

Forest Governance and the Birth of a New Social Movement: A Case of Turga Pump Storage Project (TPSP)

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Abstract: *The discourses and challenges of development may justify by the idea of Governance. The growing concern over environment was substantiated by attempts to redefine the concept and practice of development. In view of discourse of development the case of turga pump storage project in India may considered as significance one. Eco based development and environmental movement also a chief area of research globally. This paper is trying to present an example of discourses of development and the birth of an environmental movement.*

Keywords: *Ajodhya, Buru, Turga, Prevarication, Conservation, Sustainable, Discourses.*

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I. INTRODUCTION:

In the second decade of Twenty first century the discourses and challenges of development may justify by the idea of Governance. The growing concern over environment was substantiated by attempts to redefine the concept and practice of development. Following the Earth Summit held in Stockholm in 1972, Bruntland Report was published in 1987 which sought to give a new direction to the process of development, commonly known as sustainable development. This notion of sustainable development rapidly gained interest among international community, policy makers and shortly became a worldwide accepted phenomena. As a result, the last part of the 20th century saw the beginning of the shifting attitude and practice from the earlier regime of revenue generation to the conservation orientation in the management of natural resources. In this context several positive attitude towards the conservation of forest has been made in India . With this perspective several tribal and environmental movement has represents its classic and modern nature. In view of sustainable development and biodiversity conservation the forest governance is facing various challenges during implementation of developmental project & policies. Sometimes the problems are arising due to state intervention with some irregular activities or due to some environmental issues. The Turga Pump Storage Project (TPSP), Purulia of west Bengal, India has also represents such discourses in term of development.

Objective of the study: a) to justify the prevarication of Forest Governance in TPSP Project.

b) to find out the correlation between the new social movement and the movement against TPSP, Purulia, WB, India.

II. METHODOLOGY:

This study is mainly based on scientific approach where appropriate tools and methods from qualitative research methods is utilised in the light of the objective of the study. My study is heavily rely on the qualitative tools and techniques and to substantiate the understanding of the field. I have collected the secondary data from various office and institutions. The study also emphasised on some key informant telephonic interviews to understand the objectives of the study. During the March 2021 I had visited the complete study area and look out the different issues in a manner of bird eye view. I had also conducted 3 focus group discussions with 3 different groups attached to the Turga Pump Storage Project (TPSP). One was with the hotel association of Ajodhya hill and tourism area, 2nd one was with a female daily worker group dependent on forest based product and 3rd one was with a forest protection committee.

The Turga Pump Storage Project (TPSP) :

Turga Pump Storage Project (TPSP) is a proposed 1000 MW pumped storage hydroelectric project which would be developed in the Purulia District of West Bengal, India. The project will be implemented by WBSEDCL and after completion of the project they will operate this project too. The complete project including

local area development and minimum infrastructure development related to this project will be developed with the help of Japanese financial assistance. Almost 70 % of total cost of the project will be from Japan International Corporation Agency (JICA) .

Since October 2016, pre-construction activities were started and the land acquisition was completed in February 2017, followed by the grant of clearance from the Forest department in July, 2018. According to DPR total estimated cost of the project is Rs/- 6050.00 Crore and target for completion of the project is 2028. In 2017 Govt. of West Bengal has accorded the permission to develop the TPSP project with a cabinet approval. Ministry of Environment & Forest, Government of India through its order no. F.No. 8-51/2017-FC has also handed over the land of 234 ha to the WBSEDCL in Ajodhya Hill under the Purulia Division.

Turga was identified as one of the four (4) potential pump storage development sites in the area of Baghmundi which is located in the south western side of the Ajodhya Hill Range of Purulia District. All four pump storage development sites are mainly designed over the Ajodhya Hill and the lower valley of Baghmundi Block. During 1979 in a survey conducted by the Central Electricity Authority (CEA), Govt. of India gave importance on Purulia Pump Storage Project (PPSP) and Turga Pump Storage Project (TPSP), out of which the PPSP has been completed and commissioned in 2008. After the successful completion of PPSP, in October 2016 the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for Turga Pump Storage Project has been approved by the Central Electricity Authority.

