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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	CURRICULUM PLANNING ON CHILD RIGHTS IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION Dr. Nidhi Thakur	1
2.	DISPLACEMENT AND MALNUTRITION AMONG TRIBALS IN BALAGHAT KANHA NATION PARK Dr. Anjana Nema	18
3.	Religious Ideology and Economic Deprivation in the Context of India Jyoti Kumrey	25
4.	Economic Development in India: A Nehruvian Concept Dr. R.S. Thakur	44
5.	A Changing Profile Of Mortality Factors In Seoni-Chhindwara Plateau Of M.P. Harsh Lata Ulkey	50
6.	प्रगतिशील पंचायतों की सफल अभिवृद्धि : बिल्लेसुर बकरिया डॉ. निखा चव्हाणकर	56
7.	Health Care and Public Health Planning in the Panchayati Raj Era Kalpana Ingley	60
8.	NREGA — ISSUES AND CHALLENGES Dr. S.N Deheria	65
9.	National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme: Issues And Challenges Dr. Sahida Khan	78
10.	मुल्ताई ग्रामीण अव्यवस्था और स्वसहायता समूह : एक आर्थिक विश्लेषण डॉ. एन.सी. खनीफिया	83
11.	हिन्दी साहित्य एवं युक्तनैति में नैतिकविचार बर्ण डॉ. एच.आर. केजरी	87
12.	Recent Trends of Ratio Analysis: A Most Powerful Tool for Financial Analysis C.B. Jhariya	91
13.	1937 और 1948 ई. के दौरान बिहार में मुस्लिम अलगाववाद का प्रसार डॉ. केन सिंह कल्ले	99
14.	दोस्तद वंशिक इन्डोर राजवाड़े के सिद्धि सिद्धी की प्रमुख विशेषताएँ श्रीमती रचना कल्ले	103
15.	हिन्दी साहित्य एवं काव्य अनुमन की परम्परा और जागतिक्युल डॉ. चरमक कल्ले	106
16.	The Unique Periodic Solution of Abel's Differential Equation Dr. Seema Maraskole	109
17.	Determinantal Representations of the Weighted Core-EP, DMP, MPD, and CMP Inverses Dr. Pratibha Gupta	117
18.	Environment and Micronutrients to Aim Enhanced Crop Production with Reduced Environmental Hazards Dr. Jitendra Jharbade & Dr. Manoj Kumar Mahore	128
19.	Level and Trends of the Judiciary in Environmental Governance Syed Niha	132

DISPLACEMENT AND MALNUTRITION AMONG TRIBALS IN BALAGHATKANHA NATION PARK

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The role of development projects in a rapidly developing country like India cannot be overemphasized. For the economic growth of any nation, development projects are considered inevitable. Besides projects aimed at creating or improvement of infrastructure like roads, railway tracks, dams, bridges, aerodromes, etc., those intended for protection of wildlife like Kanha Nation Parks or creation of national parks etc., also come under the category of development projects. It is a well-known fact that most of these projects unfortunately induce displacement or fousting of people from their traditional habitats. Such displacement causes profound economic, social and cultural disruption to the life of people affected by it (Parasuraman, 2015). People affected by such displacement or 'ousting' are left with no other option but to seek and adjust to new entitlement and access to fresh and many a times non-feasible sources of livelihood. However, development projects induce displacement of tribal and other people from their ancestral habitats and cause large-scale loss of their traditional occupations. Thus, through the carefully planned and judiciously executed development projects have been instrumental in the faster economic growth of the nation, they often have to be painful.

This paper attempts to take a closer look at impact of displacement on livelihood of the tribals in BalaghatKanha Nation Park in Amravati District. The paper also tries to outline the impending problems that are likely to affect the livelihoods of people in general and children in particular after displacement and during the process of displacement. It also attempts to suggest a social work intervention model created to offset the impact of displacement. The paper is largely based on empirical data collected from the people of six villages (three displaced villages and three villages to be displaced) in the BalaghatKanha Nation Park area.

