



BLOCK 4
CONTEMPORARY ISSUES



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UNIT 10 MARKET ECONOMY, AGRARIAN CRISIS AND MIGRATION*

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Learning objectives

In this unit, you will be able to understand about:

- Meaning and nature of market economy;
- Agricultural sector and its liberalization;
- Effect of market economy on small and marginal growers; and
- Emerging land and labour crisis.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Countries around the world have embraced market economy and removed barriers to free trade through policy reforms. Countries with rich agricultural and natural resource-based economy have adopted new policy measures to allow free trade economic model in which both private and public firms are allowed to invest in various sectors that fall in the ambit of free trade norms. Market economy has thus allowed a firm from one nation to invest in another nation, based on the principles of liberalization, privatization and globalization. India adopted such robust market economic approach in 1991 to overcome the balance of payments crisis that emerged during 1980s. According to Walker, (2008), through economic reforms, India introduced a structural adjustment package that included the following:

- devaluation,
- fiscal correction,
- trade liberalization,
- financial sector 'reforms',

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- deregulation, and
- privatization.

Economic liberalization, which is based on global-transnational approach, developed in the direction of wider production, supply and distribution.

Market economy encourages aggressive production, distribution and consumption through technology, institutional reforms and wider supply chain network. Unfortunately, the globalized production and consumption are not conditioned by societal norms. The market can only register “demand”, i.e., need backed by purchasing power. It has no way of taking cognizance of the need to live of the poor who do not have the wherewithal to buy what they need to survive (Basu, 2007). Under market economy the economic approach of state has shifted to industry-based production in non-agriculture as well as agriculture. In non-agriculture mining, industrial manufacturing, service sector, and infrastructure operations expanded rapidly.

Unlike peasant economy, which is associated with limited production mainly for household consumption, modern industrial economy or market economy depends on surplus production that is primarily meant for the market to generate profit. Progress and development is judged through growth rate estimated at the state level as well as national level. There is competition at the state, national and international levels to achieve faster growth rate. Denying value-based growth and justice to poor including the industrial worker, daily-wage worker, small producers and landless agricultural labourer has become a harsh reality.

Adoption of global market economy benefitted individuals, states and nations with purchasing capacity by improving access to consumer products. Some of the factors on which the purchasing capacity is based on are:

- production and trade relation between countries,
- commoditization and trade of land and other natural resources,
- service sector expansion.

Liberalization benefitted countries with scarce agricultural land as they got easy access to food and other agro-based products. Countries are now exchanging surplus agricultural produce and food items based on mutual export-import norms and trade policies. Removal of export and import barriers has benefitted countries in dry, arid and semi-arid regions and other agriculturally less advanced nations to import agricultural produce and food items to feed their population throughout the year. Rising international competition among agriculturally advanced countries to keep up their industrial production and establish a position in the market globally has affected millions of small and marginal farmers, tribes and other indigenous communities who are accustomed to subsistence economy in developing countries of the world.

Most people in rural and tribal areas are poor and practice peasant economy. Tribal communities include more subsistence growers than non-tribals. A major chunk of the peasant’s production goes off for self-consumption, and only a small quantum goes to the market. Therefore, the market economy associated with industrial production of agriculture and non-agriculture, supply-chain and distribution poses a serious challenge to the small and marginal producers and tribes who often find it difficult to sell their small and meagre produce for a

suitable return in the global competitive market. As a result of low return from agriculture, shift in occupation from agriculture to non-agriculture takes place in rural and tribals areas. Despite the link of agriculture to industry, the growth rate in agriculture has decelerated and the share of agriculture to total GDP has declined since economic reforms began. According to Pocket Book of Agricultural Statistics 2019, the percentage share of output from agriculture in GDP was the following:

- 25.2 in 1989-90 (before economic reforms),
- 19.6 in 1999-2000,
- 12.3 in 2009-10,
- 10.6 in 2015-16.

10.2 MARKET ECONOMY AND LIBERALIZATION OF AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

With the advent of economic reforms, Indian economy was liberalized and was opened to domestic as well as foreign private investors. In the initial period of economic reforms, liberalization of agriculture was severely restricted because of the strong anti-liberalization lobby. However, later market economy brought agriculture also into the purview of liberalization.

According to Puspendra (2000), liberalization of agriculture means the following:

- removal of all restrictions on leasing (land),
- upward revision of ceilings on landholdings,
- concessions to the industry for investing in rural infrastructure,
- unrestricted entry in rural areas for national and multinational companies, agro-farm houses, food and fruit processing industries to lease-in or purchase land through direct interaction with the peasants,
- speeding-up the acquisition process by government,
- export-led and demand driven agriculture, and
- removal of all restrictions on conversion of agricultural land for non-agriculture.

So far, agriculture is not fully liberalized. There are restrictions on the following:

- direct leasing-in land from the farmers by the industry.
- conversion of agricultural land to non-agriculture land and so on.
- land transfer in tribal and rural areas.
- tribal land transfer to non-tribal persons.

Some components of agriculture are more liberalized now than ever before. The first formal attempt to liberalize agriculture sector was in 2000 when the new agricultural policy came into effect. More emphasis was given to boost production and marketing through public-private partnership. For certain period the foreign direct investment (FDI) was allowed to invest in industry, infrastructure and mining sectors. In due course, agricultural sector was opened up. By now every agricultural activity has been exposed to the larger global market forces (Reddy, 2016, p. 108). Emerging supply chain markets and agro-firms are penetrating

fast into the rural hinterlands for supply of raw materials to agro-processing and food industry in the form of contract farming.

10.2.1 Contract Farming and Private Sector Participation

Contract farming is an agri-business model, which involves large supply-chain management compared to the conventional form of farming. It is also a complex socio-structural arrangement in which different types of farmers from different social background are linked with the firm under certain contractual norms and principles. According to Eaton and Shepherd (2001), contract farming is an agreement between the farmers and the firm for the production and supply of agricultural products under forward agreements, but frequently at predetermined prices. As per contract the farmer is required to plant the contracting crop, harvest and deliver to the contractor quantum of produce based on anticipated yield and contracted acreage and at quality standards determined by the purchaser. The contractor has to supply selected inputs and required technical inputs and required technical advice to the farmers. A commitment also on the part of the company or the contractor is to support the farmers' production and to purchase the commodity (Chaturvedi, 2007; Eaton and Shepherd, 2001).

In India contract farming has been popular in states such as Punjab, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka. Farmers grow crops on behalf of the industry, firms or corporates. Some of the corporates that have indulged in contract farming operations are PepsiCo for tomato and potato productions in Punjab and West Bengal, and ITC in soybean production in Madhya Pradesh. There are scores of national and multinational companies such as Reliance Fresh, ITC, Mahindra, Hindustan Lever Limited, PepsiCo, who have already penetrated into agricultural sector of India. For these companies the natural choice is large farmers who are also capable of investment as per given norms under contract farming. The productions under contract farming include the following:

- staple crops such as paddy and wheat,
- vegetable crops such as potato, tomatoes,
- non-staple cash crops such as cotton, biofuel plants, gherkin.

Districts with high concentration of tribal farmers such as Rayagada, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Bolangir and Gajapati of Odisha are practicing contract farming for cotton (Directorate of Horticulture, Government of Odisha). In some districts of Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand and Odisha, tribal and non-tribal farmers are also involved in sericulture.

According to Eaton and Shepherd (2001), in the age of globalization, liberalization and expanding agri-business like contract farming, there is danger to small-scale farmers who find it difficult to participate in market economy. In developing countries these farmers will increasingly become marginalized as large farmers become the inevitable choice for contract farming. A consequence of this will be a continuation of the drift of population to urban areas in search of job.

Moreover, contract farming has resulted in change in cropping pattern. Although it is difficult to assess the impact of contract farming on agrarian structure, it is certain that contract farming is an extended form of agrarian social network and it involves heterogeneous groups. In contract farming, unlike in conventional farming, more unequal players are involved. On one side, there is an agri-business

firm and on the other side there are farmers. In between the firm and the farmers there is also a large pool of intermediaries or private vendors. However, the nature and involvement of members depend on types and nature of contract farming. Therefore, profit from cost-intensive production is shared with a large number of members in the network. Contract farming is mainly a capitalist model in which the processing firm accumulates profit at the cost of the farmers. The accumulation of capital is driven by exploitation of farmers, but this is not always the case. There are different forms of contract farming. A cooperative and partnership model in contract farming is also possible and noticed in some states such as West Bengal (Behera, et al 2018).

Check Your Progress

- 1) How is contract farming linked to market economy?

