deteriorates if the affected people are unemployed, uneducated and unskilled that exuberates the conditions of unemployment overcrowded housing

facilities and public amenities and therefore has long-term consequences. Perpetual tension surfaces for resource sharing between immigrants displaced and the earlier settled population and may reach a point of intolerance.

### Activity

Try to observe the negative and positive impacts of displacement, if you happen to visit any Rehabilitation colony or displaced villages.

## 9.4.1 Social-Cultural Impacts

Social impacts are the consequences to human populations of any public or private actions-that alter the ways in which people live, work, play, relate to one another, organize to meet their needs, and generally cope as members of society. The term also includes cultural impacts involving changes in the norms, values, and beliefs that guide and rationalise their cognition of themselves and their society.

Displacement leads to dispossession in the social, cultural and political spheres. It takes various forms such as social disorganisation, low self-esteem, loss of identity, loss of culture and of political institutions. All this leads to the marginalisation of the displaced tribals. Studies conducted by Prasad (1972), Kothari and Bhartari (1984), Viegas and Menon (1985), Gandhi and Ajit Kumar (1986) reveal the social, cultural and psychological dimensions of the lives of the oustees under consideration while planning rehabilitation measures.

### Check Your Progress

- 3) What do you understand by the term social impact?

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### 9.4.1.1 Social Disorganisation

Social disorganisation takes place with the type of changes that are brought about by the displacement process. These forces lead to major changes in the social structure of the communities in general and especially of tribal societies. Their family life may be disrupted. The traditional social control mechanisms may be weakened and even lost. Consequently, social tensions may increase. Also social support networks tend to disintegrate and that has far reaching consequences for the community. Social networks often help people cope with poverty through personalised strategies such as informal loans, exchange of food, clothing, durable goods, and mutual help with farming, building houses and caring for children. Loss of such multifunctional, yet virtually invisible social networks through displacement, acts as a hidden but serious cause of impoverishment through displacement. Such loss is higher in projects that relocate people in a dispersed manner rather than in social groups and units. In such cases, it is very difficult for the oustees to reconstitute similar social structures and networks.

Lifestyle impacts like the way people behave and relate to family, friends and cohorts on a day-to-day basis will not get prominence. Shared customs, obligations, values,



language, religious belief and other elements which make a social or ethnic group distinct will slowly dilute. Community infrastructure, services, voluntary organisations, activity networks and cohesion will disappear in resettlement colonies. The issues of quality of life like one sense of place, aesthetics and heritage, perception of belonging, security and liveability, and aspirations for the future were not seen.

#### **9.4.1.2 Loss of Self-esteem and Identity**

Often the development project oustees, experience loss of self-esteem as individuals and as communities, when confronted with development and modernisation. The loss of the moral worth and dignity of a village community can be substantial and as well as socially crippling. Various studies have shown that tribals, who have strong community leadership ties and have yet to get into the mainstream market economy, feel threatened by the government power hierarchy. After relocation, they are further fragmented, weakened and inherently unable to organise themselves. The disappearing community ties caused by geographical dispersal and the threat of commercial forces squeeze their spirits further. (Areeparampil and Fernandes and Raj, 1992)

#### **9.4.1.3 Loss of Culture and Religion**

Due to displacement, the oustees also face the risk of losing their culture and religious practices. They lose their cultural autonomy and in the process, their very identity is put at stake. Consequently, every area of their life from language to marriage customs and religion comes under attack. There is a gradual collapse of the religious ethos that is closely linked to their environment and socio-agrarian systems. The community festivals, which held tremendous importance in the lives of the people, lose their meaning.

#### **9.4.1.4 Loss of Political Institutions**

In the political sphere, dispossession takes place through the process of political integration in the so-called national polity. This gradually leads to the traditional political systems and institutions' redundancy. The displaced people are incorporated into the state and have to conform to and become integrated with the so called mainstream political system.

### **9.4.2 Psychological Impacts**

Research has shown that displacement and dislocation causes special cultural, economic and technical problems. Studies have shown that a feeling of alienation, helplessness and powerlessness is instilled in those uprooted. Social cohesion is weakened and increased psychological stress diminishes the initiative and capacity for collective action of those affected. Displacement may also lead to social anomie and emotional disorders. Many indicators of social anomie such as alcoholism, crime, suicides, prostitution, delinquency and despair may go up. (Vidyarthi 1970; Sengupta 1979; Fernandes and Thukral 1989; Pandey et al 1996).

### **9.4.3 Economic Impacts**

The impact of development induced displacement can also be seen in the economic spheres of tribal community. The various problems faced by the displaced tribal people are landlessness and disruptive change in the land-holding pattern, problem of joblessness and occupational shifts and homelessness. The other ill effects of displacement are loss of access to Common Property Resources (CPRs), loss of livelihood, impoverishment and food insecurity.

### 9.4.3.1 Landlessness and Change in Land-holding Pattern

Loss of land and change in the land-holding pattern is one of the principal forms of dispossession that results from rural displacement. Expropriation of land removes the main foundation upon which people's productive systems, commercial activities and livelihoods are constructed. In other words, loss of land results in people losing their agricultural and homestead land that provides food and economic security to a large number of people in India. If these livelihood systems are not rebuilt elsewhere or replaced with steady income generating employment then landlessness sets in leading to impoverishment. The various types of people, social groups and villages experience the risk of landlessness differently. The tribal communities could not overcome the problem of change in the land-holding pattern and became landless.

### 9.4.3.2 Joblessness and Occupational Shifts

Loss of wage employment and shift in the occupational pattern is yet another form of economic dispossession that the displaced people undergo. In tribal regions joblessness and occupational shifts, loss of wage employment and shift in the occupational pattern is yet another form of economic dispossession that the displaced people undergo. It occurs both in urban and rural displacement. Different categories of people are involved in the process of joblessness and occupational shifts. Firstly, there are the farmers who are deprived of their farming capacity with the loss of land leading to joblessness and resultant impoverishment if not provided with alternate livelihood systems. In tribal areas large tracts of land were taken over by the big industries for their activities. It meant loss of livelihood and jobs for both the landowners and the landless. However, since no one was losing his or her homestead, the company's rehabilitation and resettlement package for jobs to be given to one person per family losing both land and homestead, was totally inappropriate. Thus in such areas, nobody was entitled to a job. Consequently, the number of jobless people was very high amongst the displaced people. However, in the process of displacement, those without assets and land are the most vulnerable. This is because neither the State policies nor the R&R (Rewards & Recognition) programs make any clear-cut provisions for these categories. More often than not, they are not considered oustees. Even the few jobs that some oustees get in a project after displacement are of very low status and usually temporary in nature.

### 9.4.3.3 Homelessness

Homelessness is another form of economic dispossession. Though the loss of housing and shelter is temporary for most displaced persons, this phase can be very long and traumatic by nature. In the early 1970s, no provision of construction of housing for displaced people was made by the Project authorities. Instead, those displaced were provided with homestead plots on which the people were expected to build their own houses. This created a state of homelessness of the displaced people. Again, after displacement, the displaced people often have to live in poor quality houses, which make their life very difficult.

