

appears that very little has been done for the betterment of the agricultural labour in India. Although the country is predominantly agricultural the same is also the case in respect of workers or other unorganized sectors, such as the Small Scale Industries and rural artisans.

It is suggested that the appropriate Government should take necessary steps for improvement of the conditions of the workers of all sectors on par with the industrial workers as a step towards its goal in building an egalitarian society.

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## GLOBALISATION IMPACT: ON TRIBAL IDENTITY AND CULTURE IN INDIA

By

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### *Introduction:*

Globalisation describes an ongoing process by which regional economies, societies, and cultures have become integrated through a globe-spanning network of communication and execution. The term is sometimes used to refer specifically to economic Globalisation: the integration of national economies into the international economy through trade, foreign direct investment, capital flows, migration, and the spread of technology (Bhagawati, 2004). However, Globalisation is usually recognized as being driven by a combination of economic, technological, socio-cultural, political, and biological factors. The term can also refer to the transnational circulation of ideas, languages, or popular culture through acculturation. *Andre Gunder Frank*, an economist associated with dependency theory argued that a form of Globalisation has been in existence since the rise of trade links between Sumer and the Indus Valley Civilization in the third millennium B.C. (Frank, 1998). Impact of Globalisation, both LSCAC 2010 Proceedings 150 theoretically and practically, can be observed in different economic, social, cultural, political, finance, and technological dimensions of the world. Globalisation is the process of rapid integration of countries

and happenings through greater network of connections and interconnections *via* trade. It also refers to increased possibilities for action between and among people in situations where latitudinal and longitudinal location seems immaterial to the social activity at hand as per the definition of social theorists. Globalisation is a three dimensional term, encompassing political, economical and cultural aspects.

### *Identity and Culture:*

Globalisation can be defined as the increasing “interconnectedness of the world through new systems of communication” (Sacks, 2003, p. 26), and affects all areas of life. This ever increasing capacity to communicate worldwide has resulted in the increasing domination of American and European cultures, whose economics, and political institutions are most affluent and powerful. This process has had profound effects on less powerful cultures. Development planners seem uncomfortable with ethnic diversity because it challenges the homogenizing tendency of economists to reduce populations to quantifiable groups. Globalisation is more than just about economics. It is not only about the ratio of exports to Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

but also about culture, society, politics and people (Rangarajan, 2007, January 15).

Globalisation becomes a problem from the cultural identity perspective. In the global economy, culture has almost become only a one-way operating manner of business cultural goods and services produced by rich and powerful countries have invaded all of the world's markets, placing people and cultures in other countries, which are unable to complete, at a disadvantage. These other countries have difficulties in presenting the cultural goods and services, which they have produced to the world market and therefore are not able to stand up to competition the natural result is that these countries are unable to enter the areas of influence occupied by multinational companies of developed countries.

The most disturbing element in the process of Globalisation is its relentless drive towards cultural universalism of American/European culture and associated ideological frameworks, and its implied disregard and disrespect for cultural and language diversity. There are some 350 million indigenous people in more than 70 countries around the globe, speaking autochthonous languages, and who are marginalized and frequently denied basic human rights, including their cultural rights.

Globalisation has led to democratization and identity politics in third world countries. Political identity and cultural identity have become part and driving forces of democratization. Third world societies like South Africa, Nigeria and India too have discovered that identity and cultural dynamics are intrinsic forces. While global trends in economics and politics are converging, cultural, religious and social differences seem to be widening. Globalisation and the revolution in communications technology bring people together, but also cause fears about loss of cultural identity. Simultaneously, literature, film, theatre, art, and dance

productions often create a sense of belonging to a specific national, regional or ethnic zone.

Under Globalisation there has been a great expansion of western culture. Accusations of cultural imposition and domination have been widely heard. English language has emerged to a predominant position of being the language of communication within and between global organizations and institutions. It has become the transmission belt for western goods and services. Globalisation involves extensive migrations of people both within and across states. The communication networks make other cultures shape one's way of life very intimately. They strengthen the fabric of culture, which increasingly confronts tendencies for cultural domination.

### *Globalisation and Tribals in India:*

India is a land with many cultures, faiths, and ways of life, dress, food habits, traditions and rituals, united like petals of one flower. Its political, economic and socio-cultural contexts occur under conditions of a multi-structural whole. The national movement and the exposure to the western culture mediated by the colonial rule made Indians very self-conscious of their cultural identity. The anxieties about the impact of Globalisation and marketisation of economy, media and information systems, the leisure and style of life *etc.*, have today generated anxious debate among the scholars, the people and political parties. Such policy has long been in the making, but today the process of Globalisation and its impact on culture, both local and national, give it a new urgency (Singh, 1994).

