

# **'Needs' Based Development to 'Desired' Development: Locating the Freudian Idea in Social and Economic Development of Tribals after the New Economic Reforms in India**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This paper is an attempt to study tribal development in India where the tribals are not only marginalized but also dispossessed in the process of economic reforms in India. A massive transformation is taking place in the tribal societies in India where a need based self-sufficient society is being transformed into a desired based consumer society. The process is accelerated by the neoliberal public policies in India that promotes the idea of 'desired development'. In a way, this article is trying to document the nature of change in the tribal society which has traveled from 'need' based development to 'desired' development in the planning for tribal development. In this process of transition, we are trying to locate the Freudian idea in tribal development planning in India that is putting tribals under durable poverty, underdevelopment and marginalization. Hence, this paper seeks to contextualise the transformation in the 'logic' of public and corporate socio-economic development programmes implemented amongst tribal groups in India within the broader changes that have characterised the gradual and sometimes fraught transitions in capitalist social relations.*

## **Introduction:**

At a time when development planning in India is based on the free market logic of economic growth and the political discourse is being dominated by a 'dreadful dialectic' of war, terror and communalism, many significant issues of lives and livelihood are being conveniently allowed to take a back seat in the public debate. Displacement of tribals<sup>1</sup> in the name of development and economic growth by mining based industrialization is one such issue. Here, the idea is not to underestimate the problem and issues of war, terror and communalism in society. The issue of displacement that particularly includes the environment, marginalization, deprivation of life and livelihood and resource sustainability, is over looked within the narrow paradigm of cost-benefit analysis in economic rationalisation. Without looking into such issues contemporary development planning and economic growth is in question. Since independence, tribal displaced by development projects or industries have not been rehabilitated to date. Research shows that the number of displaced tribal till 1990 is about 8.5 million (55.16% of total displaced) of whom 64.23% are yet to be rehabilitated. This is the other side of India, where the neoliberal policy-making elites claim eight percent per annum economic growth, but such growth is not having a positive relationship on the continuing poverty and marginalisation amongst both tribals and Indian society at large. However, since the advent of the new economic reforms<sup>2</sup> in India in 1991, a significant social and cultural transformation is taking place within the tribal societies. The public policy for tribal

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1 The term "tribe" or "tribal" is a contested term. The tribals are basically forest dwellers prefers to be call as 'adivasis' (primitive inhabitants, indigenous people). In administrative language, they are known as 'Schedule Tribes (ST)' by the governments in India. Again the term tribe or tribal is a derogatory term in Europe, America or elsewhere but it refers a community of people who lives in the hilly terrains and forests in India and continues to be underdeveloped in terms of health, education and income in comparison to their non tribal neighbors.

2 The New Economic Reforms in India which was lunched during 1991 has two components i.e.: Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) and Stabilization Policies with other disinvestments policies as advised by the World Bank and the IMF. The Structural Adjustment Policy was aimed at privatization and liberalization where as

development has continued to shift from a 'needs' based development approach to a 'desires' based development approach that is having a colossal impact on the tribal society, culture and economy. The Freudian idea is being implemented through economic reform which has reinforced the market as the focal point in the discourses surrounding development. The penetration of modern and mainstream market into tribal society is the root cause of in the current process of dismantling tribal communitarian culture. In such a context, an attempt has been made to study poverty and marginalization in tribal societies in India which is undergoing massive transformations following the post 1991 economic reforms.

### **The idea of Individuality and Society among tribals in India:**

The tribal society in India is institutionalized in such a way that acknowledges individuality; each individual's uniqueness and creativity. This form of social organization in tribal society not only acknowledges individual uniqueness, but also nurtures it by allowing enough personal space to develop their creativity and consequently upholds the tribal communal culture in India where each member of the tribal groups contributes to their community in their respective ways without any binding principles. Nobody orders anyone to do this or do that. There is nothing called 'I', 'Me' and 'Mine'; rather the expression of 'We', 'Our' and 'Us' is reflected in all aspects of tribal life and society. The tribals are free to choose whatever they want to do in their social, cultural and economic life. Again the social, cultural and economic lives of the tribals have a wider meaning system where they locate their individuality in the societal life or in the life of the community. There is no place for individualism in terms of material accumulation for the self. The social, cultural and economic life of the tribals in India is based on the above ideas of individuality and society<sup>3</sup>.