### 9.4.3.4 Loss of Access to Common Property Resources (CPRs)

Loss of common property resources (CPRs) results in economic, social and cultural dispossession and impoverishment for the oustees, especially the CPR dependants. For poor households in rural India, particularly the landless tribal and other asset-less communities, including women, the CPRs have always been a critical source of basic

livelihood. Minor forest produce (MFP) like fruits and edible forest produce, firewood, common grazing areas, use of public quarries, and medicinal herbs account for a significant share of a poor household's resources. Thus, the loss of the CPRs results in major income loss or livelihood deterioration particularly for the poor groups. CPRs are also of crucial importance for the future of tribal oustees particularly in terms of their indigenous knowledge, which has a close relation with the natural resources. For instance, the tribal groups are dependent upon the natural resources for manufacturing of medicine and a variety of food crops, organic pesticides and manure, herbicides, beverages etc. One of the threats related to displacement has been that this rich indigenous knowledge system may be lost due to disappearing resources, degradation of environment and the loss of those who possess generation's traditional knowledge.

#### **9.4.3.5 Loss of Livelihood and Impoverishment**

Impoverishment is a process of decline in the economic position of the oustees due to loss of basic sources of livelihood. Landlessness, joblessness and homelessness are all indications of this process of marginalisation. It is an indication that the loss of land, the loss of productive assets, and the loss of livelihood have resulted in downward mobility. It occurs when families cannot fully restore their lost economic strength. In this process, middle income farm households do not become landless, but become small holders. Families that were earlier precariously balanced above the poverty line fall below it and never recover totally even though they may not become landless. In the case of farming families, partial but significant loss of family land to roads or canal may make some farms economically non-viable. High productivity farmers on fertile soil, although they may be given some land, also may face the risk of economic non-viability. After having lost their land and common property, tribals fell into the typical cycle of increasing debt bondage, coupled with increasing destitution and intermittent employment as contract labourers in coal mines and elsewhere. In addition, over time, most were simply thrown out of their jobs and were left with nothing to fend for themselves (see Jain 1995 and Mathur and Mardsen 1998).

#### **9.4.3.6 Impacts of Displacement on Women**

Women in the tribal areas have an important role to play in the subsistence economy based on shifting cultivation, settled agriculture and access to non-timber produce. With displacement and loss of land, women lose the economic autonomy they once enjoyed and become totally subjugated to male domination. Women from rural and tribal communities are often dependent on kin relationships and community networks, which form the primary avenues of their access to scarce resources. These include access to information, assistance during health problems or sickness, child care, economic assistance along with several other social support systems. Given this, the hardships of displacement exacerbate the gendered burden of morbidities and mortality on the tribal women.

#### **9.4.4 Health Impacts**

Displacement adversely affects the health status of the community, which is a sensitive indicator of development. It has also been seen that people forced to relocate have a higher degree of exposure to illness and to comparatively more severe illness, than those who are not. Adverse health effects of displacement result particularly when projects do not incorporate preventive epidemiological measures. The direct and secondary effects of involuntary dislocation without preventive health measures rank

from diseases of poor hygiene, such as diarrhoea and dysentery, to outbreaks of parasitic and vector-borne diseases such as malaria and schistosomiasis caused by unsafe, insufficient water supplies and inadequate sanitary waste systems. Studies on displacement have shown that development of large water bodies results in the spread of waterborne diseases like cholera, diarrhoea, typhoid, amoebiasis, hepatitis, gastroenteritis, giardiasis, scabies, and worm infections.

### Activity

Try to interact with displaced families and make a list of health problems they are undergoing due to displacement.

## 9.4.5 Environmental Impacts

Displacement caused by developmental reasons gives rise to numerous problems in the spheres of environment. The setting up of large industries may result in accompanying air and noise pollution.

The mega industries of mining and quarrying emits pollutants into the air, release of effluents into water, and dumping of solid wastes on open grounds, causing many hazards to the lives of people, animals and plants. A major problem of soil erosion, associated with strip mining and wind erosion has been noticed in many tribal regions. In addition, open-cast mining also generates dust during digging, stock filling, loading and dying operations. Air pollution from exhaust fumes during heavy vehicular movements and noise pollution aggravate the breathing problems in tribal areas. All this lead to major discomforts and spread of diseases to crop, people, and animals among tribal communities.

### Check Your Progress

- 4) State the environmental impacts caused by the development induced displacement?

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## 9.5 SUMMARY

Displacement has both positive and negative impacts. However, the negative ones generally overshadow the positive impacts. It is mainly because majorities of the displaced people experience a process of dispossession and disempowerment. In other words, the oustees face major impoverishment and dispossession risks. Not only the economic hazards of displacement but also the social, cultural, political, psychological and environmental impacts mark the risks that the oustees face. We have also seen that different types of people experience the displacement process differently. The most vulnerable groups like the asset-less rural and urban poor, the tribals, women and children are the worst affected. There are cases of complete loss of their source of livelihood. To avoid the adverse effects of displacement, the resettlement practitioner must help the oustees by organising resettlement in such a way as to restore their capital in all its forms. These points to the need for a fairly extensive socio-economic

impact evaluation to be conducted before the starting of a project and consequently a complex preventive and recovery programme in the resettlement process.

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## 9.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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- 1) Displacement is a process that uproots or forces to uproot the communities and individuals out of their homelands. The causes for displacement are development

activities such as mining, creation of military installations, airports, industrial plants, weapon testing grounds, railways, road developments, sanctuaries, and construction of dams and so on. Refer to section 9.1.

- 2) RFCTLARR Act, 2013 regulates land acquisition and lays down the procedure and rules for granting compensation, rehabilitation and resettlement to the affected persons in India. The Act has provisions to provide fair compensation to those whose land is taken away, brings transparency to the process of acquisition of land to set up factories or buildings, infrastructural projects and assures rehabilitation of those affected. The Act establishes regulations for land acquisition as a part of India's massive industrialisation drive driven by public-private partnership. Refer to Section 9.3.
- 3) Social impacts are the consequences to human populations of any public or private actions that alter the ways in which people live, work, play, relate to one another, organize to meet their needs, and generally cope as members of society. Refer to Sub-section 9.4.1.
- 4) Environmental impacts comprises noise pollution along with the mega industries of mining and quarrying emits pollutants into the air, release of effluents into water, and dumping of solid wastes on open grounds, caused many hazards to the lives of people, animals and plants. Refer to Sub-section 9.4.5.

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## UNIT 10 DEVELOPMENT OF FOREST POLICY AND TRIBES\*

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### Structure

- 10.0 Introduction
- 10.1 Tribal Economy, Livelihood and Forest
- 10.2 Forest Policy in Colonial India and Tribal Livelihood
- 10.3 Forest Policy in Post-Independence India
- 10.4 Some Flaws in Forest Policy in Recognising Tribal Property Rights
- 10.5 Forest Rights Act
- 10.6 New Initiatives for Enhancing Tribal Livelihood
- 10.7 Summary
- 10.8 References
- 10.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, the students will be able to:

- have a better understanding about culture and economy of tribal communities and their dependency on forest and forest based resources;
- know about tribal economy, forest rights and livelihood;
- understand about evolution of forest policy and its association with tribal land rights; and
- analyse the forest policy prospects in the post-colonial legacy, particularly in the aftermath of the year 2000s through Forest Rights Act and other new initiatives by Government of India.