The word 'tribe' is generally used for a socially cohesive unit, associated with a territory, the members of which regard them as politically autonomous. Different tribes have their own cultures-dialects, life styles, social structures, rituals, values, *etc.*, differing somewhat from those LSCAC 2010

Proceedings 152 of the dominant non-tribal peasant social groups. The forest occupies a central position in tribal culture and economy. The tribal way of life is very much dictated by the forest right from birth to death. It is ironical that the poorest people of India are living in the areas of richest natural resources. Historically, tribals have been pushed to corners owing to economic interests of various dominant groups.

Colonisers have always considered tribal and indigenous people as a race to be conquered. Individuals and groups who do not meet the racialised standard have their political and cultural rights questions and sometimes violated. International indigenous organising activities increasingly rely on similar beliefs about there being a global indigenous race that is monolithically in opposition to technology and globalization. At risk is respect for the political authority and distinct cultural practices of indigenous peoples. This realization of tribal and indigenous peoples inhibits decolonization and political self-determination.

The scope of trade and market, which are accelerated by the process of Globalisation, poses formidable cultural problems in both the developed and the developing societies. The economic policy of India upto the 1980's has been that of import-substitution and protectionism in trade and market. The full momentum of the Globalisation of economy started from 1990's onwards but many checks and balances continue to persist. This historical change in policy has impacts upon local cultures deeply in addition to having an overall cultural impact on the society. The new changes have been noticed in the lifestyle, consumption pattern, production of cultural objects and their circulation and usages, in the cultural ecology and habitat and the religious practices, *etc.*

The impact of Globalisation on local culture and the changing role of the nation-

state can be examined by observing the particularities of the social and cultural patterns and their local, national and transnational manifestations in India. These social and cultural realities have plural character in terms of language, geography, ethnicity, religion and culture. With partial exception of the tribal population, the caste system and its related kinship structures have shaped the profile of the culture, economy and power structures within the local communities and regions. The new institutional innovations that Globalisation may bring about in society are market, trade and finance, communication and media, technology and science, migration and inter-cultural transactions. In social structural terms, Globalisation is a historical process of transition from the agrarian-industrial, post-industrial and finally the stage of the information society (Dissanayake, 1988).

Indigenous people are on the cusp of the crisis in sustainable development. Their communities are concrete examples of sustainable societies, historically evolved in diverse ecosystems. Today, they face the challenges of extinction or survival and renewal in a globalised world. The impact of globalization is strongest on these populations and they have no voice, therefore, easily swept aside by the invisible hand of the market and its proponents. Globalization is not merely a question of marginalization for indigenous peoples it is a multipronged attack on the very foundation of their existence and livelihoods.

### ***Indian Constitution and Tribal Policy:***

The Indian Constitution, adopted soon after independence, defines the rights and privileges of castes, minorities, tribal groups and the weaker sections of society. Subject to legislation by Parliament, the power to declare any area as a 'Scheduled Area' is given to the President [5th Schedule, Paras 6-7] and the President has made the

Scheduled Area Order, 1950, in pursuance of this power (Basu, 1992). The Constitution provides for the appointment of a Commission to report on the administration of the Scheduled Areas and the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in the State (Basu, 1992).

The Scheduled Tribe's (ST's) constitute 8 per cent of the total population of the country. In 2001, their number was around 820 lakh persons. They can be divided into two categories: (1) frontier tribes, and (2) non-frontier tribes. The former are inhabitants of the northeast frontier States-Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. They constitute 11 per cent of the total tribal population. The non-frontier tribes, constituting 89 percent of the total population, are distributed among most of the States. They are concentrated in large numbers in Madhya Pradesh (23 per cent), Orissa (22 per cent), Rajasthan (12 per cent), Bihar (8 per cent), Gujarat (14 per cent), Dagra Nagar Haveli (79 per cent), and Lakshadweep islands (94 per cent) (Shah, 2004).

The tribal policy of the Government has consistently aimed at encouraging their autonomous growth with protection to their local cultures. To protect their rights in land in and forest resources, *etc.*, the law prohibits outsiders from purchasing estates, which is their preserve. There is an inner line protection policy pursued by the Government, which protects tribals from intrusion by outsiders from other States or the foreigners. Constitutionally, they enjoy privileges in running their own educational, cultural and social institutions. These measures have, however, been less successful in maintaining the autonomy of the tribal local cultures. Here is evidence that outside entrepreneurs, traders and influential people have succeeded in alienating the land and natural resources meant for the tribals by surreptitious means. In spite of the protection given to the tribal population by the

Constitution of India (1950), educational standard, economic status and political empowerment of the tribal communities still remained backward in India.