Hence, the Freudian idea of the collision of individual self-interest and social interests did not exist and materialise in tribal societies in India, as it did for the industrial capitalist societies in Europe (i.e., the context for the genesis of Freud's ideas). Freud said "the fateful question for the human species seems to me to be whether and to what extent their cultural development will succeed in mastering the disturbance to their communal life by the human instinct of aggression and self-destruction." (Freud, 1961:145). This did not happen in tribal society as per the psychoanalytical study and the pessimistic ideas about society of Sigmund Freud developed after the First World War in *Civilization and its Discontents*, and thus became irrelevant to tribal society. The tribal society continues to follow communitarian culture whilst looking at 'individual' and 'society' relationship. The principle of *Aparigrah*<sup>4</sup> followed by both individual and society which works as the basic principle to avoid conflict between individual and society. In other words, the very notions of 'individual' and 'society' that emerge in Western philosophical traditions and society are qualitatively different from those that exist in tribal society in India.

### **Market, Individual and Society:**

After the initiation of the new economic reforms under the genesis of neoliberal policies in India during the 1990s, a shift has taken place in the 'society' and 'individual' relationships. The central

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Stabilization Policy was aimed at devaluation of currency, free and deregulated market, elimination and reduction of subsidies, reduced control of the nation state over its macro economic affairs especially in the matter of budgetary policy and monetary policy and removal of welfare policies and facilities provided by the state. This reflects the basic features of neoliberal economic policies which were part of the deal by the World Bank and IMF that provoked criticism inside and outside India that this program was the handiwork of the Bretton Wood institutions. This deal did not leave any space to mobilize internal resources to meet the economic crisis. The taking of over of Indian economy by the market forces could not deliver as per the promise of the new economic reform program (Chandrasekhar and Ghosh, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> The expression and understanding of tribal culture and their society is a product of one year of fieldwork in the Kalahandi district in one of the eastern Indian state called Orissa.

<sup>4</sup> 'Aparigrah' is a Sanskrit word, implies the value of non-accumulation or of not keeping anything more that is necessary for one's minimal needs.

crystallization of neoliberal political economy is the unregulated free market and social and political institutions suitable to it, particularly private property and its definition and application by rule of law. Free market social relations places special emphasis on the individual self-interest and consequently social and economic institutions are shaped to facilitate the pursuit of this interest. At the centre of this individual world is a system of self accumulation which more than anything that satisfies not only individual *needs* but also individual *desires* or *wants*. The individual's desire overrules the individual's need. Such broad ideas are influencing tribal society and culture in a way that gives rise to a new conflict between individual and social interest, one that was hitherto non-existent due to the intrinsic and peculiar relationship between the individual and society amongst tribal groups. This conflict between individual and society is the basis of the dismantling of the tribal communitarian culture. The fragmentation of tribal life has led to the augmentation of conflicts between individuals for their own interests. These conflicts are contributing to the growth of vulnerability, marginalization and poverty. The disunity among the tribals also presents an opportunity chance to non-tribals and other ruling elites to exploit tribals on a paramount scale.