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### 10.0 INTRODUCTION

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Forest has been central to the livelihood system of tribal communities since time immemorial. It provides supplementary food, fuel, fodder, medicine, non-timber forest produce, and most importantly, it is a vital component of sustainable livelihood support system. Many ethnographic studies that focus on the issue of culture and livelihood of tribes have also focused on forest and related natural resources. Vidyarthi (1963, 1991) has an extensive focus on forest in the life of Maler, the Sauria Paharias of present Jharkhand. von Fürer-Haimendorf in his book, *Tribes of India: The Struggle for Survival* has focused on tribes and their culture, livelihood and forest dependency. In parts of central India including eastern Indian states, South India and north-eastern states, tribal people are still closely associated with forest to derive livelihood. Birhor, Hill Kharia (also called the Sabar), Sauria Paharia, Mal Paharia, Dongria Kondhs, Juangs, Bondas, Konda Reddis, Chenchus, Yanadis and many other such tribes in

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India across scheduled and non-scheduled areas and geographical cross-cutting find their subsistence from forest. There are a few tribes such as Jarawa and Sentenelese who are still isolated from mainstream and mostly depend on the forest for their livelihood. In the north-eastern region, Eastern and Western Ghats, Nilgiri Hills and in most of the Himalayan regions, ethnic communities depend on forest and forest based agriculture. In India there are seventy-five particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) who mainly depend on forest for their subsistence. Forest provides first of all, the dietary supplements that are required for human survival. Further, it provides tools and supplements for shelter and economic production. Traditionally, forest and hill land are preferred by tribal to grow some traditional crops as per their dietary habit and customary practice. This is reflected in their practices in the form of shifting cultivation, terraced farming and sedentary cultivation.

Nature plays a significant role in tribal culture and livelihood. Forest, hill, some wild species, etc., are given special regards in tribal life. Forest, which includes sacred grooves, is an integral part of tribal culture. Although sacred grove is not confined to any particular community or religion yet it is the most popular cultural practice of forest tribes. Some patch of forest land in some geographical location along with all plants and animals species in these areas and other natural objects are protected by tribal communities for their sacredness. This religious and aesthetic practice is particularly important for maintaining biodiversity. Some plant and animal species have special ritual importance for the forest dwellers. This is observed through their traditional customary practices. For instance, *Sarna* are the sacred groves in Chotanagpur plateau of Jharkhand and in adjoining states. There are more than 750 sacred groves reported from undivided Andhra Pradesh. Twenty-nine sacred groves are found in Banaskantha district of Gujarat alone. Villages in Bastar have three popular sacred groves such as *matagudi*, *devgudi*, and *gaondevi* (Malhotra et al., 2001). Different types of groves having diverse cultural significance are also found in other states of India.

Forest products including some green leaves, roots and fruits, are among the common dietary habits of the tribal communities. Foraging, food gathering, and hunting are some of the traditional economic practice of the forest dwellers. It is observed that the tribal communities those who still live in and around forest and hill tracts are heavily dependent on forest for their livelihood, but certainly with some reservation. Therefore, it has become an inherent practice of the tribal communities to preserve and protect forest and not to over exploit it. Thus, the nature of relationship between tribes and forest is symbiotic. Roy Burman (1982) with his anthropology background discussed extensively the role of forest in tribal socio-cultural systems. He observed, in times of distress, the tribes who are also the forest dwellers increasingly depend on forests by reinforcing their labour power. Thus, nature which includes forests comes to the rescue of the communities in times of famine and distress (Nag, 1958; Roy Burman, 1982, 1987).

## **10.1 TRIBAL ECONOMY, LIVELIHOOD AND FOREST**

FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation) classifies three main types of forest people. First category includes people who live inside forests and also people who live outside forests but they all heavily depend on forests for their livelihood. These people are mainly away from mainstream political and economic system, but then the entry of non-indigenous migrants is significant. Second category includes people who are close to forest or in the periphery of the forests. This category includes peasants who derive



subsistence from agriculture as well as forests. And, the third category includes people who are associated with forest based industries, corporations, business and commerce, income generating activities, etc. Therefore, it also includes people who indulge in subsistence practices. Byron and Arnold (1999) have classified forest dependent communities almost in the similar line of interests. Forest based communities who live within forest and mainly dependent on it, communities who rely on forest for supplementary source of income, and lastly, people who derive commercial interest from forests. Further, Indian anthropologists have classified tribal communities as hunter-gatherers, foragers, shifting cultivators or people who depend on slash and burn cultivation, agriculturists and agricultural labourers, and artisans. All these classifications give the impression that the forest is a most important livelihood means for the tribes.

The Report of the Sub-Group-II on non-timber forest produce (NTFP) and their Sustainable Management in the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan estimated that 275 million poor rural people in India, which is roughly 27 per cent of the total population, depend on non-timber forest produce (NTFP) to support their subsistence. Even in the case of economic transition in India, forest remains a key safety-net for millions of tribal households who derive their livelihood both directly and indirectly. Above fifty percent of tribal people who live in forest fringes have both their culture and economy intricately connected with the forest (World Bank, 2005). However, both culture and economy of these forest based communities are increasingly under stress due to several factors such as restrictive policy measures, demographic pressure lowering forest density, dwindling forest produce, etc. This process which has adversely impacted tribal livelihood began since colonial administration along with the rise in political and economic interests among states and different social groups. As a result, forest policy is concerned with conservation of natural resource and restoration of ecosystem, preservation of forest dwellers' culture and heritage, tribal economy and livelihood. Since colonial period, forest policy is also more aggressively concerned with its commercialisation. This intention of state and private parties is demolishing the community spirit for conservation of forest, preservation of culture and subsistence use.

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## 10.2 FOREST POLICY IN COLONIAL INDIA AND TRIBAL LIVELIHOOD

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The colonial administration brought out the first forest enactment, the Forest Act in 1865 to restrict private access to forest and bringing forest under direct control of the state. By formulating forest policies and later enacting them the colonial administration could not only control the forest but also the forest dwelling communities, the tribes. There is a serious question on the intention of the colonial state which introduced forest legislations or enactment in the second half of nineteenth century. Sinha (1987) observed the British administration did not want to take risk of meddling with the affairs of forest dwellers as they had witnessed several tribal revolts in nineteenth century. Therefore, it affected the commercialisation of timber and vested trade and commercial interest. This compelled them to establish the department of forest department in the year 1861 in India. Several authors (Guha, 1983; Chaudhuri, 1991) have also noted that the primary intention of nationalisation of forest resource was commercialisation and to generate income and the secondary intention was to conserve natural resources including forest.