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10.3 PUBLIC INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURE UNDER MARKET ECONOMY

A market economy is a profit-driven approach. It encourages private investment in agriculture for generating profit. Under the market economy, agriculture becomes a commodity which is more concerned about the market than about the community. It is thus least concerned about the tribes and other small peasant growers. With the growing commodification under market economy, public investment in agriculture for welfare of the farming community has reduced. Development and modernization of agriculture in tribal areas is neglected, even though these areas lag far behind other communities in the country. Initial momentum from private sector participation in agriculture through contract farming or corporate farming lessened subsequently, though a small revival is seen in recent years. To explain how the share of public investment in agriculture has declined, some thoughts are given below.

Immediately after India's independence land reform measures were introduced to protect cultivators from exploitation by landlords. A large number of intermediaries like zamindars were removed and cultivators were given the security of tenure. Land distribution to the landless continued in states as a part of land reform measures. In addition to tenancy reforms, there was imposition of ceiling limits under land reforms. In tribal areas, restriction of land transfer to non-tribal became tougher.

Despite some recognized efforts, land reform is pronounced defunct, less successful and it remains unfinished agenda of the state (Sinha & Puspendra, 2000). A major chunk of public investment in agriculture in the early decades of post-independence period was associated with institutional reforms such as land reforms and development of infrastructure. Major hydro-projects such Hirakud in Odisha, Bhakra Nangal Dam in Punjab and several other minor and major

hydro projects were built for irrigation. But agricultural performance was far low when compared with other developed countries. This was mainly due to lack of modern technology available to the farmers.

In mid-1960s, the focus shifted to modern technology such as application of high yielding variety (HYV) of cereals such as wheat and rice, agrochemicals and chemical fertilizers and modern irrigation. This period is regarded as the Green Revolution period. During Green Revolution period India emerged a food-surplus country from a food-scarce country. India registered substantial increase in food grain production after introduction of new technology. In the year 1967-68 India registered 95 million tons of food grain production and by 1980-81 it had registered 130 million tons of food grain production (Farmer, 1986). Rice and wheat production increased considerably in Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh where there were better irrigation facilities (Farmers, 1986). The other promising food grain production occurred in West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

It was observed that public investment in agriculture as proportion to GDP increased from 1970s to 1980s, but it has been falling since 1980s. It was revived for a few years between 1999 and 2003, then resumed its downward trend since 1999-2000 (Jha, 2007). However, based on estimate of 2011-12 series, it has increased again to some extent since 2015-16 (Pocket Book of Agricultural Statistics 2019, GoI).

The policy shift towards market economy after economic reforms tended to:

- reduce gross capital formation of agriculture,
- reduce the proportion of institutional credit in the total borrowed credit of the farmers,
- increased farmer's dependence on informal form of credit, agricultural inputs and extension services.

This in turn put pressure on farmers, mainly due to non-remunerative return from agriculture, and translated into a largescale agrarian crisis of the farming community (Reddy and Mishra, 2009).

The outcome of the Green Revolution model was not impressive in states with lack of irrigation, agricultural extension and lack of adequate public efforts. Odisha, Jharkhand, eastern Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh (including Chhattisgarh) did not yield impressively out of the Green Revolution. The Green Revolution has yielded the least positive outcome in most tribal pockets and hilly areas where there is lack of irrigation, agricultural extension, cooperatives, credit access and public support for easy access to finance (capital) for agricultural investment by tribal farmers. It has benefitted farmers who have better access to capital, technology and irrigation. Moreover, the Green Revolution had an adverse impact on the environment. It resulted in depletion of ground water, soil health, and created air and water pollution. Indiscriminate use of chemical pesticides and insecticides produced greenhouse gases.

Agriculture was most neglected during post-economic reforms period when attention shifted from agriculture to non-agriculture. The adverse effects of the Green Revolution along with state's apathy to agriculture compounded the agrarian crisis. Market economy was increasingly concerned with industry,

mining, manufacturing and infrastructure. Land as a natural resource was exploited to support non-agricultural industry. Groundwater was exploited to cater to demand of industries including agro-industries. During this period higher level of public investment was essential to undertake appropriate activities for regeneration of soil health, land development measures, recharging ground water level etc. Unfortunately, the share of public investment in agriculture to total GDP decreased compared to the period of the Green Revolution and the pre-Green Revolution period.

While private investment in agriculture sector increased, public investment in irrigation, land development measures, and agricultural subsidy has reduced during post-economic reforms period, particularly in the initial period of economic reforms. In remote rural areas, particularly in tribal areas, there is very little focus on land development, agriculture through modernization and access to easy finance for agriculture.

Check Your Progress

- 2) How has market economy affected small-marginal growers and food grain production?

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10.4 AGRARIAN CRISIS

Agriculture is conditioned by the specifications of agrarian class structure and capitalist development of agriculture since the Green Revolution. The neoliberal economic policy tended to:

- reduce gross capital formation in agriculture,
- reduce the proportion of institutional credit to the total borrowed credit of the farmers,
- increase farmers' dependence on informal and private sources for credit, agricultural inputs and extension service.

In turn the overall cost of the farmers has increased and net return from agriculture has reduced. The agricultural pattern is, however, showing stagnation. Food consumption among the poor is declining and the number of rural poor is declining (Walker, 2008). Many farmers are forced to exit farming to migrate to cities and small towns to earn daily wages from engaging in non-agricultural sectors.

Marginal and small producers account for above 85 percent of the total landholders in the Indian sub-continent (Agriculture Census 2010-11). Therefore, the agrarian issues here are primarily concerned with marketing of agricultural produce of small and marginal farmers in the post-economic reforms period.

Increasing population and changing nature of family from joint to nuclear type is one of the reasons for growing fragmentation of landholdings. Growing

fragmentation of landholdings leads to increasing number of marginal and small landholdings and landlessness. The effect of demographic changes on reducing land holding size is a biosocial process. Market economy is on the other hand the most critical and robust form that is associated with largescale land dealings for corporate gains. Therefore the impact of market economy on landholdings is far more complex and land market relation is concerned with state and political economy.

With the growing presence of market economy even in the remotest of rural areas in India, agriculture has created an opportunity for large landholders and commercial sectors that constitute a very low proportion to the total agricultural population. Even in some tribal areas, tribal elites have developed to take advantage of market economy. They are either purchasing land from fellow tribals for agriculture or non-agriculture. They are involved in non-agricultural investment by taking advantage of the poor socio-economic conditions of fellow community members. But the number of rich farmers and private investors is very small compared to the large mass of poor landless and small and marginal producers in tribal pockets.

In the wake of new economic reforms and increasing trend of small and marginal landholdings, many farmers have switched to non-staple cash crops. The share of food grains to the gross cropped area has decreased compared to the years before economic reforms (Agricultural Statistics at a Glance, 2014). For instance,

- Farmers in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Odisha have adopted cotton farming.
- Farmers in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Gujarat are growing soybeans and oil seeds.
- Farmers in Karnataka are growing gherkin through contract farming.
- Farmers in Kerala have switched to more profitable crops such as spices and condiments.

Adoption of commercial crops, however, has increased risk. The input cost for cash crop production is very high compared to that of staple crops. At the same time, the market is too competitive to get best return for the producers. Usually, agricultural commodities produced in states are dependent on international market situation. After liberalization with the removal of quantitative restrictions (QRs) on imports and lowering of tariff levels, farmers cultivating commercial crops have been affected by higher imports and stiff competition for exports in the international market (Jeromi, 2007).

Adoption of high valued cash crops has benefitted mainly large farmers in terms of financial gain. At the same time it has instilled a sense of insecurity due to market instability and uncertain weather. According to Singh et al. (2012), despite productivity of major crops increasing over time, net returns have followed a declining trend in the state. In the age of globalization, profitability has declined at a faster rate because of a mismatch between input and output prices. By taking the case of Andhra Pradesh, Rao and Suri (2006) observed that although the area under cash crops had increased over the years, the growth rate of yield for these crops had declined.

Small and marginal producers who either possess meager landholdings or lease-in land from landlords lack access to institutional finance. Among the cultivators,

tenant cultivators face maximum hardship to get an institutional credit due to lack of record of rights available with them. In the absence of collateral, financial institutions often deny credit to the tenant-cultivators and sharecroppers. This situation is even worse in tribal areas where the records of rights are not updated or absent. Therefore, these small growers have to depend on non-institutional sources of credit for borrowing cash at an exorbitant rate of interest in time of urgency. The farmers, particularly in rain-fed areas, have to rely on weather for good production and market for good return. When one fails, or both fail, it becomes a nightmare for the farmers who are already reeling under debt. They cannot repay their debt in time. They are permanently pushed into debt crisis. Many such farmers reeling under debt sell or mortgage their land under distress, or take further extreme step of suicide.