Markets do not have a uniform influence on the tribal population in India. The impact of the market on tribal populations varies according to their social and geographical location. Although few tribals live in the urban centers in mainstream society, they integrate with the market relatively easy, and again few among them might even become beneficiaries of the market, the majority of the tribal population who live in the hilly terrains and forests areas, face real difficulties in integrating themselves with the market and inevitably suffer negative consequences to their traditional cultural life. Thus, the variation in the effects of markets on outcomes one must identify an exogenous source of variation in market participation. The economists and anthropologist have developed and put together five complementary hypotheses to explain what pulls or pushes indigenous peoples toward or away from markets: (a) the allure of foreign goods (Orlove, 1997, Bauer, 2001), (b) encroachment by outsiders (Gross et al. 1979), (c) resource scarcity from internal population pressure (Diamond, 1995), (d) taxation (Cooper, 2000), (e) the desire to improve individual well-being by capitalizing on one's comparative advantage and gains from trade (Henrich 1997, Godoy 2001), and (f) distaste for markets (Hirschman 1984). All these factors are important to understand the way market influences tribal societies in India and influences negatively. The factor seems irrelevant for the tribal or indigenous societies in India as they do not have any allure for foreign good<sup>5</sup>, no indication of resource scarcity, no desire for individual well being at the cost of their community. They do not need modern market for their primary or secondary needs, so the modern market is quite distasteful for the tribals. They call their market as *haat* or *bazaar* (*market*) which has wider social and cultural meaning attached to it that serves the interest of tribal communities in terms of their basic needs. The buyer and seller relationship in *haat* is much more communitarian than consumerist. The communitarian interest carries more importance in such kind of *haats* than profit making. The second factor is very important to understand the intervention of mainstream market that not only intrude *haat* but also brings outsiders to take over tribal land, market, culture and invade their economy. In this way, the market in its contemporary, consumer-specific manifestation engenders a collision between the tribal individual and society and exhausts their resources. This conflict between individual and society is being further enhanced by the state policies in the tribal community which are suppose to deliver development and welfare to the tribal population in the country.

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<sup>5</sup> Tribals feel everything is 'videshi' (foreign) for them which are outside their society; their production and forest network. For example anything from the district capital of Kalahandi district of Orissa, India is foreign for the tribals of Thuamulrampur block of Kalahandi.

### Locating Transitions in the Development Planning for Tribals in India:

Initial development planning in India was made by ingraining the tribal population and their development needs in the consciousness of the public policy makers. Recognizing the special needs and problems of the tribal population, special provisions were accorded to tribal development even in the Constitution of India<sup>6</sup> to ensure tribal development. The First Five Year Plan (1951-56) was designed with a special focus on tribal development, the Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) adopted the principle of 'Panchsheel', the Third Five Year Plan (1961-66) revamped the tribal development plan by opening of Multi-purpose Tribal Development Blocks to intensify tribal development where as the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74) and Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) has introduced the special strategies through the Tribal Sub Plan. Thus, from the First Five Year Plan (1951-56) to the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78), the development policy makers followed a policy of universal development approach towards tribal development. The Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) and Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90) stressed the poverty alleviation programmes via a higher degree of devolution of funds with a particular reference to educational and economic development of the tribal population in the country. The Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97) emphasized the elimination of exploitation in terms of land alienation, regular wage payment for the tribal laborer and tribal exploitation by local money lenders. It also highlighted the development gap between the tribal population and non tribal general population and followed sector wide approach to target vulnerability and marginalization. The Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) and the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07) aimed at the development of tribal population through the empowerment programmes (Planning Commission, 2002: 443-445). Thus, from the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) to the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07), public policy has followed targeted and sector wide approach for the tribal development in the country.

However, the shift from the universal tribal development approach to targeted tribal development is exemplified by the shift in the Indian economic policy from state-command to market-orientated economy after the implementation of the new economic reforms in 1991. The transition in the tribal development approach from a dedicated focus upon tribal welfare, to the concept of tribal development as 'empowerment' is a policy prescription of the neoliberal economic reforms.