DEPENDENCE OF TRIBAL ON NATURAL RESOURCES

The very great dependence of the tribals on the common property resources (CPRs) is a crucial factor. Much of their food and other daily needs are met by the forest even in areas where there has been massive deforestation in recent decades. The non-wood forest produce (NWFP) they use as food includes plants, fruits, flowers and leaves of various-types. Traditionally around 80 percent of their food come from these resources and from shifting cultivation on forest land. Even after deforestation, about 50 per cent of the food comes from the same source which has been confirmed by many studies. (Fernandes, 1997:82). More than 80 trees and plants including Mahua, Bel, Sal and Tendu are used by the tribals as food (Fernandes, Menon and Viegas, 1988:151-153). Among fruits that are used by the tribals are Ramphal, Sitaphal, Mango, Jackfruit, Jaman, Tamarind, etc.

According to the Zoological Survey of India, Kolkata, at least 894 varieties of mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, insects etc. are used by the tribals for medicinal purposes (Joseph, 1992:78-96).

Fodder and timber are other benefits the tribal get from forest (Ramchandaran, 1997: 13-14). Traditionally, the forest dwellers have also been dependent on forest for building their houses, small timber for agricultural implements, furniture, ropes, mats, charpoy and other daily needs. However, tribals consume less timber than the urban middle class does. According to one estimate, their house,

agricultural implements and furniture together consume around one cum of timber while an urban middle class family owning a two bedroom house, consumes approximately 3 cum (Fernandes, Menon and Viegas, 1988: 153-154). Fences around the fields to protect from wild animals and fuel wood are other needs of the tribals, which are fulfilled by the forest. One can thus see their total dependence on the forest. When these sources are threatened they are bound to feel insecure.

NATIONAL SCENARIO OF DISPLACEMENT, RESETTLEMENT AND REHABILITATION

Studies indicate that development-induced displacement has been one of the major causes of deprivation of livelihood of the people in India. According to the Government of Madhya Pradesh classification, in the project affected people 98 per cent of the population belongs to "Backward Classes" and only 2 per cent of the population in project areas belong to Maratha, Brahmins and the economically and socially higher caste groups. Out of the 17 lakh persons displaced by 119 Central and State government schemes a staggering 8 lakh, i.e., more than half were tribals. Mines have displaced over 21 lakh persons during the past 40 years which includes 14 lakh tribals. A 1987 Government of India report claims that 85 lakh tribals have been displaced at least once. Another estimate suggests that the total number of DPs/PAPs in India between 1951-91 is 213 lakh and nearly 85 of them are tribals. It further mentioned that only 53.8 lakh persons or 25 per cent of them have been resettled. The total number of resettled tribals among them was only 21 lakh persons thus indicating that nearly 75 per cent of the tribals were not resettled at all.

OUTCOME OF DISPLACEMENT & RESETTLEMENT

The important factor is paucity of benefits. Much of the land attempted to be taken away from them is Common Property (CPRS). If it is forestland, the law gives no rights whatever to the people even though they might have used it as their livelihood for several generations (Singh, 1989:92). Traditionally no compensation has been paid for it.

One of the tragedies of forced displacement is that while in most cases, persons displaced by natural disasters or communal violence are able to return to their original habitat, this choice is not available to those displaced or those whose livelihoods are adversely affected.

In the process of displacement, not only those who hold land in their possession and have dwelling houses, etc are displaced as a consequence of the acquisition of their lands, but the displacement extends equally to the co dependence of system including the tenants, share coppers, landless labourers, and also carrying on any trade, occupation, calling or working for any gain within such areas. All such persons are affected and deprived of their livelihood.

Landlessness, Joblessness (reduction in employment opportunities), Homelessness, Marginalization, Food Insecurity (uncertain opportunities and reduced wages in and around resettled villages), Morbidity and Disarticulation are the results of forced displacement.

MALNUTRITION AND STARVATION DEATHS SCENARIO IN MADHAY PRADESH AND BALAGHAT

According to the India Human Rights Annual Report 2005, the tribals are poorest in the State and they become disproportionate victims of starvation death. In the face of governmental apathy, hunger, malnutrition and death have become a way of life for the indigenous peoples in Madhya Pradesh. Government records in June 2004 showed that out of 37,524 children below the age of six in Balaghat region, only 12,376 were of normal weight. The rest were suffering from various grades of malnutrition, with over a thousand under the severely malnourished categories. Activists, however, claimed that more than 50 per cent of the children were malnourished in the two blocks of Dharmi and Chikhaldhara, and at

least 200 children had died since April 2004. In July 2004, the government claimed that only 86 children had died from April to June 2004.