However, as the functioning of the democratic forces has become stronger, a resentful local leadership has emerged among these communities sponsoring movements for either a separate State, or political autonomy or even separation from the Union (Oommen, 1997). Cultural modernization, sponsored by the forces of globalisation, is resented if it encroaches upon or does not promote the core cultural values of society, its language, social practices and styles of life. The vigour of the renewed sense of self-awareness generated among the members of the local cultures and communities and regions in India, which have existed historically, reinforce instead of threatening the national identity. These bonds seem to become stronger as India encounters the forces of modernization and globalization.

### *Impact of Globalisation on Tribals:*

The tribals are a part of the Indian society and general problems of consciously changing or modernising Indian society are applicable to them. Before independence, tribals enjoyed an almost untrammelled control over forestland and its produce for their survival. Forest offered fodder for their cattle, firewood to warm their hearths, and above all a vital source of day-to-day sustenance. The wonderful equation between man and nature demolished after independence with the encroachment of rapacious contractors on tribal land and the indiscriminate destruction of forest in the name of development.

Tribals in India present a significant degree of cultural and ethnic diversity. They differ in their socio-cultural levels as well as in their behaviour patterns Tribal situation in the country poses peculiar problems of development, not encountered in other areas.

The peculiarities can be broadly summed up as geographical, demographic, socio-cultural and exploitative. Tribal development indicates serious challenges to the policy makers, administrators and development activists. The socio-economic forces of modernization and development have no doubt brought some benefits to the people of respective areas, but the benefits accrued to them have been largely outweighed by the harm more to them. Development induced displacement, involuntary migration and resettlement has cause marginalization of tribals and presented enormous problems to them. The new economic regime has led to privatization and marketisation of economy and thus it has been treated as powerful threat to the survival of tribal communities (Singh, 2008).

According to one estimate, irrigation projects, mines, thermal power plants, wildlife sanctuaries, industries, *etc.*, between 1950 and 1990 in India, displaced 213 lakh persons. 85 per cent of them are tribals (Fernandes & Paranjpe, 1997). The Government is aware of (a) the eroding resources base and socio-cultural heritage of tribal population through a combination of development interventions, commercial interest, and lack of effective legal protection of tribal and (b) the disruption of life and environment of tribal population owing to unimaginative, insensitive package of relief.

### **Case Studies:**

#### ***1. A Tribe Faces Extinction***

Several tribal groups spread over the Eastern Ghats across the southern and eastern region of the Indian sub-continent. In Orissa, a tribal group named Dongria Kondh people who inhabit the Niyamgiri Hills now faces extinction. According to the census, there are only 7,952 surviving members of the Dongria, a sub-sect of the Kondh peoples, who have inhabited the forests of eastern India for thousands of years. On one side

sits the State and Central Government and the Indian subsidiary of Vedanta Resources Plc, a British Mining Corporation. They are applying for permission to dig up the Niyamgiris-rich in bauxite, used in the manufacture of aluminium-at the rate of three million tonnes a year and then pour them into a huge alumina refinery, which has already been constructed at the foot of the hills (Foster, 2008, May 18). The Dongria are the next casualties of the headlong rush for industrial development.

#### ***2. Jarawa Tribes***

Jarawa tribals, an ethnic group in Andamans, also faced extinction due to various reasons. An approximate number of Jarawa tribals were 500. Of these 260 were reported to have survived the devastating tsunami by hanging on to the trees. According to the 2001 census figures, there LSCAC 2010 Proceedings 156 were around 250 Jarawas inhabiting the middle-south Andaman Islands. These people are still living in primitive stage of the society in isolation.

#### ***3. Chengara Land Struggle***

During the last two years, Chengara in Kerala had become the symbol of a silent war for land. Unlike in Singur or in Nandigram, it was not against eviction. Instead, it was the fight of those who toiled in land, but never possessed any cultivable land, asserting their right to own sustainable land in a society that professes equality and fraternity. The agitation at Chengara in Pathanamthitta District had commenced on August 4, 2007, when 300 families from various parts of the state belonging to Dalits, Adivasis and other landless communities converged on the rubber estate owned by Harrison's Malayalam Plantations Ltd and pitched up thatched sheds and started living there. Their demand was five acres of land for cultivation and Rs.50,000/- as financial assistance per family. The demand was later reduced to one acre of land. After 790 days,

the struggle has been 'settled' at a discussion convened by the Chief Minister V.S. Achutanandan with Lala Gopalan and others of the Sadhu Jana Vimochana Samyukta Vedi (SJVS), which spearheaded the agitation. 1432 families out of the 1738 families who had started living on the rubber plantation of Harrison's will get land and financial assistance to build houses, as part of the settlement.