The neoliberal economic reforms in India have prescribed policies where the state has a minimal role to play in the delivery of the welfare to its citizens, and in this way is broadly concomitant with the worldwide transformations in political economy that followed the collapse of the Bretton Woods agreement in 1973 and associated ideas of 'embedded liberalism' and 'welfare capitalism' and the subsequent neoliberal economic reform programmes that emanated from Great Britain and The United States (Holloway, 1995). The withdrawal of the state from the welfare activities started after the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) in a soft way which was known as '*half hearted liberalization*' (Manor, 1987). Although the economic reform programme surrendered to the neoliberal open economy after 1991, it was not until the Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) and the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07) that a new direction in the development debate in India opened up. The role of the state in the development and welfare of the tribals was reconstituted by the involvement of the Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Self Help Groups (SHGs) in the process of tribal development. It has not only reduced the role of state in the development process by involving NGOs and SHGs but also shifted the accountability to the people and communities and their organization,

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<sup>6</sup> The Constitution of India provides the following provisions for the development of the tribal population in the country. Article 14 provides equal rights and opportunities, Article 15 prohibits discrimination, Article 16(4) directs the state to make special provisions for the development of the backward class citizens, Article 46 directs the state to take special care of educational and economic interests of the weaker section of the population with special reference to tribal population, Article 275(1), 332, and 335 constitutes affirmative action through reservations, Article 340 empowers the state to appoint a Commission to investigate the condition of the socially and educationally backward classes with a special reference to tribal population. Again the Fifth Schedule to the Constitution of India lays down certain principles to protect tribal areas by categorizing their area under Schedule Area. The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution of India ensures the effective participation of tribal population in the process of planning for development and politics.

raising earnest questions about the legitimacy of representative government and its relation to the aspirations and needs of its citizens (tribal or non-tribal) in the world's largest democracy. Now we are in a situation where nobody is accountable for the tribal development programmes. The NGOs involvement in the development programmes dates back to the Janata government in 1978 when tax concessions were declared for voluntary initiatives by commercial companies were introduced, and many non-governmental organizations came into being. This has given space to commercial institutions to invest some of their profits in the development activities which allows them exemption from the tax structure. A change of government in 1980 and the restoration of rule by the Congress party led to the expected withdrawal of tax concessions; the centralization of voluntarism (companies could contribute to the Prime Minister's fund for rural development and seek fresh grants from it for action programmes). The Tenth Plan says that NGOs are playing "a very important role in sharing the responsibility of the Government in 'Reaching the Services to the Un-reached' in far-flung inaccessible areas and in developing and experimenting alternative project models to match the needs of the local people. Voluntary Organizations are effective agents in bringing forth the most desired social change and development by virtue of their direct contact and linkages with the tribals. VOs will, therefore, be encouraged to play an effective role in improving the status of tribals in the areas of education, health, nutrition, employment and income-generation, besides sensitizing the administrative machinery and concretizing the tribals to realize their rights and potential besides safeguarding them from social and economic exploitation."<sup>7</sup> Thus the government needs to fund these organizations for the development activities and welfare delivery programmes. In the process, such NGOs remained perpetually dependent upon aid agencies and government funding creating a class of people who are salary seeking social servants aimed at undermining the role of state and politics in the development of tribal population.

### **Revisiting of Freudian Ideas in the Tribal Development Policies in India**

As has been mentioned briefly already, the re-orientation of tribal development policy in India from state-led, 'needs' based development to a 'desire' based approach under the broader neoliberal programme introduced by the New Economic Reforms in 1991 can be located in a worldwide transformation in global political economy that has entrenched free market logic, through a variety of techniques, into the 'consciousness' and logic of development and economic growth. There is a substantial body of critical literature on the qualitative form of this transformation and its implication for both the process of 'globalisation' and the sometimes fraught disjuncture between the still young conception of a global society and national and local specificity. Both William Robinson and Kees Van der Pijl argue that the historic emergence of a 'transnational' capitalist class, whose primary function is to facilitate the flow and accumulation of capital which is unrestricted by national territorial organisation, has led to the maintenance (in its Transatlantic, Anglo-American core) and expansion of neoliberal economic ideology to the extent that its agents are no longer readily identifiable within the traditional structures of national political organisation (Robinson 2005; Van der Pijl, 1999). Particular prescience is given to the influence of multi-national corporations (MNCs) in influencing national and transnational economic policy, with its direction since the mid-1970s moving toward the deregulated and unrestricted global free market that we can see in its entirety today. The intersection of MNCs, world economic institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and World Trade Organisation and national policy-making elites that have been 'co-opted' into the neoliberal agenda are seen as a part of the constituent make up of the 'transnational' capitalist class (Gill and Law, 1993).