This is despite the fact that on 5 June 2004, government acknowledged that more than 9,000 tribal children below the age of six years died of starvation and malnutrition in 15 districts of Madhya Pradesh between April 2004 and May 2004. During April-May 2004 alone as many as 1,041 children reportedly died of malnutrition. Out of them, 86 children died in Dharni and Chikaldhara talukas in the Balaghat region of Amravati district. Every year, at least 500 children reportedly die of malnutrition related causes in Balaghat region. The Director admitted that there were deaths of 1,041 children in April-May 2004 due to various other reasons like typhoid, pneumonia and snake bites besides malnutrition.

There were little serious attempts to control malnutrition and starvation deaths. "Operation Kam" programme launched in June 2004 by the Amravati district administration failed to control malnutrition deaths. The scheme covered only the grade four malnourished children, that too not without disparity. To ensure the Adivasis' presence at the hospitals, the state government provided a daily payment of Rs 40 each, the equivalent to a day's wage. But the insincerity on the part of the administration and health department is best exposed from the reported statement of Dr Geetanjali Joshi, a medical officer at the Jamsar Primary Health Centre: "The adivasis are basically dirty so we don't bother too much about hygiene. They wouldn't understand".

According to the Child Mortality Evaluation Committee headed by leading health activist Abhay Bang, set up by the government of Madhya Pradesh to study the problem of infant mortality in the state, an estimated 160,000 infants die every year due to malnutrition in Madhya Pradesh. The committee held that apathy and negligence on the part of the state's healthcare machinery were responsible for the high number of infant deaths. The first report of the Abhay Bang committee presented to the state legislature on 18 December 2004 by state health minister Vimal Mundada stated that 82,000 children died every year in rural Madhya Pradesh, excluding the 23,500 kids who die in the tribal areas. In urban slums, 56,000 children die every year. According to the survey, most of the deaths were caused by malnutrition and infection. Nearly 80 per cent of deaths happened due to stillbirths, pneumonia and diarrhea.

Some years ago, when around 4,000 tribal children died in the Balaghat area due to so-called 'malnutrition', almost no rise in the normal infant mortality was observed in the 57 forest villages inside the BalaghatKanha Nation Park. This could be because quite apart from fresh and safe drinking water, the Bega communities had access to tubers, roots, creepers, wild fruit, fish, crabs and other such life supporting resources. These communities will probably have to face outside "competition" as the roads that have been constructed now enable outsiders in vehicles to enter the very heart of the forest.

BALAGHATKANHA NATION PARK

BalaghatKanha Nation Park (MTR) is located in Satpura Hill Ranges in Central India. It represents 6E Central Highlands province of The Deccan Peninsula Zone in India in the rime habitat of Royal Bengal Tiger (*Panthera Tigris*). MTR extends over an area of 1676.93 Km. of Southern Tropical Dry Deciduous Forests buffered by another approximate 1200km. of Reserve Forests. It harbours a viable population of Tiger (73 - 1998 estimate) Supported by another 20-25 tigers in the surrounding reserve forests. The area is catchments to the five major rivers viz. Khandu, Khapna, Sipna, Gadaga and Dolar all of which are tributaries of river Tapti. The Teak (*Tectona grandis*) dominated dry deciduous forests of the area harbours variety of fauna and flora making it one of the prime biodiversity repository in Madhya Pradesh State. According to Notification No. WLP-1978/10553(A) dt. 5.9.1985 under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, the PTM was declared as Balaghat Tiger Sanctuary with an area of

1676.93Sq.Km., including the area of Dhakna-Kolkaz Sanctuary. However, till 1988 working in this forest area was at large scale and tribal population used to work and get enough money for their daily needs. These monetary aspects satisfied their nutritional aspects and so even during rainy season, when due to excessive rains, roads used to get blocked and Government machinery could not reach the villagers, we found gradually more large-scale deaths due to malnutrition or diseases.