The forest policy is by and large a negotiated outcome between state and other stakeholders, where the involvement of forest based communities is supposed to be at

the centre and not at the periphery. The first policy in India under British administration, however, ignored this aspect of community involvement. As a result, it jeopardised community livelihood system and eventually led to massive unrest after which the state was bound to amend or brought in new legislations with relatively flexible approach for forest based communities. The Forest Act in 1865 was concerned with the legal sanction to the forest administration in various provinces and empowered them to monopolistic control over forest. Sinha (1987, XII) noted, the first legislation introducing the government policy and program was actually introduced in 1873, which is called the Indian Forest Act 1873. Through this Act the entire forest in the country was classified into (a) Reserved forest (b) Protected forest and (c) Village forest. It allowed the forest dwellers to enjoy the rights to some extent but in restricted form as in 1865. The Forest Act-1878 also categorised forests into reserved forests, protected forests and village forests. The Forest Act 1878, however, declared certain acts as offences, introduced provision of fines and even imprisonment which did not go well with the forest dwelling communities as they are known for their subsistence use. Thus the intent of the colonial state was not merely conservation but to prohibit entry and access of communities who were the custodians of forest for thousands of years. The other intent of the state was to maximize profit and increase commercial access to forests with such regulations. Since 1865 until 1952, there were several amendments, but the Indian Forest (Amendment) Act 1927 elaborately dealt with different aspects of forest management and people's rights including provision of penalties. The Indian Forest Act 1927 was furthermore comprehensive and prescribed duty on timber. It regulated community rights over forests and forest department was strengthened from time to time with an intention to increase state revenue (Kulkarni, 1987). After the enactment of Government of India Act 1935, forest became a provincial subject (Sinha, 1987). As a result, extensive cutting down and felling of trees for commercial interest, over-felling of private forests and forests in the princely states was found and also mentioned in the Report of the National Commission of Agriculture 1976.

### Check Your Progress

- 1) How did forest policy in colonial legacy affect tribal culture and livelihood?

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## 10.3 FOREST POLICY IN POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIA

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The National Forest Policy 1952 is the first of such comprehensive national forest policy of post-independent India. Several scholars noticed that the National Forest Policy had the system of balanced land use, maintaining ecosystem, checking of soil erosion, tree plantation, supply of timber for national need and realisation of maximum annual revenue, etc. The National Forest Policy is credited for its recognition to symbiotic relationship between tribals and forests. However, it is also discredited for its favour to commercialisation. It pursued withdrawal of concessions on the release of forest land for cultivation, establishment of village forest for meeting requirement of the villagers,

bringing the private forests under the state control, introduction of grazing free forest area by disowning community land (grazing land), and development of measures to restrict shifting cultivation practice of tribal (Verma, 1990). This policy further reduced traditional rights of the tribal communities over forest to mere concessions (ibid). The National Forest Policy Act (1952) in its Para 32 had a few concessions to the tribals in terms of rights to take water, digging of wells and canals for agricultural purpose, free grazing in open forests not reserved forests, access to required timbers, bamboos, canes, etc., for construction and repair of houses, collection of grass for cattle, fishing and hunting excluding the protected fauna, etc. (Sinha, 1987). Verma (1990) further noted by bringing new national forest policy, forest departments engaged more number of contractors in forestry operations such as timber supply, minor forest produce marketing to maximise revenue. It may be noted here that the tribal communities who adhered to customary practice and were not aware of forest laws were left to the mercy of contractors. There was infringement of traditional forest rights and customary cultural practices due to excessive state intervention. Thus, the National Forest Policy maintained the colonial emphasis on precedence of national interest over local demands (Haeuber, 1993). Das (1996) observed how the tribal communities, particularly the women raised their voice against privatisation and commercialisation of minor forest produce (MFP) in Odisha. The tribal women met the then Chief Minister of Orissa in 1953 to withdraw leases of tamarind, an MFP to private parties in the interest of tribal people living in forest. The struggle against such interest of the state continued thereafter but without any concrete outcome in favour of the tribal livelihood in the state. Since colonial time, the expansion of legal control over the forest territory has severely affected tribal livelihood system and affected the tribal freedom and women rights.

The Dhebar Commission in 1961 after reviewing the National Forest Policy recommended its revision and reconsideration to give further concession to tribals with respect to access to the forest land for cultivation, free grazing in forest areas and emphasised on the participation of tribals in forest management. The Commission recommended that functionally all forest lands should be classified into protected areas, productive forests, and social forests. The first type was concerned with forests in hill tracts and other areas which are associated with ecological restoration. The second type was primarily commercial forests with potential timber bearing strands, and the third type on wastelands was to meet community requirement. Subsequently, Shiloo Ao Committee in 1969 also emphasised on the given line of recommendations of the Dhebar Commission and stressed upon tribal livelihood system (Kulkarni, 1987; Sinha, 1987).

The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 empowers government to declare any area to be declared as protected area such as national park, wildlife sanctuary, tiger reserve, etc., for wildlife protection. The Act is credited for its support to protect wildlife from poaching, killing and hunting and also effort to reserve endangered wild lives. However, keeping in considerable tribal habitat particularly in forest and hill tracts, the Act was criticised for its biasness. There were many instances where the tribals who entered into reserved area for their livelihood were prosecuted. The traditional land rights were violated after certain area was declared wildlife sanctuary, national park, etc., for people who were living in forest for generations.

In the initial period of post Independence India, forest was a state subject as per the VII Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Subsequently, in the year 1976 through the 42<sup>nd</sup> amendment to the Constitution, it was transferred to the concurrent list. The Report

of the National Commission on Agriculture in 1976 has noted the possibility of pilferages by engaging contractors in forest trading and therefore recommended for involvement of community in the forest management to develop sense of belongingness. It stressed upon investment in forestry than mere exploitation of forest for commercial gains of industry and of state. It re-emphasised forestry, social forestry, and forest productivity and forestry education with focus on economic growth. Under social forestry, the Commission recommended restoration of degraded forests, fuel wood plantation on forest lands and other government lands, farm forestry on private land and agro-forestry among others (Pandey, 1987). The Forest Conservation Act 1980 (read hereafter FCA 1980) furthermore emphasised on forest conservation to restore vast tracts of forest land which is fast depleting due to excessive anthropogenic pressure. It classified forests into four categories-reserved forests, protected forests, village forests and private forests. The Act made it mandatory for the state government to take permission from the union government. The researchers have observed that the FCA 1980 was too negligent on the forest rights of tribal communities which has a direct repercussion on their livelihood and autonomy. The exclusionary forest and wild life conservation became a major concern for the government and tribals who are traditionally the custodians of forest were treated as criminals in their own lands (Haque, 2020).

After criticism from different quarters and tribal apprehension over failed forest rights, the government realised that if tribal demands are not met, forests cannot be effectively saved. Therefore, the notion of inclusion of local communities in forest management was imbibed. The Indian Forest Policy of 1988 and the subsequent government resolution on participatory forest management (MoEF, 1990) emphasised the need for people's participation in natural resource management. The Forest Policy 1988 incorporated the clauses to protect the forest dwellers' rights (Bandi, 2017). It further advocated protecting the rights and concessions enjoyed by the communities (Saxena, 2002). The new Forest Policy 1988 gave higher priority to environmental stability than to earning revenue. It encouraged mixed cropping over mono cropping.

Marketing of minor forest produce for the forest based communities remained a challenge even after its nationalisation. Private traders and corporation could not protect the interests of the tribal communities, particularly in case of minor forest produce. Some of the problems included lack of organisations for fair trading of MFPs, poor road communication in tribal areas, lack of storage, lack of processing units for value addition, lack of technical support system, and presence of intermediaries who have vested economic interest amongst others. Keeping in view the problem of marketing of MFP by tribal communities which is now called NTFP, Government of India established in 1987 Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED). TRIFED acted like a facilitator between State Tribal Development Federations and State Forest Corporations for trading of such produce at the national and international level (Verma, 1990). Despite some support system by the Union government and states, TRIFED could not address the real issues at the grass-root level due to over regulation by the state. It was also noticed that the price fixation for MFPs did not attract the people.

The Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, popularly called PESA Act 1996 is a progressive legislation in terms of devolution of power to Gram Sabhas and recognising the rights of people to forest and forest produce. It is mainly applicable to the Fifth scheduled areas recognised by the Constitution of India. This Fifth scheduled area is distributed across ten states, other than northeastern states of India where there is sizeable tribal presence. The PESA Act 1996 conferred ownership rights on Gram

Sabhas in respect of MFPs. Despite autonomy and decentralised governance, the scheduled areas are not free from state intervention, bureaucratic hurdle and political interference. There are some questions related to PESA in the matter related to management of forest resources including forest land. Some key questions pertaining to PESA are settlement of forest land rights, demarcation of boundary, record of rights, etc.

### Check Your Progress

- 2) Make comparative assessment of forest policies during and post colonial legacies?

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## 10.4 SOME FLAWS IN FOREST POLICY IN RECOGNISING TRIBAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

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Some flaws in forest policies in India have been the inadequate recognition to tribal habitations, economic practice, indigenous knowledge, customary practice, etc. Further, most tribal habited hill and forest regions are not surveyed and thus the land records are not created. For instance, in the north-eastern states, the states that are mostly inhabited by tribes are with the lowest geographical coverage in cadastral survey. Roy Burman once pointed out that hardly one percent land in actual possession of the tribal communities in Odisha was recorded in their favour. Similarly, Mahapatra (1993) noted only 0.25 per cent land owned by the Bonda people were recorded in their favour. Further, Saxena (2005) noticed, in north-eastern states of Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Meghalaya, hill areas of Manipur and some tribal tracts of Assam have no land records, nor is there any payment of revenue (Behera, 2014). Traditionally, these communities had their customary practices through which land ownership, distribution and usages were determined. But with the introduction of cadastral survey and land records in some tribal pockets, the customary land practices were overlooked. As a result, there is a conflict in land ownership and forest rights. The above description shows that the tribal communities and forest dwellers are mainly vulnerable in terms of lack of legal ownership, or possession of record of rights. As a result, their eviction becomes easier even with or without compensation guaranteed by the government.

The rights issues of forest dwellers remained unresolved for centuries now with none of the forest policies neither denied nor recognised the rights of the forest dwelling communities adequately. The intention of the state and private parties to extract forest revenue became more important than protecting community rights. The question of fundamental rights of forest based communities to live in dignity remained unanswered due to apparent apathy and negligence by state until 2006 when the Forest Rights Act was enacted.

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## 10.5 FOREST RIGHTS ACT

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As already discussed, the tribal communities have already struggled a lot to protect their interests and rights with regard to forest and forest based livelihood. In order to

protect tribal rights over forest and customary practices, the fundamental requirement was to recognise the forest dwellers, their habitat rights, their resource such as forest land, and customary practices. It was required to survey such areas, create new records where there are no records, and provide them tenure security. The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, which is popularly called, FRA 2006 fills the gap in recognising tribal forest land rights and overcoming persistent violation to their customary rights. It provided the Gram Sabha the authority to determine the nature and extent of individual or customary rights within the local limits of its jurisdiction. There was provision for entitlement to a forest dwelling scheduled tribe who resided for at least three generations, which is 75 years before 13 December 2005 according to the Act and primarily dependent on the forests or forest land for bonafide livelihood needs.

Despite landmark forest legislation, the FRA has produced mixed results due to several procedural delays, lack of establishing proof of dwellings, legal dispute, etc. In the meantime, it has given many tribes and forest dwellers their long pending rights to live in dignity in their habitation.

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## 10.6 NEW INITIATIVES FOR ENHANCING TRIBAL LIVELIHOOD

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Several state governments have promoted women self-help groups for processing of MFPs, value addition and marketing. It is observed in some tribal areas women SHGs are involved in stitching leaf plates, preparing pickles from MFPs, etc., to generate profit of selling such items with the support of SHG-bank linkage programs.

Government of India has further focused on fair returns to the tribal gatherers through minimum support system (MSP) and development of value chain for MFPs. It is now focusing scientific process of gathering, harvesting and primary processing of MFPs under the Van Dhan Vikash Karyakram (VDVK). Under VDVK, the government plans to set up about 6000 Van Dhan Kendras in a span of two years. It is proposed to constitute Van Dhan Vikash SHGs, development of clusters of such SHGs and convergence with existing SHGs that are active in tribal areas to enhance livelihood opportunities.

### Check Your Progress

- 3) What are the new forest policy prospects for tribal livelihood?

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## 10.7 SUMMARY

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It is about the greed not the subsistence which has to be questioned for the exploitation of natural resources including forest. The issue of forest policy which is concerned with conservation has shown the reservation to declare commercialisation rather than tribal

subsistence practice as the major cause of deforestation. In order to focus on forest conservation, ecological restoration, countering climate change and sustainable development, considering tribal as key stakeholder in the policy discourse is important. Tribals who have been practicing subsistence economies, livelihood without greediness and practice conservation through customary practice should be considered as the protectors of forest. As these tribes and traditional forest dwellers are the aboriginals, the focus in priority on their culture and livelihood security should be addressed in forest policy.

The question of forest policy is not related to livelihood alone, but a bulk of other associated issues such as violation of fundamental rights, property rights, conservation of culture and ecology, and indigenous knowledge amongst others. Some efforts to address these issues through Forest Rights Act and new initiatives through Van Dhan Vikash Karyakram by Government of India are progressive steps, but then their effective implementation through centre-state coordination and states' commitment to tribal livelihood promotion along with conservation of forest and ecological restoration are significant.

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## 10.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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- 1) Refer to Section 10.2
- 2) Refer to Sections 10.2 & 10.3
- 3) Refer to Sub-sections 10.5 7 and Section 10.6



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## UNIT 11 TRIBAL MOVEMENTS\*

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### Structure

- 11.0 Introduction
- 11.1 Definition, Characteristics and Classification
- 11.2 Tribal Movements in Pre-Independent India
  - 11.2.1 The Santal Hull
  - 11.2.2 The Bastar Movement
  - 11.2.3 The Bhuyan and Juang Movement
- 11.3 Tribal Movement in Post-Independent India
  - 11.3.1 The Jharkhand Movement
  - 11.3.2 The Naga Movement
  - 11.3.3 The Kalinganagar Movement
- 11.4 Impacts of Tribal Movements
- 11.5 Summary
- 11.6 References
- 11.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this unit, you will be able to:

- understand “tribal movement” and its characteristics;
- understand the factors which were responsible for the tribal movements in pre-independent India;
- analyse the nature of contemporary tribal movements in India;
- know in detail the major tribal movements before and after the independence of India; and
- understand the impact of these movements on tribal life.

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## 11.0 INTRODUCTION

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In this unit, we will deal with a very important issue that has been a matter of concern for scholars from various disciplines such as anthropology, history, political science and sociology. We will talk about tribal movements of India which continues to be a burning topic even today. Indigenous societies, as we know, are different in many aspects from the modern industrial societies. Their culture, worldviews and cosmologies are different from those of modern societies. With the emergence of nation states after World War II most indigenous societies in the world are coming into contact with the neighboring states willingly or unwillingly. They are being assimilated, integrated or

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subjugated with the modern states resulting in conflicts and movements. In India the *adivasis*, the indigenous populations of India, have a long history of conflict with the state machineries, the zamindars (landlords), the mahajans (money lenders), etc. Let's examine some of the major tribal movements in India in detail in this unit.