With regard to Indian domestic economic and development policy, as we have noted, a neoliberal 'turn' took place following the New Economic Reforms of 1991 (triggered by a balance of payments

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<sup>7</sup>The Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007), Planning Commission of India, Government of India, New Delhi.

crisis, overtures to foreign capital with the policy prescription of the Bretton Wood institutions and as such the policy-making elites in India began its integration into the broad configuration of transnational capitalism. The implication of this is that, whilst in other areas of the world, neoliberal reforms were more readily translatable into domestic policies, India's previously state-led, autarchic economy was a latter stage of integration than other parts of the West, and remote areas of Indian society, such as tribal communities, have only recently begun to experience this transformation into what we can deem as a 'consumer' society. This has created a tension between a community used to its own, unique traditional form of social and economic organisation and a gradually conforming global consumer-orientated free market society. Yet to document *how* this transformative and integrative process has occurred, it is worthwhile revisiting the Freudian ideas of psychoanalysis, whose interpretation and manipulation by corporate and governmental agencies in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s did much to entrench corporate market logic in economic policy and bring about a qualitative transformation of social consciousness from the 'needs'-based citizen to the 'wants,' or 'desires'-based consumer (Marcuse, 1955). With this comes the idea that capital, in its historic and contemporary transnational manifestation, utilises the techniques of manipulation (principally through advertising and imagery) to make consumers act on an impulse of gratifying immediate wants (Haug, 1986).

There are, in very general terms, two consequences of the very specific nature in which the *interpretations* of Freudian psychoanalysis impacted on the interlinkage between government, corporations and society. Firstly it gave rise to a distinct and historically-specific approach in the way in which government policy makers perceived society (and subsequently designed domestic policy toward) and secondly, it brought about a broader, gradual change in the nature of the relationship between 'citizen' and representative government.

- 1) The first point alludes to the scepticism in which government regarded society- particularly a pervasive ruling class fear of a large disenchanted urban mass that through sheer weight of numbers had the potential to dismatle the prevailing political and economic hegemony and its structures (especially with the assistance of radical ideology, hence the US governments early and successful attempts to marginalise and eventually demonize socialist ideology). Both the government and corporations feared that this could be destabilising for capital (and the operation of the free market), and thus set about reforming the techniques of conserving and perpetuating capitalist hegemony. The nephew of Sigmund Freud, Edward Bernays, was instrumental in advising both government and businesses that the key to securing an acquiescent mass for the growing consumer market of non-necessary goods and services and repress any potentially aggressive and destructive impulses (as implied by Freud's reflection of the social crises in Europe and the mass violence of the First World War) (Osborn, 1937) was to proliferate images and messages that would assuage these impulses and re-orientate them toward gratifying their immediate desires. Essentially this meant devising techniques that would carry the implicit intendment that participating in the consumer market was a way in which people could find 'happiness'- through material gratification. In practice, people would now buy goods and services that had hitherto been unnecessary, giving rise to the proliferation and standardisation of goods that were previously in the 'luxury' realm, desired only by a limited wealthy section of society (Haug, 1986). From this point, we see the cultivation of both the 'Public Relations' consultancy in government in engineering consent for policy and staving off dissidence to prevailing hegemonic ideas, as well as the escalation of mass advertising imagery as the primary medium of the transmission of consumer free market logic. As a technique of communication, we are now familiar with the pervasive prevalence of advertising and consumer consciousness as a defining element in the era of 'globalisation'- but these techniques did have a specific, historic emergence and it is testament to the strength of the interpretation of Freud's ideas that these techniques have become so embedded in global society.