Agriculture as a traditional source of livelihood is unviable because of rapidly increasing input costs, stagnant productivity and increasing cost of living. Despite productivity of major crops increasing over time, net returns have followed a declining trend in many states. Due to increasing investment and decreasing net returns, many farmers are forced to exit agriculture because they realize that agriculture is no more remunerative and returns from agriculture are uncertain, as it is prone to vagaries of weather. The findings of NSSO 59th round clearly show that 48.6 percent of the farmers are indebted and have incurred significant liabilities. A significant prevalence of farmer's indebtedness was found in Andhra Pradesh. More than half of the farmers availed loans for capital to meet current expenditures such as fertilizer, pesticides and insecticides among others, in growing cash crops such as cotton. This trend is also growing in Maharashtra and Punjab (Deshpande and Prabhu, 2005; Radhakrishnan, 2010). Farmer indebtedness has been singled out as the foremost cause for farmer suicides (ibid).

Check Your Progress

3) What are the changes that occurred in crop cultivation with economic reforms?

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10.4.1 Land in the centre of agrarian crisis

Land is an important resource that is at the centre of agrarian crisis. Some issues concerning land that have become more contentious in the wake of new economic reforms are:

- property rights,
- transfer of private land for public purpose,
- restriction in transfer of agricultural land for non-agriculture,
- restriction on transfer of tribal land for non-tribal,
- restrictions on leasing-in land.

In India, land being a state subject, its use is mainly governed by state. Each state has certain restrictive measures to transfer agricultural land for non-agriculture purpose. Compared to non-scheduled areas, land transfer in the scheduled areas is very much restricted. There is constant pressure on agricultural land for corporate land use, for public and private purpose. Some sections of the intelligentsia have advocated removal of restrictions on land leasing and land transfer to encourage more private sectors investment. However there are issues concerning removal of restrictions on tribal land transfer. Though such a move would open up avenues for international and domestic companies for setting up big industries on such land, it would also allow them to take advantage of cheap land, water, labour and other resources available at the cost of native people's livelihood.

Land market to facilitate neoliberal trade has been furthermore augmented in recent years with more policy reforms. One of such major policy reforms in 2005 was the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs). Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Gujarat, holding around half of the total share of Indian state's gross domestic product (SGDP), saw excessive inclination towards SEZ policy. Similarly, the Indian real estate sector, the fourth largest sector in terms of FDI inflows, also grew at an annual rate of 20 per cent (IBEF, 2019). It has been the role of the state to acquire land on behalf of private investors. Majority of such land dealings are counter-productive to agriculture. Such land diversions from agriculture to non-agriculture sectors have affected livelihood and food security of the rural communities. Land alienation and dispossession of farmers from their agrarian base has been widely discussed by scholars across disciplines. According to Banerjee (2014), change in land use from agriculture to non-agriculture resulting in speculative market in land has increased livelihood concerns of the peasantry in the context of acquisition of vast stretches of land for non-agricultural use. The exposure to neoliberal market penetration and globalization has unleashed primitive accumulation and a process of dispossession in tribal as well as non-tribal areas (Reddy, 2016).

Tribal communities have become the major victim of discrimination, displacement and dispossession right since beginning of colonial time (Rao & Behera, 2017). Tribal areas with relatively sparse distribution of population, and cheap and affordable land, attract investors to establish mining, industry and manufacturing units there. The land acquired in tribal areas includes not only agricultural land and public land but also land of use by the communities such as common property resources, forest land, etc.

The Expert Group on Prevention of Alienation of Tribal Land and its Restoration (2004), of the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India had observed issues of agricultural land being converted for non-agricultural land use in the tribal areas while displacing thousands of tribal peasants from their ancestral property and agricultural landholdings, to support public and private sectors' interest. The neoliberal economic pursuits have aggravated land issues leading to anticipated agrarian crisis.

10.4.2 Agrarian crisis and labour in market economy

The other component of agrarian crisis is labour. Agriculture absorbs the large labour force. Traditionally, agriculture was associated with both family labour as well as hired labour. Increasing fragmentation of landholdings and

concentration of marginal landholdings resulted in meagre returns from agriculture. Since agriculture becomes non-remunerative and non-productive, it does not attract young people anymore. The percentage of people employed in agriculture has been consistently declining, from around 60% in 1999-2000 to 49% in 2011-12 (NSSO estimate based on 55th Round (1999-2000), 61st Round (2004-05), 66th Round (2009-10) and the 68th Round (2011-12)).

Labour shortage has affected production of staple crops such as rice in Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and Punjab; it has also affected sugarcane harvest in Gujarat (FICCI, 2015). The problems due to labour shortage are noticed in other states as well. Large chunks of agricultural land is being kept fallow without use in Odisha, Bihar and Jharkhand. One of the reasons for keeping land fallow in these states is non-availability of labour.

10.5 MIGRATION

Migration has both positive and negative effects in a society. Migration may bring in new innovations to the rural and tribal peasant communities. Simultaneously, it may bring in cultural and behavioral changes. Distressed migration is, however, a reflection of apathy of the state developed with capitalism followed by neo-liberalism. Migration in search of livelihood is a hard reality today. According to P. Sainath, “the increase in migration is driven by the collapse of millions of livelihoods in agriculture and its related occupations” (reported in BBC News: South Asia, 27 September 2011).

Agrarian crisis, particularly in the drought-prone, desert, flood-affected and hill areas, has forced people to migrate to urban sectors in search of livelihood. Market economy has enabled growth and developed job prospects in urban sector. Due to agrarian distress in the wake of liberalization, rural youth particularly from poor states like Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha are switching their jobs to non-agriculture sector such as construction, petty business, skilled and semi-skill operations in urban sectors. Sectors that employ large number of migrant workers are:

- construction sector (40 million)
- domestic workers (20 million)
- textile industries (11 million)
- brick kilns (10 million).

Transportation, mines, quarries and agriculture sectors also employ migrant labour. The labour force in construction are mainly seasonal migrants and their number has increased by 26.5 million in one just one decade, 2000-2010 (Kalkoti, 2014). Farmers in poor agricultural performing states like Jharkhand and Odisha are moving to rich agricultural performing states like Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh for daily-wages.

10.6 GENDER

Neoliberal economic policies like trade liberalization and free-market assume that benefits would trickledown and would reach all. Growth would percolate among women and the marginalized sectors and it would bring a positive impact

in their lives and livelihoods. It presumes that the women and the marginalized may suffer at the beginning of the market economy, but they would reap the benefits at the later stage.

But this was disproved in the year 1970 by the feminist scholar Esther Boserup on studying African and Asian agriculture patterns. In her path-breaking work on 'Women's Role in Economic Development', she challenged the modernization theory and trickle-down approach. She brought to notice that the women in agriculture activities in Africa were engaged mostly in subsistence farming. At the same time, men occupied fertile land to cultivate cash crops. The modernization of agriculture activities and the introduction of modern techniques in agriculture in Africa did not translate to improve women's lives. Finally, the benefits of modernization in agriculture reached only to men. This has led feminists to question neo-liberal economic policies and modernization theory. Like her study, other feminists have argued that the neo-liberal economic policies bring differential impact on different genders and women may suffer due to existing socialization process.

Society assumes men as breadwinners and considers it significant for men to get a decent job with decent pay. India entered into a market economy in 1991. In the current free-market economy, if the market grows at an exponential rate, it may absorb both men and women as part of the labour force. If the market suffers, women are the first to lose jobs because women are considered as reserve army in economic activities. The market also considers that women earnings may add additional income to the family but they are not primary earners.

When economic recession led to significant loss of jobs in India and other Asian countries like Thailand, most men were not ready to join the unorganized sector. On the other hand, one could witness lots of women working as street vendors in most Asian countries like Thailand. The female labour force participation in India fell from 37 percent in 2004-05 to 29 percent in 2009-10, according to ILO's Global Employment Trend 2013 report.

In the neoliberal economic scenario, informal economy has grown and it is 60 percent of the overall economy. Percentage of women working in the informal sector is high. Women are usually absorbed in mass production sectors like textiles in the special economic zones with less pay.

Studies prove that the trickledown effect on women and the marginalized is very slow in the current scenario. The benefits of neoliberal economic policies reached only certain sections of the population in India. The policy predominately brought benefits to the service sector in the developing countries like India and it improved the secondary sector by generating employment only for the skilled. In this process of economic activities, women and the marginalized get affected even more. Percentage of women working in service and unorganized sectors is high, but they don't have the agency to question the exploitative nature of the economic activities. They are made to work for long hours with less pay. Women are rarely allowed to occupy decision-making position in the service sector even though it is mandatory for companies to appointment 33.3 percent of women as members in the highest decision-making bodies of companies. Looking at the current pandemic scenario and the consequent slowing down of the economy, there is a high probability that women will face severe unemployment issues due to existing strong patriarchal notions prevailing in the society.