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## 11.1 DEFINITION, CHARACTERISTICS AND CLASSIFICATION

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You all must have come across the word “movement” in various contexts and purposes. We are also very much aware of the Indian freedom movement. But what is “movement”? How it is different from the similar looking terms such as “protest” and “resistance”? **Protest** is a method of showing dissent or objection by an individual or a group of people to the action of the state or the authority. It is usually the expression of anger and disapproval of the powerless before the powerful. It is a way for the dominated to stand against the dominant. Through protest the powerless show its **resistance** to the dominant values and the authority. We show resistance to the dominant political, economic or social structure in myriad ways. Protest and resistance are spontaneous, short-lived and can sometimes be at the individual level too. But **Movement**, on the contrary, requires a longer period of sustained collective action. It requires proper coordination, leadership and organisation on a collective basis. Movements are often oriented towards realising a bigger social or political goal through a change in state policy.

Movements in the context of Indian tribes have a long history. Before the advent of the Britishers the *adivasis* of India had a different nomenclature such as *jana* (Ray, 1972). They lived a self-sustained and self-ruled life in mostly the forest and hill regions of India. The forest land and other resources in the tribal habitat were never claimed by any outsider before the advent of the British rule. There is hardly any recorded evidence of conflicts between the *adivasis* with the outsiders before the British rule. The British administration introduced a new forest policy, The Indian Forest Act, 1867, by which the entire forest land in India became the property of the state. The state became the conservator of Indian forest by this Act. Thus, during the British rule the remote hilly and forest area of India where the *adivasis* lived became open to the outsiders. Britishers had their commercial interest in the *adivasi* habitat due to the abundance of natural resources in the area. Once these inaccessible areas were made accessible there was influx of the *dikus* (outsiders) in the area. Eventually the British administration named the various types of *adivasis* into a single term “tribe” for administrative purpose (Ray, 1972). As soon as the area where these “tribes” lived became open to the non-tribals the *adivasis* became increasingly vulnerable to exploitation. The tribal land, timber and other resources were targeted by the Britishers as well as the non-tribal traders. Gradually the number of exploiters in tribal area increased which included money lenders, middlemen, contractors, liquor vendors, zamindars, etc. The tribal communities resisted such exploitation and invasion to their territory. Though the immediate nature and purpose of these movements varied across parts of India we can see a sense of common identity as *adivasis* or “tribes” in these movements. Thus these movements are better known as “tribal movements”. These movements are characterised by the presence of community consciousness and a fierce resistance against the attempt to derecognise the tribal traditional right over forest land. Moreover tribal movements are “tribal” because the movement was largely against the *dikus* or the outsiders, the non-tribals.

If we examine the nature of tribal movements we can observe that they are mostly spontaneous outburst of long pent-up anger against the exploiters such as government officials, landlords, money-lenders and traders. Most of these movements are marked by exemplary unity among the people against the oppressors. Ethnic identity and the sense of indigeneity contributed to the social solidarity. Another characteristic feature of tribal movements is that most of them aimed to solve only immediate grievances. Only a few of them looked beyond the immediate needs to think of any long-term goal or issue. Almost all the tribal movements took violent turn and subsided only with heavy bloodshed. The other characteristic feature of tribal movements is the local character of the movements. Many of them started and persisted locally. Another distinguishing character of tribal movement is the lack of leadership and inability of the *adivasis* to coordinate among themselves to march ahead towards their goal strategically. Tribal movements used only traditional arms such as bow, arrow, and axes. In the post independent India the naxalite movement used modern weapons though most other tribal movements still relied on traditional arms.

### Classification of Tribal Movements

We can study tribal movements according to their various types. There have been attempts to categorise tribal movements in various ways. One of the most cited classification of tribal movements is given by Mahapatra (1972). He divided the tribal movements into reactionary, conservative, revisionary or revolutionary. The reactionary movements aim to bring back the “good old days” whereas the conservative movements try to maintain the status quo. The revolutionary movements attempt to transform the society by “purification” or improvement of culture by eliminating the “evil” or “low” customs or beliefs or institutions. Another way to categorise tribal movements is to study them as ethnic rebellion, reform movements, movements for political autonomy, secessionist movements and agrarian unrest (Sinha, 1968). In this unit we will discuss tribal movements in two major categories: the pre-independence and post-independence tribal movements.

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## 11.2 TRIBAL MOVEMENTS DURING PRE INDEPENDENT INDIA

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As you know most *adivasis* of India live in hilly and forest area. Traditionally they are the protectors, users and owners of the land they inhabit. No one questioned it before the British ruled in India. The British administration introduced Indian Forest Act in 1878 by which the forest land of India went into the control of the state. This policy was very detrimental to the tribal interest because at the core of it was the derecognition of the customary rights of the *adivasis* over their own land. The government created a land system where the role of outsiders in the form of landlords and middlemen was legitimised. The community based rights were replaced by state ownership of land. The *adivasis* were forced to pay rent for the land they used. Thus the status of *adivasis* changed from land owners to mere tenants. This was the core of all related exploitations that the tribals faced at the hands of the state, the zamindars, the contractors, the traders and the middlemen. Gradually the customary tribal law was replaced by the law of the state. The *adivasis* also were made to follow a system of local governance which was headed by the representatives of the zamindars or the rajas. All these gave rise to severe oppression of the *adivasis* which eventually led to uprisings and rebellions.

The government officials, the legal system, the zamindars, the traders, the contractors and the middlemen were all outsiders and thus the conflict was against the outsiders or the *dikus*. Let us discuss the major tribal movements which happened in the pre-independence era.

### 11.2.1 The Santal Revolt

The Santal tribe fought against the zamindars, mahajans and the East India Company during 1855-56 in the erstwhile Bengal Presidency. They lived in a region called Damin-i-koh which was first cleared from jungle by them. Thus they considered themselves as the rightful occupant of the area. The jungle was needed to be cleared and converted into agricultural land to overcome the shortage of food due to famine. The Santals were invited to clear the jungle and made it suitable for cultivation. But once the jungle was cleared the local zamindars started collecting huge rent from the Santals for this land. The local traders and money-lenders too started exploiting the Santals on many grounds (Singh, 2005). This was the seed of discontent among the Santals. They had no security in the possession of the land they themselves had cleared out of the jungle. For payment of rent they had to depend upon the mahajans, who in turn exploited the adivasis in various ways.

The administration was corrupt and rarely listened to the Santals' woes. Continuous oppression at the hands of the zamindars, money lenders, traders, and the British administration made the Santals to yearn for freedom and for their own land. Thus they wanted to drive away the *dikus* and establish Santal raj. Two tribal leaders Kanhu and Sidhu led the Santals to organise a movement against the *dikus*. They decided that they have to take back the land from the *zamindars* and the *mahajans*. Thousands of Santals marched with arms such as bows, arrows, axes etc towards Calcutta to present a petition before the Governor. They were obstructed by the police and there was violent rebellion for around sixty days. Hundreds of Santals were massacred and the revolt was suppressed with heavy forces. However the British government realised the woes of the Santals and around 5000 sq miles area was demarcated for the Santals which was later known as Santal parganas (Xalxo, 2008).