*"If we understand the mechanism and motives of the group mind, is it not possible to control and regiment the masses according to our will without their knowing about it? The recent practice of propaganda has proved that it is possible, at least up to a certain point and within certain limits."*

(Bernays, 1928)

- 2) The second point regarding the nature of the relationship between citizen and representative government has global, national and local consequences that refer to democratic accountability and the legitimacy of economic development policy (Wood, 1995). If, as is the case with Indian tribal development policy, there has been a turn to a 'desire'-based approach, then we see that the Indian government has in some way devolved responsibility for the policies to NGOs that are already aligned within the global neoliberal framework. It is almost as if there is 'no turning back,' and tribals are set on an irredeemable course to integration of both the Indian and global market place as consumers. Many NGO activists or workers whatever you may call are from the urban centers or from the mainstream society. They find NGO sector as an employment generating sector. They preach and practice mainstream culture in their everyday life which is known as so called civilized life. Again most of the NGOs working in the tribal areas in one way or the other are attached to the Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh(RSS) and Vishwa Hindu Parisad(VHP) (Chatterjee, 2003, 2004, 2006). The NGOs attached to these organizations are working under different names for example, for the educational programmes, they work in the name of Saraswati Sishu Mandir, Vivekananda Sikhya Kendra and for tribal welfare programmes, they work under the organization of Vanavasi Kalyan Kendra(Tribal Welfare Center) and Vidya Bharaties to advance hindu nationalism. These organizations and people within it are not only reducing the role of the state but also creating hype where tribals are being dragged into the mainstream culture (hindu and urbanite). The mainstream culture carries mainstream market where tribal population are becoming a part of it by being consumers without having any consciousness about it.

What this implies is that there is a corollary relationship between the transformation of citizen to consumer and the broader entrenchment of consumer market logic and consciousness. For example, as a consequence of the marketization of development policy in India, tribals are now exposed to 'goods' that previously had little relevance to their social life, but now, through increasing exposure to the very techniques described above, desire goods and services that they can neither afford nor can the state provide them for the tribals. This clearly has an disintegrative social impact- similar to the 'cargo cults' of remote Indonesia, where tribes that came into contact with Western 'development' aid quickly adopted a materiality that saw them sitting around and waiting for the next cargo rather than participating in the traditional social and cultural activities (Macmichael, 1998). How the state has in some way become 'detached' from this process masks a deeper problematic existent in the ongoing transformation of the global political economy and the emergence of a conformist 'one-dimensionality' of capitalist life that has now penetrated even the remotest, pre-market societies, and with it bringing about the feeling of helplessness of the state to counter this process (Marcuse, 1964).

## **Conclusion**

The reflection of Freudian ideas in the public planning for the social and economic development of tribal population in India is having a long term impact on tribal culture, economy and society at large. The transition of tribal development policy from a 'needs' based approach to a 'desires' based

development approach has placed tribals into a situation of enduring poverty and marginalization through the consumer market mechanism. The idea here is not to distance tribals from India's longer term modernization project, but there must be the basic institutions of modernization which can uphold indigenity and modernity together without overlapping each other. The market that accelerates consumer culture with the help of tribal development policies is creating a false desire (and consciousness) within tribal society which makes them dependant on a state that has already reduced its role in development planning. And again the desire to be like mainstream people and follow their culture puts them in a situation where they can neither develop nor get out of the so called civilized people and mainstream cultural hangover. In this way the transition of tribal development policy under the shadow of the new economic reforms places tribals in a situation of impoverishment and underdevelopment, and recourses to questions regarding the legitimacy and accountability of the public policy-making elites in India, and their position in the broader transformation of global political economy to a fully integrated, 'desire'-driven global consumer market.

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