Most policies and programmes are formulated and implemented by the government in a gender-neutral manner, assuming that women too would benefit out of the economic stimulus. It may not be possible for women to access financial resources due to existing patriarchal notions prevailing in all social structures. Internal migration of women in the unorganized sector may bring more stress in the lives and livelihoods of women. They may have to join agriculture activities.

In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, some state governments suspended labour laws to accelerate economic activities. Such a move, though impacting all genders, brings a higher negative impact on women's lives as they become even more voiceless and may not be in a position to assert their rights in the work space. Work in the primary sector in India is seasonal and labour-intensive. This sector may not absorb the entire migrant women labour. They may search for alternative employment offered by the government through MGNREGS. They don't get sustainable work for the entire year under MGNREGS.

The contribution of women in agriculture needs to be recognized and it must be reflected in government policies. If the government fails to address the current pandemic from the gender perspective, it may lead to further feminization of poverty. Women-headed households may suffer further, with deprivation in every aspect. Considering existing studies and gender-disaggregated macroeconomic data, the government needs to make gender-sensitive policies by redistributing resources and ensuring social security to women. The government must analyze the impact of disasters in a gender-sensitive manner.

Check Your Progress

4) What were the reasons women were not able to access financial resources?

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10.7 SUMMARY

India became a neoliberal state with adoption of new economic policy in early 1990s. This new economic policy, which is based on the principles of liberalization, globalization and privatization, has accentuated market economy. Market economy has already affected every economic sector. Mining, manufacturing industry, infrastructure and real estates have grown substantially in the last few decades. As a result of market economy, attention also has shifted to commercialization of Indian agriculture in the form of contract farming.

There is growing production of cash crops despite high input cost and low yield from small acreage of land. Farmers are switching from staple to non-staple cash crops with a hope to earn better. Liberalization in agriculture has resulted in stiff competition at the regional as well as at the global level with small and marginal farmers, peasants and landless agricultural labourers bearing the brunt. Due to liberalization of agricultural trade, farmers have to compete globally in terms of

price as well as quality of products. Many farmers, by switching to commercial production have become indebted. Farmers in tribal areas and other remote rural areas who lack institutional finance have to depend on non-institutional agents for borrowing cash at exorbitant rates of interest for growing cash crops.

Agriculture as an occupation can be stressful for farmers adhering to cash crops and non-remunerative to farmers growing staple crops in their meagre landholdings. Farmers in tribal areas who are traditionally accustomed to subsistence production have to face market economy without having strong institutional back-up and public attention to overcome the challenges. The commodification of land and agriculture, land alienation, displacement and dispossession are growing effects of neo-liberalism resulting in agrarian crisis. The small tribal and peasant producers find it very difficult to get bare minimum return of their meagre production. The unstable market price for the produce of the peasant producers under market economy has forced them to migrate to cities in search of livelihood. As a result of agrarian crisis, migration from agriculture to non-agriculture and from rural to urban areas and cities has become an inevitable choice for many poor tribal and non-tribal farmers.

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10.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- 1) Contract farming is an agreement between a farmer and a firm for the production and supply of specific agricultural products under forward agreements, but frequently at predetermined prices. It is primarily business-centric and linked to a global supply chain network. The market determines production and supply.
- 2) There is lack of public investment in agriculture, also lack of subsidy and direct supply of farm loans to small-marginal growers. Many small and marginal growers and tenants who cannot use their land as collateral are unable to access institutional credit. The lack of market for food grain has compelled small and marginal farmers to adopt non-food cash crops despite risk and uncertainty. This is also one of the reasons why the share of foodgrain production has declined over the years.
- 3) In the wake of new economic reforms and increasing trend of small and marginal landholdings, many farmers have switched to growing non-staple cash crops.
- 4) Women were not able to access financial resources due to existing patriarchal notions prevailing in social structures.

UNIT 11 DEVELOPMENT: IMPACT, RESPONSE AND CONSEQUENCES*

Contents

- 11.0 Introduction
- 11.1 Development Impacts: Positive and Negative
- 11.2 Development Responses
 - 11.2.1 People's Response
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 - 11.2.1.2 Case 2: Mallannasagar Project in Telangana
 - 11.2.2 Responses of Project Authorities and Governments
 - 11.2.2.1 Case 3: Gundlakamma Reservoir Project in Andhra Pradesh
- 11.3 Development Consequences
- 11.4 Summary
- 11.5 References
- 11.6 Answers to Check Your Progress

Learning Objectives

In this unit you will learn about:

- Impacts of development on various sections of people;
- Different responses to development, and;
- Significant consequences of development.

11.0 INTRODUCTION

Development is a process of positive change and an outcome of improved well-being of people. Development involves undertaking various development projects such as dams, hydropower plants, industries, mines, transportation routes and urban infrastructure. Development projects have the potential of solving our various economic and social problems, improving our living conditions and eradicating poverty. They are perceived as symbols of national and regional progress. Such projects, therefore, were called temples of modern India by Jawaharlal Nehru. However, development projects have diverse impacts on various sections of people, different responses from people and the government, and significant consequences.

Check Your Progress

- 1) Development projects were called temples of modern India by Jawaharlal Nehru. Why?

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* Contributed by Dr. K. Koteswara Rao, Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Institute of Technology, Rourkela.

11.1 DEVELOPMENT IMPACTS: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE

On the one hand, development projects improve infrastructure and public services and generate new employment opportunities, on the other hand, they cause displacement and impoverishment of people and environmental degradation. Development projects affect various sections of people, particularly in the project implemented areas in different ways. They benefit large sections of people, but the most benefitted are the rural and urban elite and industry-based sections. These people enjoy the fruits of development, while the people most affected or displaced by the project bear the burden of development. However, development projects are a national priority, in which the burden of pain is regarded as inevitable and acceptable when weighed against 'national' and what the State defines as the 'public' interest in the 'greater good'.

Nevertheless, local people in project's core areas are negatively affected and become victims of development. Those are mostly marginalized sections (tribals, dalits and poor) and their livelihoods and lives get disturbed due to the construction of projects in their resource-rich tribal and rural areas. The benefits of the projects do not generally accrue to these people. Instead, they are dispossessed of their assets, such as house and land, livelihoods and resources. Displaced from their original and ancestral houses, lands, villages and habitats, they are pushed into even further marginal and interior areas resulting in a state of alienation from the resource base. They are forced to replace the socio-cultural fabric and ecosystems, which had given meaning to their lives for thousands of years by alien and unknown culture. In other words, the displaced people often lose almost everything – from livelihoods to kinship ties, and even their identity.

Development impacts on tribals in particular are very disastrous. As the areas they live in happen to be rich in natural resources, they are often forcibly displaced from their lands to make way for development projects. They are paid little or no compensation, and relocated to environments completely different from their own and then left there to fend for themselves. Tribal culture breaks down under this onslaught. Social and cultural impacts of development projects rarely receive proper attention. Though tribal culture is deeply attached to its land, for outsiders, it is difficult to understand that emotional link.

Development impacts are not just limited to local people, but also impact the local environment and ecology. Local natural resources, forest (flora) and wildlife (fauna) are affected. However, not all projects have the same impact. Some projects may generate more positive and beneficial outcomes. But most of the projects generate an inadequate return and are a drain on scarce public resources. They end up with more negative consequences.

Check Your Progress

- 2) Why are development impacts on tribals disastrous?
 - a) They are often forcibly displaced from their lands to make way for development projects. []
 - b) They are paid little or no compensation. []
 - c) They are relocated to environments completely different from their own. []
 - d) All the above []

11.2 DEVELOPMENT RESPONSES

The response of development can be understood in two ways. These are:

- 1) people’s response.
- 2) responses of project authorities and the government.

11.2.1 People’s Response

People’s response is mainly visible in the context of protests of the project-affected people. The affected people who are forcefully displaced from their native lands - ancestral/original homes, villages, habitats- in the project-affected areas and deprived of their lands and livelihoods may show some resistance. The issues and interests of local people are often undervalued and neglected. Specific and careful attention to the socio-economically deprived and marginal sections is overlooked.

For instance, having a secure livelihood is more important for landowners than the amounts offered to them as compensation. So farmers are reluctant to give up their lands. Even when they have to give up, they prefer to get suitable agricultural lands elsewhere instead of cash compensation. Unfortunately, in most cases, the state, which acquires the lands, does not offer such compensation of alternative lands. In such conditions, people apprehend that they would be deprived of their lands, assets and livelihoods, and visualize the problems that may arise due to such deprivation or displacement. And they may show their protest in various ways, sometimes even in violent form, as happened in Singur of West Bengal a decade ago.