### 11.2.2 The Bastar Movement

Bastar was a princely state during the colonial rule. The Britishers didn't directly rule over it. *Adivasis* constituted the major share of the population of Bastar kingdom. Gond tribe was the numerically dominant population in the region. The Hindu Rajput kings ruled the state and there was mostly a cordial relation between the rulers and the adivasis (Gell, 1997). In 1853 the state of Bastar came under the indirect rule of the British administration. Since then the British interference started to control the state in various ways. There were three major moves by the British administration with respect to the Bastar kingdom. First, the forest land went into the direct control of the British administration. Second, the British government wanted to exploit the abundant natural resources in the region such as timber, minor forest products and mineral resources, which led to displacement of the *adivasis* from their land. The third was the role of the British administration in matters related to the succession to the throne. The British administration wanted to place compliant officials in power. All these led to the resentment and discontent of the tribal subjects of the Bastar kingdom (Verghese, 2016).

The death of the king Raja Bhairam Deo in 1891 was a turning point in the history of Bastar movement. The prince, Pratap Deo was just 6 years old then and many caretaker diwans were appointed by the British administration before the prince took over as the king. In 1910 one of the former diwans, Lal Kalendra Singh instigated the tribals against the king and the Britishers. He assured the adivasis that if he came to the power he would drive the Britishers out of the kingdom. The movement spread across the entire state and the existing British force couldn't contain it. Eventually more forces had to be called from Bengal and Jeypore. The movement was suppressed with heavy force and many adivasis were imprisoned. Lal Kalendra Singh was arrested and he died in the prison later.

### 11.2.3 Bhuyan and Juang Revolt

Bhuyan and Juang are adivasi communities who live in the Keonjhar district of Odisha. In the pre-independent India Keonjhar was a princely state. The kings of Keonjhar exploited their prajas, mostly the adivasis, through various rents and taxes. One such rent was *bethi* system through which the kings collected rents from the *adivasis* in the form of forced labour. The economic harassment was so acute that the tribal subjects wanted the end of the King's rule at the earliest (Mishra, 1983). The dissatisfaction of the tribal subjects reached a peak when the British administration selected an oppressive royal, Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanj, as the successor to the throne after the death of the king in 1861 (Verma, 1990).

An educated Bhuyan young man, Dharanidhar Naik, convened a panchayat to discuss the issues of oppression by the king and his officials and presented their grievances to the authorities. They waited for the officials and authorities to listen to their grievances. But no one listened to their grievances. Finally the *adivasis* took the matter into their hands and resorted to rebellion. It started in May 1891 with about 1200 rebels. It continued and took the shape of a movement with violent means. The British administration sent forces to Keonjhar to suppress the movement. Eventually Dharanidhar Naik was captured and imprisoned for seven years. The movement continued till the last tribal leader Madan Futkar was arrested in 1898. Gradually the British authorities came to know about the maladministration and economic oppression by the king's officials. The king was asked to pay attention to the tribal subjects' legitimate demands. Steps were taken for the economic upliftment of the Bhuyan, Juangs and the Kols (Mishra, 1987).

#### Check Your Progress

- 1) Examine the factors which gave rise to tribal unrest in India during the British rule?

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## 11.3 TRIBAL MOVEMENTS IN POST-INDEPENDENT INDIA

The independent India had a changed outlook towards the tribal issues. The government followed a policy of phased integration with massive welfare programmes in the tribal

area. This, to some extent, slowed down the rebellious adivasis and many tribes gradually adapted to the new reality of independent India. The level of education and literacy went up and there was the emergence of a tribal middle and elite class wanting to participate in the mainstream social and political process. Tribal political parties and associations emerged as a medium to strengthen the social solidarity. At the same time till 2006 there was no change in the British forest policy which was instrumental in the exploitation of the adivasis. The state continued to assert its monopoly rights over forest land and exclude the tribes from their customary rights (Guha, 1983). In 2006 the Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act was passed. But due to lack of implementation this Act remains orphaned even today. This led to a very distinctive way of interaction between the *adivasis* and the State in post independent India over the use of forest land. The state confronted the *adivasis* on various mega developmental projects such as construction of dams, and establishment of mining industries, etc. The massive displacement of the *adivasis* for the mega developmental projects and industries went unnoticed in the initial period till 1990s when the tribal awareness on this was absent. The 1991 economic liberalisation allowed national and multi-national companies to acquire tribal land and establish industries in much more easier ways. The state and the industries often compromised with environmental concerns to proceed with establishing various industries in tribal area. You all know that tribal area in India is rich in natural resources and mineral resources. The tribal groups facing displacement gradually got united and raised their voice against the authorities. Though it was sporadic in the initial phase but later tribal leadership emerged and spearheaded movement against displacement and in some cases for proper compensation. There are stories of success and failure of this type of tribal movements in the contemporary India. Thus in independent India tribal movements have been based on realising goals largely related to self-determination, anti-displacement and pro-environmental.

### 11.3.1 Jharkhand Movement

In the post-independent India the tribal movement which drew more attention and successfully achieved its goal was the Jharkhand movement. In the beginning of the last century a group of educated tribal social workers and students from Chhotanagpur area initiated a protest movement against the growing regional disparity in development, and exploitation of *adivasis*. They demanded for a greater land for *adivasis* comprising parts of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal. The major tribes who inhabited in this area are the Munda, the Ho and the Oraon. Their culture, land ownership and political system were very much different from the non-tribals. The habitat was also more or less isolated. But the *jagirdari* system, introduced in eighteenth century by the British, and the influx of Hindu, Sikh and Muslim traders to this area a century later were the causes of exploitation for the tribals (Sen, 1972).

The Chhotanagpur Unnati Samaj which was formed in 1920 started raising voice for the tribal problems and concerns and gradually drew attention of the government. It was later renamed as the Adivasi Sabha. Jaipal Singh was elected the president of the forum in 1939 and spearheaded the movement for tribal interests. In 1951 the Adivasi Sabha was converted into a political party called the Jharkhand Party. It continued to win assembly seats in Bihar and Odisha amidst political ups and downs. The able leadership of Jaipal Singh brought together the Christians, the non-Christians, urban population and the rural people to put forward their demand of a separate state for tribals.

In 1973 some tribal leaders under the leadership of Sibu Soren and B.B. Mahto formed Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and demanded for a separate Jharkhand state. In 1983 the demand for a separate state of Jharkhand continued with protest march and economic blockade programme under the leadership of JMM. Violent bandhs were also called and an all party meeting was called by Sibu Soren in 1992. The demand continued and amidst political ups and downs finally in 2000 the Parliament approved the Bihar Reorganisation Bill and on 15th November the state of Jharkhand was formed.

### 11.3.2 Naga Movement

Ethnic movements have been a characteristic feature in the north eastern part of India. Formation of the state of Assam involved inclusion of many tribal groups of the north-east India. These groups later aspired for political economy citing development disparities on the basis of ethnic groups. Naga Hills District was a scheduled district in Assam before India's independence. The 1935 Government of India Act declared the Naga Hills District as an "excluded area" which means the general laws applicable for India will not be applicable in Naga Hills District. This arrangement worked well for the Nagas as the interference from outsiders was negligible. However after the independence of India and with the withdrawal of British administration the Nagas started fearing about the encroachment of their land and forest by the people from the plains. Naga movement was an expression of the real and perceived interference and exploitation by people from the plains (Das, 1982). Though the Naga consciousness was expressed through the formation of the Naga Club in 1918 the movement for political autonomy actually started after Indian independence.