#### 4. Fight for Water

The struggle for water in Plachimada, is another episode in Kerala, where The Coca Cola Company bottling plant has both drained and contaminated groundwater on which the local farming community depends. Coca Cola came to India in 1993, looking for water and markets in a country where one third of all villages are without anything approaching adequate water and shortages are growing every day. Indeed India is facing a gigantic water crisis, even as Coca Cola and other companies haul free water to the cities from the countryside and water parks and golf courses metastasize around cities like Mumbai. The bloom was on neo-liberalism back then when Coca Cola came in, with Central and State authorities falling over themselves to lease, sell or simply handover India's national assets in the name of economic "reform".

Coca Cola had sound reasons in zoning in on Plachimada. A rain-shadow region in the heart of Kerala's water belt, it has large underground water deposits. The site Coca Cola picked was set between two large reservoirs and ten meters south of an irrigation canal. The ground water reserves had apparently showed up on satellite surveys done by the company's prospectors. The Coke site is surrounded by colonies where several hundred poor people live in crowded conditions, with an average holding of four-tenths of an acre. Virtually the sole source of employment is wage labour, usually for no more than 100 to 120 days in the

year. Within six months, the villager's mostly indigenous adivasis and dalits saw the level of their water drop sharply, even run dry. The water they did draw was awful. It gave some people diarrhoea and bouts of dizziness. To wash in it was to get skin rashes, a burning feel on the skin. It left their hair greasy and sticky. The women found that rice and dal was not cooked but became hard. A thousand families have been directly affected, and well water affected up to a three or four kilometers from the plant. The cruel fact is that water from our underground sources is pumped out free and sold to our people to make millions every day, at the same time destroying our environment and damaging the health of our people. For us rivers, dams and water sources are the property of the nation and her people.

#### 5. Narmada People's Struggle

Since 1985, the adivasis of the Narmada Valley have been struggling against displacement and destruction resulting from the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP). Their united fight reveals that not only the political and economic aspects of globalization, but also its intellectual repression must be resisted. The people's knowledge resulting in their land must not be ignored. Particularly when Government information is fraught with inconsistencies (Aravinda, 2000, November 11). Living in the mountains and plains of the Narmada River Valley, stretching for 1,300 Km through Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and Maharashtra communities including tribal people also known as adivasis have, since 1985, mounted a tenacious struggle against displacement, State repression, and the destruction of natural resources resulting from the Narmada Valley Development Projects. The projects comprise 30 large dams, 133 medium size dams, and 3,000 small dams, along with 75,000 Km of canal networks to direct the waters of the Narmada River to wherever the state decrees (Sangvai, 2000). Sardar Sarovar takes up over

80% of Gujarat's irrigation budget but has only 1.6% of cultivable land in Kutch, 9% of cultivable land in Saurashtra and 20% cultivable land in North Gujarat in its command area. Moreover, these areas are at the tail end of the command and would get water only after all the area along the canal path get their share of the water, and that too after 2020 AD.

### Conclusion:

Culture is defined as patterns of human activity and the symbols that give these activities significance. Globalisation, as a process, has far-reaching cultural potential in India. Developmental strategies under the New Economic Policies led to a process of conscious and systematic annihilation of culture and identity of the first people-the adivasis- of this country. This process of globalization has invaded India since the introduction of New Liberalisation Policy. The socio-cultural change among the tribal communities has no doubt empowered the tribals; however, their cultural identity is under severe stress. However, it is not too late to rise above the politics of exclusion and marginalization, to unearth and mainstream fast vanishing tribal traditions, whether in India, or in African countries. Perhaps its time to amplify long marginalized voices and awaken contemporary nation States to the realization that only through the establishment of such democratic, reconciliatory, gender friendly grass root tribal traditions could one create a more equitable, more just society and world order. The reality remaining that without rapid action, these native communities may be wiped out, taking with them vast indigenous knowledge, rich culture and traditions, and any hope of preserving the natural world, and a simpler, more holistic way of life for future generations. Globalization does hold out great promise if it managed properly. However, it will only work if the winners share with the losers.

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