Check Your Progress

- 3) The project-affected people may show some resistance because

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11.2.1.1 Case 1: Singur Project in West Bengal

In the context of Singur Nano car project in West Bengal, although a higher price than the market rate was offered by the then state government, it did not tempt the farmers. Perhaps they felt that it would not be possible to regain their loss or purchase such lands elsewhere with the amount offered. The negligence of the state in recognising the rights and apprehensions of the farmers and the arbitrariness of the state unleashed violent confrontation by the farmers; the ensuing police gunfire claimed the lives of a dozen farmers.

11.2.1.2 Case 2: Mallannasagar Project in Telangana

In the recently undertaken Telangana’s Mallannasagar project, the project-affected people staged demonstrations for the implementation of the “Right to Fair

Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013” (hereinafter LARR Act, 2013). The protests were ended by police lathi charge against protesters that caused injuries to 10 people, including women. The government imposed police control and restrictions on the movement of the public under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) in four villages, and the same was in force for two months in two villages. It was lifted later only on the directions of the High Court of Judicature at Hyderabad. Though the government asserted that it was acquiring lands voluntarily, the affected people of this project had to struggle to get fair compensation and proper resettlement and rehabilitation. The affected people of a village, in particular, led a 32-months-long protest demanding the implementation of the LARR Act 2013, and for getting proper compensation and resettlement and rehabilitation benefits.

There were similar protests against many other projects across the country, such as:

- Sardar Sarovar (Narmada) project in Gujarat,
- Polavaram project in Andhra Pradesh, and
- Kalinganagar and Dongria Kondh protests in Odisha.

Some of the reasons for such resistances or protests by the project-affected people are:

- against expropriation and state hegemony,
- against conditions of oppression and exploitation,
- collective consciousness about unjust and unfair conditions,
- against coercive land acquisition and unfair compensation,
- to gain mediation and bargaining advantage,
- against material and historical circumstances of the resettlement, and
- against lack of balance between the processes of negotiation and transition from the old to the new.

Scholars like Pattnaik (2013) say that people resist the ‘development’ forces that deprive them of the resources of land, water and forest, and disempower communities such as peasants, the landless, fishermen and tribal people, who face the issues of losing their livelihoods, opportunities and self-esteem. These movements are also against the violation of human, civil, political, and natural rights. They demand systemic equality and justice within the broader framework of development. An example is the resistance movement against the Hirakud hydropower project at Burlain Sambalpur of Odisha in 1960s.

Strong motivators for resistance include the violation of economic rights, cultural issues pertaining to the rights of existence and identity, and spiritual links to land and environment. Such resistance movements forced the government of Orissa to frame its first comprehensive Resettlement and Rehabilitation Policy in 2006.

Thus people respond and resist against deprivation of their livelihood and struggle for inclusive development. They challenge development asymmetries (resources/power) and exclusions.

11.2.2 Responses of Project Authorities and Governments

Michael Cernea, an authority on displacement and resettlement, says development projects are often carried out in ways that cause the displaced and affected people to end up worse off than before. This raises the question of social justice and equity. The principle of the 'greater good for the larger numbers' is routinely invoked to rationalize forced displacements, and it is often abused and turned into an unwarranted justification for tolerating avoidable ills.

The project authorities and the respective governments in many states, instead of addressing the avoidable ills, often neglect even their minimum responsibilities towards the affected people. They usually manage to get the required works done with no risk and without taking into consideration the affected people. They manage the avoidable ills through various tactics such as the manufacture of consent and managing the middlemen. Thus there is a violation of basic human rights. These are particularly evident from the Gundlakamma Reservoir Project in Andhra Pradesh.

11.2.2.1 Case 3: Gundlakamma Reservoir Project in Andhra Pradesh

This irrigation project in the State of Andhra Pradesh has earned the distinction of being the first out of 74 such projects, taken up in 2004 by the then state government, for its quick completion within two years. The government planned to complete its construction on a fast-track basis, as there was no resistance from the displaced people against the project, unlike resistance to other such development projects in the state and elsewhere. In other words, this was the only project launched without any resistance from the land oustees. While cooperating with the project construction, the displaced people asked for fair compensation and proper resettlement and rehabilitation. The positive response from the displaced people towards project construction allowed the government to undertake, rapidly construct, and complete the project in a short time of just two years. Had the then government used this opportunity of positive response and cooperation from the displaced people, and addressed the issues of land acquisition and resettlement and rehabilitation properly and effectively, the project would have set a precedent for all other future projects.

But, unfortunately, that did not happen. Instead, the displaced people have been facing various problems in getting just compensation and resettlement and rehabilitation benefits. Regrettably, they are still facing some problems of rehabilitation. These difficulties and problems were mainly because of:

- ineffective implementation of the state resettlement and rehabilitation policy 2005,
- 'intentional negligence' (by vested interests) in the implementation of the policy,
- indifference and lack of empathy towards the grievances of the displaced people,
- certain problematic provisions in the policy.

However, nowadays, the central and state governments are showing more concern over the plight of affected people. They are increasingly taking into consideration an assessment of potentially negative social impacts of projects before the

commencement of projects so that they may be in a position to plan remedial action well in advance.

Social impact assessment (SIA), which is a way to anticipate and manage potentially negative impacts of development projects, has emerged as a practice in the recent past mainly in response to peoples protests against development projects that often leave them worse off than before. It appeared in the development-induced resettlement and rehabilitation policy of the Government of India in 2007 for the first time, and it became a legal mandate in 2013. Earlier (and even today in some areas), development projects were constructed without adequate assessments of their adverse social impacts. The consequences of such practices are often disastrous.

11.3 DEVELOPMENT CONSEQUENCES

11.3.1 Displacement and Impoverishment Risks

The most significant consequence of development projects is displacement. Development-induced displacement in most cases results in socio-economic problems for the displaced people, as they face the task of restoring livelihoods amid new and often less favourable geographic, environmental, social, and economic conditions.

Michael Cernea identified the key and potential risks and impoverishment processes in displacement as:

- 1) landlessness
- 2) joblessness
- 3) homelessness
- 4) marginalization
- 5) food insecurity
- 6) loss of access to common property resources (and services)
- 7) increased morbidity and mortality
- 8) community/social disarticulation (disintegration) and
- 9) educational losses.

If those risks are not appropriately addressed, they become real problems for the displaced.

Two more risks intrinsic to displacement were identified later by other scholars. These are:

- 1) loss of access to community services,
- 2) violation of human rights.

The first one is about public services such as health clinics and educational facilities.

The second one is about unfair compensation and violations of civil and political rights:

- Rights against arbitrary arrest,
- Right to protection from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,
- Right against temporary or permanent disenfranchisement and
- Right against the loss of one’s political voice.

In other words, arbitrary displacement leads to the risks of violating people’s economic, social, cultural, and political rights at the hands of state authorities and security forces.

For example, the displaced people are entitled to proper compensation and resettlement and rehabilitation benefits at the family, community and village level (such as restoration of their economic and socio-cultural base, infrastructural facilities). But, they are grossly violated and often lead to violence in many of the projects and thus a “gross violation” of human rights.

Check Your Progress

4) Who identified the impoverishment risks in displacement for the first time?

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11.3.2 The Consequences of Improper and Inadequate Baseline Surveys

When projects are planned, baseline surveys on affected people are required to be carried out. But the projects often fail to make precise baseline surveys – inventories of various categories of affected people, their losses, etc. The payment of compensation and resettlement and rehabilitation packages like rehousing and other entitlements based on flawed assessments then fail to meet expectations of the affected persons. Such situations lead to angry protests by the affected people. If baseline surveys or initial assessments are carried out properly with the participation of affected people, the implementation of resettlement and rehabilitation would not be so troublesome.

11.3.3 Challenges

Today, the challenges of development lie not only in implementing projects that achieve national or regional development goals but also in generate positive economic and social outcomes for the displaced people. In fact, development connotes a balance between benefits of such projects and costs and pains of being dispossessed and resettled, and the risks of impoverishment among the uprooted people.

The consequences of development, such as displacement (or unnecessary displacement), which deprive the lives and livelihoods of people, are avoidable. Where displacement is genuinely unavoidable, the harmful effects of

development or displacement that are widely recognized and understood can be mitigated through pro-people policies and legislations and their effective implementation for resettlement and rehabilitation.

However, as Rajagopal recently identified, there exist five ‘human rights challenges’ that arise due to development projects. They are:

- 1) the right to development and self-determination;
- 2) the right to participation;
- 3) the right to life and livelihood;
- 4) the rights of vulnerable groups;
- 5) the right to remedy (Robinson 2003).

11.4 SUMMARY

This unit provides an understanding of how development projects affect various sections of people in diverse ways, different forms of responses from people and project authorities, and important consequences and challenges of such projects.