DISPLACEMENT OF THREE VILLAGES

However, there were 22 villagers still located on the peripheral 788.75 Sq. Km. land. These 22 villages were proposed to be rehabilitated outside Balaghat Sanctuary and at present no working plan was introduced in Balaghat forestry. Operation is facing some constraints and is not able to generate the size and quantum of employment that is needed by the local population and which can develop their economic aspects.

Three villages, out of 22 villages had been displaced from the buffer zone. There were a series of consultations amongst people from the villages, public officials and NGOs. The rehabilitation committee was formed which comprised the representatives from all above groups. The NGOs in consultation with adivasis prepared a rehabilitation plan to be considered before resettlement and rehabilitation. The important points of this plan were:

1. The Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Area) Act (PESA) gives a number of powers to communities living in scheduled areas. Most importantly, it refers to constitutional powers to people in scheduled areas (5th schedules). Hence while rehabilitating communities from scheduled area, it is important that-a) the alternative land should be in a scheduled area.
2. The entire resettlement process should be carried forward only in consultation and after receiving the assent from Gram Sabha. The decision taken by the Gram Sabha shall be binding.
3. The village should be, ideally, rehabilitated with similar ecological conditions.
4. The village should have the status of a revenue village.
5. Everybody should be provided with the house, place, cultivable land, drinking water, village school, playground, electricity, roads, cattle shed, the grazing land, anganwadi, fair price shop, medical facility, sewage line, toilets, burial ground, firewood, biogas system;
6. The follow up process for five years.

Koha, Kund, Bori have been rehabilitated at RajuraGiravpur in Akot Tahsil of Akola District in March 2020. Each household has been given Rs. 30000 to construct their house along with 1 hectare land. They built school for three villages without any teaching facility (teachers, etc). The Government has told to resettle in the period near rainy season, when many of them could not even construct their house. Many of their promises are unfulfilled, e.g. Health, sanitation, infrastructure and communication. And government is praising this work for nothing. The government is in hurry to resettle the remaining 19 villages though they haven't rehabilitated the earlier villages properly and government even failed to fulfill their promises and the suggestion and considerations of Rehabilitation Committee.

TRIBAL LIFE IN THE PROCESS OF DISPLACEMENT IN BALAGHAT

In 1974, Balaghat was declared part of the Project Tiger Scheme and in 1990 the Government of Madhya Pradesh officially declared Balaghat as a reserved forest. A direct and sudden consequence of this unilateral decision was the prohibition upon Bega people to pick up forest produce for their own consumption, which is violation of Art. 25 ICESCR and despite the stipulation of the National Forest

Policy 1988, according to which "the basic objective that should govern the National Forest Policy includes meeting the requirement of fuel wood, fodder, minor forest produce and small timber of the rural and tribal population". The forest department continues to keep the Bega away from any decision making concerning forest policy.

Following are the main areas concerning the life of Bega Tribals affected because of BalaghatKanha Nation Park:

1. **Absence of means for livelihood:** There are no employment opportunities after displacement and land received in compensation is not productive;
2. **Lack of access to health care both traditional and modern (12 ICESCR and 25 CRC):** Government public health centres, PHC sub-centres and rural hospitals are there in the BalaghatKanha Nation Park area but the doctors and other staff never remain in the hospital. And as there are no transport facilities and road access to reach from one village to another it is difficult to provide health facilities within the required time. Because of ban on collection of MFP and medicinal plants it is difficult for the people from Balaghat area to utilize these plants for medicinal purposes;
3. **Inadequate nutrition:** Even the Art. 24(2)(c), Constitution of India ensures adequate nutrition and minor forest produce and community control over natural resources under PESA Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996. The Provisions of the Panchayat (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996: regarding minor forest produce (MFP) and natural resource (NR), is to provide adivasi control and ownership over MFP and NR in order to ensure community wellbeing and ecological sustainability by giving them autonomy with adivasi;
4. **Inaccess to traditional food and nutrition which is a violation of the right to life:** The introduction of cash crops in recent years has further disrupted the tribal economy. Crops like soybean and cotton have been taken over from local crops like kodo, kutki and savarya, which once formed the basis of the tribals' yearlong food security. It is believed that both government and non-tribal outsiders used the lure of money to encourage tribals to shift to cash crops;
5. **Prohibition on collection of MFP like Tendu, Rosa grass, Gum, Mahua flowers, Fruits and Honey:** It has resulted in nutrition -deprivation of children and in a deterioration of Bega's housing and increasing health hazards. There is a deep connection between the tribal economy and minor forest produce. Access to products like mahua (butter tree), tendu leaf and edible gum (dink) is a matter of life and death to the tribals. Since the tiger project began, the government has been methodically snapping the lifeline of the tribals. Today, they can't collect forest produce in large quantities to sell. They can't hunt or fish without bribing the forest officials. This is a direct attack on their self-reliance;
6. **Violation of Right to be Free From Racial Discrimination:** (Art 15(COI), Art 1 of Convention against Racial discrimination) The discrimination against the Bega people, based on their ethnic origin, and nullifying the exercise of their economic, social and cultural rights is violative of the convention against racial discrimination;
7. **Lack of condition for work:** Daily wages paid are below the minimum daily wages;
8. **Neglected Health sector in Balaghat:** However, even if the public health system were adequate, it would not be enough. It is a medical solution for an economic problem. If you remove people from their source of sustenance, you must provide them with an alternative. Medical intervention can save lives but they cannot deal with generational nutritional deficiencies, where low birth