The Naga Hills District Tribal Council was formed in 1945 which was renamed as Naga National Council in 1946. It was aimed to augment the Naga ethnic and political unity. With the election of Phizo as the president of NNC the Naga consciousness changed towards independence (Kikhi, 2020). The general elections of 1952 was boycotted and there was wide spread violence. Eventually an agreement was signed between the Government of India and the NNC which brought ceasefire and further talk. However both the Government of India and the NNC seemed to underestimate each other and not much development was possible towards a mutual agreement. In 1960, after a series of violent conflicts, there was a 16-point agreement between the Government of India and the Naga People's Convention in 1960 which created the state of Nagaland. Both, the Naga nationalism and Indian nationalism started to coexist. However, many Nagas took it as a measure of counter-insurgency to divide the Nagas. The main aim to integrate the Naga-inhabited areas in India and Myanmar continued to exist. In the meanwhile there was mutual distrust and criticism within various factions of the Naga movement. Along with the pro-independence groups there are also pro-India groups. The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak Muivah) has established itself as a more acceptable force in the movement and was instrumental in the formation of the state. In 2015 there was also an agreement between the Government of India and the NSCN (IM) which facilitated more talks and peace. The movement is an ongoing process though factionalism has influenced its course deeply.

### 11.3.3 Kalinganagar Movement

The state of Odisha is endowed with various mineral resources in great quantity the majority of which remains untapped till now. The 1991 Indian economic liberalisation and the 2001 Orissa Industrial Policy provided the required administrative and legal

support from the state to accelerate establishing mining industries in Odisha. The adjoining region of the Keonjhar and Jajpur districts in Odisha plays a dominant role in the mineral map of Odisha. There are many chromite and iron ore mines in this region. The Ho adivasis live there and are considered as the indigenous population there. In 1990s the Odisha State Government proposed to set up an industrial complex in this region at a place called Duburi and named it the Kalinga Nagar Industrial Complex.

The local adivasi community claims that the demarcation and acquisition of land for the above project was done without any prior-information to the people. A corporate body called Industrial Development Corporation of Odisha (IDCO) was built and all the land was acquired in its name by the Government. The first land acquisition was done in 1990 from a group of villages near Duburi. In exchange the people were promised a compensation package which included land for land taken, jobs in the industries, houses, and schools for children. The discontent began when the people were not compensated as promised. Many families were not considered for compensation due to lack of pattas or any documents for the land they possessed. The Ho adivasis traditionally do not have the conception of private individual property and consequently many of them didn't have any documentary evidence. Moreover there has been no land settlement in the area since long (Pandey, 2009).

All these led to protest against land acquisition and establishment of industries in the area. There was months of protest and representation but the administration did not compensate the displaced adivasis as promised earlier. Consequently on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2006 a group of protesters attempted to stop construction work of mining industries at Duburi. The protest turned violent and the police shot dead thirteen adivasis. One policeman was killed too in the tragic incident. After this the Kalinganagar movement got more strengthened and united because people from various adjacent areas joined them. The Bisthapan Biridhi Jan Manch (BBJM), the forum which spearheaded the movement from the very beginning, continued the movement against displacement. The movement forced the government to take up steps to compensate the displaced adivasis. However neither was the compensation satisfactory nor were all the displaced adivasis identified. Moreover in 2016 the Sukinda region was earmarked by the government to be developed as the National Investment and Manufacturing Zone (NIMZ). The BBJM continues its movement against land acquisition for industries and for compensation. Later the movement experienced setback due to factionalism within the tribal groups.

### Check Your Progress

- 2) Critically differentiate the nature of tribal movements in pre and post independent India.

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## 11.4 IMPACT OF TRIBAL MOVEMENTS

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Tribal movements have significant influence on various aspects of adivasi life. While discussing various movements in previous sections we have looked at their course and



consequences. In this section we will examine the impact of movements on economic, political and socio-cultural domains of tribal life.

The most obvious impact of tribal movements has been on the economy of the adivasis. The economic oppression which remained the core of almost all tribal movements was addressed to some extent by the British government. Certain policy measures were taken to reduce the adivasis' dependence on the money-lenders and landlords. In some cases land was also provided for example the Santals were allotted land for cultivation and habitation which was named Santal parganas. However the core reason of discontent, i.e. the state's right on forest land continued to exist. The systematic exclusion of the rights of the adivasis on forest land became the important factor in continuing discontent among the tribals leading to movements such as Naxalbari Movement in the post independent India.

The impact of tribal movements is also observed in the self-determination of the adivasis. The post-independent India initiated various welfare measures for the adivasis which was reflected in the increasing level of literacy and education. A strong adivasi middle class and elite section emerged with increasing tendency to assert tribal identity and resist disparities in development. The adivasi consciousness witnessed regional expression and culminated in the formation of states like Jharkhand and Chhatisgarh. Today adivasis of India have achieved significant political strength as a result of various tribal movements.

There has been tremendous impact of tribal movements on socio-cultural aspects of the adivasis. Various charismatic tribal leaders spearheaded movements which are reformative. Evil and harmful cultural practices were discarded and new beneficial cultural values were incorporated into tribal life. The Birsait movement which you studied in the previous units is a crucial example. Tribal movements are also responsible for creating a consciousness based on adivasi identity which resulted in new social solidarity among the adivasis of India.

The impact of tribal movements in recent time is very crucial from an environmental point of view. The anti-displacement movements are often pro-environmental. The tribal movements against mega projects and industries in ecologically sensitive area such as forest and hill regions have stopped further deforestation and concretisation of earth's surface. The movements have also led to the recognition of indigenous knowledge systems regarding management of natural resources as well as adivasi rights on forest land and resources.

### Check Your Progress

- 3) Tribal movements in India are an expression of self-determination. Explain.

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- 4) Discuss various impacts of tribal movements.

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## 11.5 SUMMARY

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Tribal movements have been organised for various reasons across various parts of our country. The tribes of north-east India faced different challenges than the tribes of most other parts of India. Those have been discussed in this unit under two broad categories: movements before and after Indian independence. The tribal movements before independence were mostly against the exploitative nexus between the British government and the *dikus* representing the landlords, money-lenders and traders. These movements, after much sacrifices, also yielded certain positive policy measures beneficial to the adivasis. The movements after independence were organised around the issue of development disparities culminating in movements for political autonomy. We have also observed identity based movement, especially in the north-east part of India after independence. Ethnic identity is considered a major cause of development disparity in north-east India and consequently political autonomy and sometimes secession is aimed as solution. Indian tribes have also been organising movements against development-induced displacements. The impacts of these movements have been immense in terms of economic, political and social gains. Rights of adivasis and relevance of indigenous knowledge systems have been highlighted in these tribal movements.

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## 11.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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- 1) Refer to Section 11.2.
- 2) Refer to Section 11.2 and 11.3.
- 3) Refer to Section 11.2, 11.3 and 11.4
- 4) Refer to Section 11.4

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