Though development projects benefit a majority of people, the local people in project areas are often negatively affected and become the victims of development. Most of them are marginal groups, such as tribals. Their livelihoods and lives get disturbed due to the construction of projects in their resource-rich areas. They are often forcibly displaced from their houses and lands, paid little compensation, and resettled to areas completely different from their own. They often lose almost everything, including their kinship ties and identity.

Although development projects can be meaningful when the project affected people are properly taken care of and adequately rehabilitated, most of such projects are often carried out in ways that cause the displaced people to end up worse off. The affected people continue to be disregarded and deprived, their basic rights to life and livelihoods are often violated, mainly by the project authorities. Therefore, the project oustees often protest either against such “development” projects or for better compensation and resettlement and rehabilitation.

The project authorities, instead of addressing the above avoidable ills, often neglect even their minimum responsibilities towards the affected people. So the displaced people often face the risks of impoverishment. Therefore, the significant challenges of development today include:

- making a balance between gain(er)s and lose(r)s and
- addressing the basic human rights of livelihood and better living conditions for the affected people.

These can be achieved through people-centred and inclusive development approaches and resettlement action plans.

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11.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer 1

They are perceived as symbols of national progress.

Answer 2

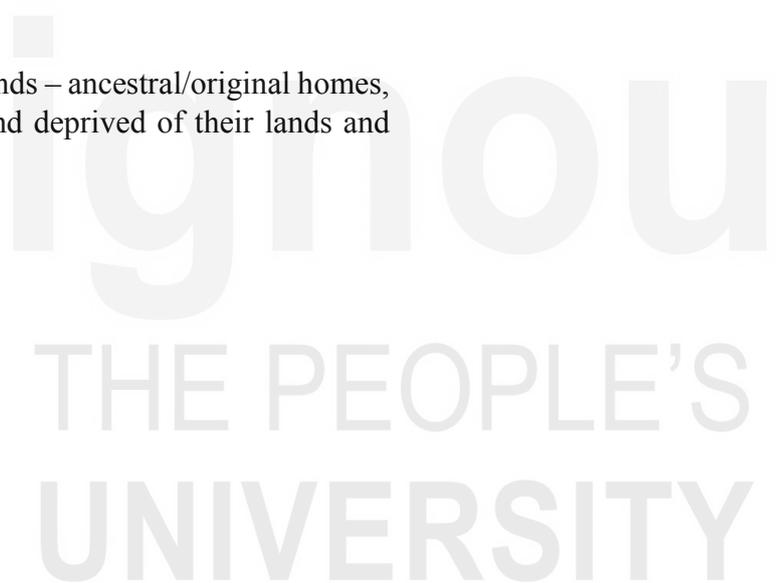
d (all the above)

Answer 3

They are forcefully displaced from their native lands – ancestral/original homes, villages, habitats in the project-affected areas and deprived of their lands and livelihoods.

Answer 4

Michael Cernea



UNIT 12 PROTEST, RESISTANCE AND ETHNO-POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

Contents

- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Protest, Resistance and Ethno-political Movements
- 12.3 Peasant Resistance, Protest and Ethno-political movements
 - 12.3.1 Tebhaga Movement
 - 12.3.2 Telangana Movement
 - 12.3.3 Naxalbari Movement
- 12.4 Tribal Resistance, Protest and Ethno-political movements
 - 12.4.1 Kol Mutiny
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 - 12.4.3 Kondh Uprising
 - 12.4.4 Jharkhad Movement
 - 12.4.5 Niyamgiri Movement
 - 12.4.6 Bodo Movement
- 12.5 Summary
- 12.6 References
- 12.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

Learning Objectives

By the time you complete this unit you should be able to understand:

- Why a society or group of human population protests or resists;
- What are protest, resistance and ethno-political movements?
- The history of tribal and peasant movements in India; and
- The tribes and peasants involved in protest, resistance and ethno-political movements.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

In the earlier units we studied the characteristics of Indian peasants and tribes and discussed some of the contemporary issues related to them. In this unit we will discuss another crucial dimension of their life, namely the protests and resistance movements that they have experienced or are experiencing today. Knowledge about Indian peasants and tribes will be incomplete if we don't have an adequate understanding of the resistance and protest movements they underwent in the past and are undergoing in the present.

Later a discussion about the basic terms such as protest, resistance and movements will be done. Then you will come to know the nature of all these human social behaviors and about the types of movements which are usually observed in our

* Contributed by Dr. Khirod Maharana, Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Allahabad, Allahabad.

society. We will discuss the protest, resistance and movements that Indian peasants and tribes have organized both before and after independence.

12.3 PROTEST, RESISTANCE AND ETHNO-POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

In 2020 our nation witnessed widespread protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2020 (CAA). Sporadic protests erupted in many parts of our country though a continuous protest was observed at Shaheenbagh, Delhi. Have you ever wondered why the protest happened? Did you try to find out what is the difference between a protest and a resistance? What is a movement?

Protest and resistance is natural and universal in human society. Human society, across time and space, has witnessed schisms and conflicts within it due to many factors. Most factors indicate that in a society not all sections are equally at ease with the dominant and commonly held beliefs, norms and customs, no matter how egalitarian it claims to be. 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.

When you want to avoid or prevent something from happening, for example when students expressed disapproval of the fee hike in the hostels of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi in November 2019 or when people gathered against the Citizenship Amendment Act 2020 of the Government of India, we can call the acts of the students and the people as protests. Protest is an organized dissent or the formal manifestation of the same by the public. Through protest we show our resistance to something we don't approve of.

Resistance is the act of resisting or opposing something. The term resistance implies a sense of power to withstand something which has to be eventually overthrown. Resistance as a method was made famous by Mahatma Gandhi when he used non-violent resistance against various government policies in pre-independent India. Resistance often emerges against political, cultural and economic domination. Resistance reflects the capacity of individual and collective subjects to generate alternate forms of power, distinct from and opposed to the dominant or prevailing structure (Courpasson, 2016).

We show resistance to the dominant political, economic or social structure in myriad ways. Mahatma Gandhi wore a loin cloth to show his resistance to consumerism expressed through the economic policies of the erstwhile British India government. A friend of mine who hails from a Brahmin community resists Brahminism to such an extent that he once threw away the sacred thread that he was wearing. Many modern educated women do not wear vermilion or bracelet (*kangan*) as a mark of resistance to patriarchy in our society.

Resistance can be individual or collective, and overt or covert. Resistance has two basic dimensions, i.e. contextual and universal. No matter whichever way we show resistance which are considered as its contextual aspects, the fact remains that we resist against injustice, exploitation and dominance which can be considered as the universal dimension of it.

Resistance can be viewed as any practice *that attempts to challenge, change, or retain particular circumstances relating to societal relations, processes, and/or institutions. These circumstances may involve domination, exploitation, subjection at the material, symbolic or psychological level* (Routledge, 1997).

Unlike protest and resistance, movements require a longer period of sustained collective action. Protests are spontaneous and usually intend to solve urgent issues at hand immediately. For example when students gather and demand the arrest of a driver whose careless driving resulted in the death of a fellow student in a university. Protests and resistance can be and often are disorganized but movements require an organized and coordinated form of collective action. Movements are often oriented towards realizing a bigger social or political goal through a change in state policy.

Movements are based on organized and collective working around certain strategies which eventually takes us towards our goal. Thus organization and leadership are crucial in a movement. Depending upon the differential orientation to the existing culture or society, Mahapatra (1968) categorized movements into the following:

- reactionary,
- conservative,
- revisionary or
- revolutionary.

Reactionary movements are those which aim to bring back the ‘good old days’. They are also known as revivalistic movements. Conservative movements are against any changes and aim to perpetuate the status quo. Revisionary movements intend to bring specific changes to a society without disturbing the basic features of the socio-political structure. Revolutionary movements aim to replace the entire culture or social order with a desired new system having progressive social, political, economic and other aspects.

We can also categorize movements as social, political, linguistic or ethnic depending on the nature of goals to be realized. In this unit we will focus mainly on ethno-political movements in Indian peasant and tribal societies besides discussing various modes of protest and resistance among them.

Check Your Progress

1) How resistance can be viewed as a practice?

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12.4 PEASANT RESISTANCE, PROTEST AND ETHNO-POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

According to the Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology (1986), peasants are a category of primary producers within a society characterized by the existence of social classes and state formation. Peasants in India are rural cultivators characterized by:

- external economic and political control,
- combination of subsistence agriculture with production of food stuffs and other goods for urban centres,
- extreme ecological dependence,
- low-intensive technology and
- dependence on family labour.

On the one hand peasants appear to be self-sufficient and closed-in socio-economic category, on the other hand there is a continuous dependence on the demand and interest of the power holders situated in an external space. This unique position of the peasants has been responsible for creating various threats to their livelihoods, identities and lives at different periods of India's history. Being a part of a wider economic and political arena, peasants in India have been interacting with the kings, the zamindars, the *jotedars*, and now the capitalists. Let us discuss some of the well-known peasant movements in India to understand the issues which triggered ethno-political movements.