weight babies grow into emaciated and underfed mothers who then produce low birth weight babies. It is a cycle that cannot be broken by medicines alone;

9. **Denial of all the rights of the Children** i.e. right to survival, right to protection, right to development and right to participation;
10. **Discontinuation of Public Distribution System:** In the BalaghatKanha Nation Park area as people from the village are to be displaced, Government has discontinued the supply of various needy items through public distribution system because of that people are unable to maintain their life from the income they earned;
11. **Not getting benefits of Scheduled Areas:** Before displacement displaced villages were in Schedule 6th area of the Indian Constitution which give and provide various benefits to the tribals but after displacement these displaced villages do not come under Schedule 6th area and are denied all the benefits they enjoyed before displacement;
12. **As compared to other castes, particularly Gaolies in the area, tribals are more vulnerable to exploitation economically, socially, politically and psychologically:** Literacy is higher among the non-tribals (Gaolies) than among the tribals. Their sons are thus able to get many skilled jobs, which the tribals are unable to do. Because of their greater exposure to the formal sector, the Gaolies are better equipped than the tribals to negotiate with the project administrators and government officials;
13. **More malnutrition deaths of the tribal children in the age group of 0-6 years:** These incidents of tribal deaths have become a stereotype drama. Sometime it remains a political issue by opposition party before elections and the news, pictures are flashed in the national and local media, which are followed by visits of government officials, high profile ministers and then after some days the news is more or less forgotten;
14. **About 300 NGOs are working:** In total about 300 NGOs are working on different issues of tribal people from the area. Balaghat area is overcrowded with the number of NGO;
15. **Millions have been pumped in the last decade** - both by the government and NGOs - in health programmes and welfare schemes to avoid such deaths

CONCLUSION

It is normally assumed that when previously isolated tribes come into contact with the economically advanced and politically more powerful sections of society, their material impoverishment and social disintegration inevitably follows. Land displacement and contamination affect the food supply of indigenous people, increasing the likelihood of malnutrition and starvation.

The crisis is one of absence of livelihood and the choices are too severe. The forests are important for humankind as a whole and not just for those who live in forests is the argument. These people can be resettled elsewhere in the interests of preserving forests. It is this basic premise that has resulted in the dislocation of the lives of millions of tribal communities throughout India. In Balaghat, the situation has been acute. And the restriction on cultivation of land and collection of minor forest produce makes their life miserable and which is resulting into deaths and reducing their populations.

Here the role of state is crucial in protection of rights of Adivasis which are enshrined in the constitution of India. The private players in credit, market and resource management will be more exploitative. The state must recognize that without the active participation of Adivasis, forest protection is impossible. This will happen if their basic needs are given adequate attention by giving their due share

or equal rights. It demands greater genuine community forest protection initiative through Gram Sabha unlike dominated Joint Forest Management (JFM). The state sponsored cooperatives of landless Adivasis should be set up for the processing and marketing of various non-timber forest produce. The resettlement and rehabilitation must be done in accordance with legal norms without violating their human rights.

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