12.4.1 Tebhaga Movement

During the earlier part of twentieth century Bengal had a land tenure system and a socio-economic stratification different from what we see today. Land was not owned by the tillers or small cultivators. The *zamindars* or the landlords owned the land and there were tenants at various levels. The landless cultivators were at the lowest rung who had to pay parts of the harvest as rent to the middle-level tenant called *jotedars* who in turn paid it to the landlords. The *jotedars* (the rich tenants) and the *zamindars* (the rich landlords) had substantial control over the production system and the land. Tenants at the lowest stratus such as the *bargadars* and the *adhiars* were at the receiving hand. Thus, the result of the labour and other investment that an *adhiar* or *bargadar* put in ultimately went to the *jotedars* and the *zamindars*.

The Tebhaga movement was a struggle by the *bargadars*, the *adhiars* and other lower-level tenants against the *jotedars*, *zamindars*, money lenders, traders, and the British bureaucracy demanding two-thirds (tebhaga) of the harvest. These agricultural labourers, share-croppers and poor peasants got united for this movement against their exploitation under the banner called Kisansabha in 1946 (Sen, 1972).

In September 1946 a group of share-croppers started a protest in Bengal under the banner of kisansabha demanding two-third share of the harvest from the *jotedars*. The Kisansabha leaders organized public meetings, delivered speeches, and distributed leaflets. There were demonstrations in many villages demanding *tebhaga* (two-third) of harvest which was recommended by the Land Revenue Commission in 1940.

The protest took the form of a revolt in Dinajpur district when about one hundred *bargadars* went to the fields in Rampur village of Atwari police station, cut paddy and brought *tebhagato* their own thrashing ground. The *jotedars*, with the help of the police, objected to this and a clash erupted. Although Sushil Sen, who organized the protest, was arrested, the *bargadars* continued the movement by cutting paddy and staking it in their own thrashing ground (Sen, 1972). Many leaders joined the movement. The police acted swiftly and arrested many in the whole district.

Kisan volunteers in villages in neighboring districts such as Rangpur and Jalpaigudi took the crop to their *khamars* instead of the *jotedars*. In Rangpur there was a clash between the peasants and the *jotedars* resulting in the death of Tatnarayan Ray due to police firing. This spread the movement like wildfire and about 3,000 peasants got united. Since the *jotedar* was a Muslim, fearing a communal riot, the leadership decided not to kill but to boycott the *jotedars*. Districts like Mymensingh and Midnapore also witnessed the movement where many leaders including Sibram and Samiruddin were killed by police firing.

The peasants or *kisans* in the *Tebhaga* movements were mostly from the Muslim and the tribal community. In spite of the Muslim League's attempt to colour it in communal tone, the movement retained a peasant identity and established Indian peasantry as a political category. The movement was an outcome of politicization of the peasantry in Bengal with the help of Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Kisan Sabha (Dhanagare, 1983), though the immediate triggers were the economic crisis following the World War II and the Bengal famine.

12.4.2 Telangana Movement

Telangana was in the princely state of Hyderabad where the Nizams of the Asafjahi dynasty ruled till 1948, when the state of Hyderabad was annexed by India. According to Khusro (1958), the land in the Hyderabad princely state was divided into the following:

- About 60% was under the governmental land revenue system (Diwani or Khalsa Area),
- 30% was under *Jagirdari* system and
- 10% was the Nizam's own direct estate (*Sarf Khas*).

In Sarf Khas area the peasants lived almost like bonded slaves whereas in *Jagir* area the peasants had to suffer from bonded labour and various illegal exactions. In Khalsa area the common man's land was acquired by feudal landlords through various uncanny methods and the practice of forced labour was common. Fixed amount of grains and other agricultural products were forcefully collected annually from the peasants and those who were unable to pay were tortured (Reddy, 1975).

Thus the peasants suffered utter exploitation, eviction from their cultivated land and other forms of inhumane torture. The tillers had no hope and scope to take their grievances anywhere. Gradually the environment became explosive for a violent resistance and struggle.

Initially the peasants used lathis and slings as mechanisms of self-defense against the violent exploitation of the patels and landlords. Later this struggle grew into armed revolt against the Nizam. The Andhra Maha Sabha (AMS) and the

Communist Party of India (CPI) organized the peasants in 1944 against the vetti system, illegal evictions and exactions. Gradually the peasants became aware about their political capability and rights. During a protest in 1946 an AMS leader was killed by police firing which eventually triggered a revolutionary movement in Telangana (Sundaraya, 1985). The militant struggle spread to Warrangal, Nalgonda and Khammam districts like wildfire.

In 1948 the Nizam's rule ended by accession of Hyderabad state to the government of India. The people of Hyderabad had great hopes from the Nehru Government. However it took nearly three years of struggle for the peasants to defend the lands they had seized from the landlords (Sundarayya, 1985). About 4,000 communist party members and peasant militants were killed and more than 10,000 communist cadres were jailed. More than 50,000 people participated in the Telangana movement.

12.4.3 Naxalbari Movement

In 1967 the Communist Party of India (Marxist) came to power in West Bengal and an aggressive land reform plan was on the cards. The state government wanted the distribution of land among the landless peasants though it knew that the landlords would not allow it. In most part of Bengal, especially in the northern part, majority of land was encroached upon by the tea estates and rich farmers. The CPI(M) led government knew that the land distribution plan would not be easy. Thus a faction of CPI (M) decided to carry out this plan by organizing a peasant movement with the help of revolutionary methods (Ghos, 1992). It began at a place named Naxalbari in the northern part of West Bengal and the demand was that the land encroached by the tea estates and *jotedars* should be distributed among the peasants. Kanu Sanyal and Charu Majumdar were the leaders who guided the landless peasants to be armed with traditional weapons. According to Banerjee (2002), among their demands were:

- the unequal agreements between the peasants and the moneylenders be declared null and void,
- the hoarded paddy be distributed among the peasants, and
- the *jotedars* be tried and sentenced to death,

The peasants forcibly occupied and looted rice and paddy from the *jotedars*. There were cases of physical assault and murder of rich peasants and *jotedars*. Thus the movement took the form of an extreme violent struggle leading to intervention from the central government. The movement spread to the neighbouring states of Andhra Pradesh and Bihar and was known as Naxalite Movement.

Check Your Progress

2) Why did the peasant movement emerge in Telangana?

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12.5 TRIBAL RESISTANCE, PROTEST AND ETHNO-POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

India is home to the second largest tribal population of the world next only to Africa. A tribe is, in an ideal state, a self-contained unit. It constitutes a society in itself and has territorial, linguistic, political and cultural boundary. The tribal way of life is fundamentally different from life in caste society and other highly stratified non-tribal societies. Tribal life is based on lack of differentiation and specialization in socio-economic activities and the society is kinship based. The tribes in India have been in constant inter-relations with the non-tribal population as evident from various historical documents. They have been responding to the dominant non-tribals in various ways throughout history. In different phases of India's history they have reacted differently to the dominant Hindu culture, the ruling Islam religion and later the influence of Christianity during the British rule. Tribal and non-tribal relations have become bitter at times in Indian history when there were threats to the source of sustenance of the tribes- land, forest and water.

Indian tribes, also known as the *adivasis*, are generally peace-loving people. They are most attached to the land, forest and springs for which they justify their existence on this planet. However at various phases of India's history many regimes have tried to penetrate tribal land which are rich in natural resources. This happened especially during and after the British rule when successive governments considered tribal land a huge potential source for exploitation. There have been invasions in their land by various non-state entities too, such as contractors, middlemen, moneylenders, liquor vendors and others who had commercial interest in tribal land. The *adivasis* have fought and resisted the invaders and there have been violent clashes, struggles and movements organized by them to protect their land and identity. Let's discuss the major ethno-political movements organized by Indian tribes.

12.5.1 Kol Mutiny

One of the earliest resistance movements against the invasion of tribal land was Kol Mutiny. The British tried to enter into the Singbhum area of Chhotanagpur which was the land of the Ho *adivasi*. The Hos are also known as *LarkaKols* for their fighting spirit and power of resistance (Dalton, 1973). The British made many unsuccessful attempts to invade the land before finally annexing four *pirs* (subdivisions) out of the total five of the Bamanghatai division of Mayurbhanj state (Verma, 1995). However it was not easy for the British administration to completely subdue the Hos and ultimately a peace accord was brought with the conditions that they will be ruled directly under the British. However the Hos were cheated and many non-tribal intermediaries such as *zamindars* were given permission to collect taxes from the tribals.

Eventually the *zamindars* and the money-lenders went on exploiting the Hos and the British administration was of no help. Twelve Ho villages which were under a *manki* (a traditional post of a chief heading a group of villages) were given to non-tribal middlemen and the *manki* as well as the villagers were dispossessed of their land. Not only they were dispossessed of their land but their women were abducted by the outsiders. This led to a violent clash with the *zamindars* and middlemen resulting in the killing of about ten outsiders who had

evicted the tribals of their land. In 1831 the Mundas of Chhotanagapur joined the Hos and they jointly revolted against the non-tribals and the British. The struggle quickly spread over Ranchi, Hazaribagh, Palamau, Manbhum and other parts of Chhotanagapur. However it was finally quelled with armed forces.

12.5.2 Birsa Movement

As the British became successful in opening up tribal lands there was an influx of money lenders, liquor traders, contractors and other exploiters of *adivasis*. In central India the Mundas and the Oraons were exploited by Hindu *mahajans* (money lenders) and *zamindars*. Christian missionaries took this as an opportunity to convert the tribals into Christianity. The *adivasis*, seeing missionaries as a beacon of hope to save them from the exploitation of the landlords and the moneylenders, converted into Christianity in large numbers. Birsa Munda, a tribal leader of Jharkhand area, stood firm against this conversion and professed a new religion by combining Hinduism and Christianity (Verma, 1995). He started this movement with an objective to save the *adivasis* from the exploitative Hindu landlords and the Christian missionaries by emphasizing the originality of tribal culture, identity and religion. The movement took the form of a struggle for tribal self-assertion under the leadership of Birsa Munda, demanding non-interference from outsiders in the matters of religion, culture and economy. The British had to use force to put down the revolt and the movement subsided only after the mysterious death of Birsa Munda while he was in jail in 1900. This movement had a deep impact on the way the British handled tribal issues. The British took measures to ensure tribal interest in land and enacted The Chhotanagapur Tenancy Act 1908. The movement created a deep sense of ethnic identity among the tribals which had wider political significance in later years.

12.5.3 Kandh Rising

The Kandhs live in the Kalahandi, Phulbani and the Koraput districts of Odisha as well as in the adjoining hill tracks of Andhra Pradesh and Jharkhand. The Kandhs rebelled against the British during the period between 1837 and 1856. The inaccessible terrain in which the Kandhs live helped them to enjoy a relatively independent life without any interference from any outsiders. Like other tribal groups they were much attached to their social, cultural and religious practices and allowed no interference in these matters. They believed in a cosmology which prescribed human sacrifice, called *mariah*, to contain natural calamities such as famines, epidemics, and other misfortunes. The practice of *mariah* was the foundation of their socio-religious life (Campbell, 1864).

The British came to know about the *Mariah* practice in 1837 and tried to dissuade the Kandhs from practicing it. However it didn't stop and the British had to use force against the Kandhs for this. The Kandhs got united under the leadership of Chakra Bisoi who continued the movement against British efforts to dilute their culture and religion. The Kandhs also believed that their sufferings such as the droughts, famines and exploitations by *zamindars* and money-lenders were somehow linked to the British who intruded into their area. The British also increased the amount and types of taxes which was a big burden for them. All these factors contributed and strengthened the movement led by Chakara Bisoi. Thus the movement had a mass following not only from the Kandh tribe but also from the neighboring tribe, the Savara. The movement continued till 1856-57.

12.5.4 Jharkhand movement

In the beginning of the last century a group of educated tribal social workers and students from Chhotanagpur are initiated a protest movement against the growing regional disparity in development and exploitation of tribals. They demanded land for *adivasis* comprising parts of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal. It took about twenty years for this initiative to take the shape of a pan-tribal movement. The Chhotanagpur Unnati Samaj was formed in 1920 and it started to draw attention of the government to tribal problems and concerns.

The political platform of this movement was the Jharkhand Party. It was formed in 1949 and continued to win assembly seats in Bihar and Odisha amidst political ups and downs. A separate state for the tribals was envisioned by including the areas of the erstwhile Chhotanagpur Administrative Division. The setback for the movement came as a result of many factors including the merger of Jharkhand Party with Congress in 1963 and splitting of the party on the basis of religion, personal rivalries of tribal leaders and other regional interests.

In 1973 some tribal leaders under the leadership of Sibu Soren and B B Mahto formed Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and demanded a separate Jharkhand state. This also was split into three groups in 1983 namely JMM (Sibu Soren), JMM (B B Mahto) and JMM (Devinder Manjhi), out of which the JMM (SS) had most influence. The demand for a separate state of Jharkhand continued with protest march and economic blockade programme under the leadership of JMM (SS). Violent bands were also called and an All-Party meeting was called by Sibu Soren in 1992. The demand continued amidst political ups and downs, finally in 2000 Parliament approved the Bihar Reorganisation Bill, and on 15th November the state of Jharkhand was formed.

12.5.5 Niyamgiri Movement

Niyamgiri is a hill range situated in the districts of Kalahandi and Rayagada in Odisha. Dongria Kondh, a tribe coming under the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG), live in these hills. Vedanta Resources, a multinational company based in London, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Government of Odisha in 2004 to mine bauxite from Niyam Dongar, the hill on which the supreme God of the Dongria Khond is believed to reside.

The Dongria Kondhs, like most tribal groups, are deeply attached to their land, forest and gods. The forest is regarded as sacred and cutting trees on the Niyam Dongar is taboo. Vedanta Resources started acquiring land for this project in 2004 (Pattnaik, 2013). The Dongria Kondhs resisted this attempt vehemently as it was linked to their livelihood and identity. They united strongly against this mining project. Gradually support from many national and international organizations for this movement reached Niyamgiri. The movement continued for years and in 2013 the Supreme Court ruled that the gram sabha's consent was essential for the mining project. All the 12 villages nearby the proposed mining project voted against the project. An organization called Niyagiri Suraksha Samiti is spearheading the movement even today.

12.5.6 Bodo Movement

Bodo is an Indo-Mongoloid tribe inhabiting the plain area of Assam. They are settled in the northern areas of Brahmaputra valley in the districts of Kokrajhar,

Darrang, Goalpara and Kamrup. Bodos constituted about 49% of the population of Assam in 1947. However the percentage of population dropped to 29% in 1971 due to migration and regular entry of migrants from Bangladesh (George, 1994). Though the demand for a separate state of Bodoland was raised in 1930, a political party called the Plains Tribals Council of Assam (PTCA) was formed only in 1967. Another organization, The All-Bodo Student Union (ABSU), formed in 1967, spearheaded the movement for a separate state for the Bodos on the basis of unique ethnic and linguistic identity. A continued sense of alienation among the Bodos due to the economic, cultural and linguistic dominance of the Assamese contributed substantially to this movement. The movement continued amid political ups and downs with bands and violent actions.

In 1993 the Bodo Accord was signed and a Bodoland Autonomous Council was created. However most Bodo leaders rejected BAC terming it anti-democratic and anti-Bodo. Bodo militants continued violent methods of protest and ethnic cleansing of non-tribals in the villages of Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon. The movement continued mostly with violent ethnic cleansing of non-tribals in the area and eventually in 2003 the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was formed. It is an elected body which allows more power for self-governance to the Bodos. A new peace initiative was signed in January 2020 between the government of India and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), which will strengthen the existing structure of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) by enhancing its executive and legislative power as well as by increasing its membership from 40 to 60.

Check Your Progress

3) Name the states where Kandhs live.

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12.6 SUMMARY

In this unit we discussed some of the major ethno-political and resistance movements organized by Indian peasants and tribes. We started with a basic understanding of protest, resistance and movements, and tried to examine the factors which are responsible for these. In each movement discussed, we see how a particular socio-economic and political situation becomes exploitative for a group which is numerically small, marginal or powerless. India is a melting pot of identities based on religion, ethnicity, caste, tribe, peasantry and so on. We have discussed how various cross-cutting interests play a pivotal role in exploitation, alienation, oppression and subjugation of these social groups. We have also discussed how state is a dominant factor in creating as well as annihilating conditions of exploitation and subjugation through its various responses to ethno-political movements.

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12.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- 1) Resistance can be viewed as any practice that attempts to challenge, change, or retain particular circumstances relating to societal relations, processes, and/or institutions. These circumstances may involve domination, exploitation, subjugation at the material, symbolic or psychological level.
- 2) The peasant movement emerged because peasants of Telangana suffered exploitation, eviction from their cultivated land and other forms of inhumane torture. The tillers had no hope and scope to take their grievances anywhere. Gradually the environment became explosive leading to a violent resistance and struggle.
- 3) The Kandhs live in the Kalahandi, Phulbani and the Koraput districts of Odisha as well as in the adjoining hill tracks of Andhra Pradesh and Jharkhand.