The project envisages the construction of Upper Dam (C.A. 8.29 Sq. Km) across TurgaNala, a tributary of Subarnarekha river and a water conductor system with an underground Power House on the downstream of Upper Dam and a Lower Dam having intermediate catchment of 4.37 sq. km (total C.A. 12.66 sq. km).

S. No.	Purpose of Land Acquisition	Area (ha)
1.	Upper Reservoir submergence at FRL	87.10
2.	Lower Reservoir submergence at FRL	49.00
3.	Dam site and other structure	13.90
4.	Quarry Site	32.00
5.	Construction facility	15.00
6.	Clay core Area	20.00
7.	Roads	10.00
8.	Stockpile area for construction material, etc.	30.00
9.	Other miscellaneous requirement	35.00
Total		292.00

Source: WBSEDCL

The major land-use category of land in the study area is under vegetation as it accounts for 31.13% of the study area. The area under agricultural land accounts for about 29.09% of the total study area. Barren land/ Rocky outcrops occupy about 25.58% of the total study area. Settlements and water bodies account for about 0.2% and 0.53%, respectively of the study area respectively. Apart from the land use pattern the wildlife conservation is going to be challenged. In last two years the forest officials recognised that Deer, Bear, Hyena, Monkey, Elephant, Pangolin and various migratory birds are glorifying the wildlife of Ajodhya Hill rang.

Land use pattern in the project area.

S. No.	Category	Area(ha)	Area(%)
1	River/ Water body	223	0.53
2	Vegetation	13189	31.13
3	Agricultural Land	12325	29.09
4	Barren Land/Rocky outcrops	10839	25.58
5	Scrub	5708	13.47
6	Settlements	83	0.20
Total		42367	100.0

Source: WBSEDCL

The project envisages the construction of Upper Dam (C.A. 8.29 Sq. Km) across TurgaNala, a tributary of Subarnarekha river and a water conductor system with an underground Power House on the downstream of Upper Dam and a Lower Dam having intermediate catchment of 4.37 sq. km (total C.A. 12.66 sq. km). Total land required for the project is 292.0 ha. Out of which 234 ha of land is Forest land and the remaining (58 ha) is non-forest government land and /or Private Land.

On 2nd July 2019, Calcutta High Court in its initial judgment said that the land acquisition procedure followed by the government has been not in proper way. So no action can be taken over the 234 hector of forest land before the final judgment has come. The order has cited a number of irregularities in connection with the permission obtained by the State government for going ahead with the project. The appropriate procedure laid

down under the Act of 2006 was not followed for the purpose of convening any meeting of any gram sabha of any village affected by the project. The State government has challenged the order before a Division Bench.

Forest Governance and the Major Failure:

To succeed the idea of forest governance there are so many act and policies taken by government. The basic things and issues which could be considered as a matter of forest governance are;

- i) Recognition of rights of the forest dwellers.
- ii) Protection of forest and its resources
- iii) Maintenance of forest based economy.
- iv) Collection of timber & non-timber product.
- v) Protection of wildlife.
- vi) Management of tourism industry
- vii) Economic & Sustainable development.
- viii) Maintenance of Ecological balance and biodiversity conservation.

Join Forest Management (JFM) may consider as most effective tool to implement and execute various act and policies practically. The Forest Protection Committee (FPC) and the proper utilization of Forest rights Act-2006 Could be the more significant in concern to the establishment of the sustainable development and to resolve the developmental discourses.

For TPSP both the Central & State government did some irregularities regarding the hydroelectric project in Ajodhya hill of Purulia District. Though the PPSP has been completed successfully but the matter related to protection of environment and recognition of forest rights of the traditional forest dwellers is being neglected. Government of India conducted a survey on ajodhya hill and finalize 4 numbers of hydroelectric project within a aerial distance of 10 to 15 KM which becomes major challenge to protect biodiversity and wildlife of ajodhya hill. During the PPSP (1998-2007) the people of locality and the traditional forest dwellers of ajodhya hill was unable to recognize the demerits & irregularities of the project. During 1998 to 2007 the local people just watched and observed the hydroelectric project from developmental perspective. Even in 2007-08 they don't know about the four hydroelectric projects. After the commencement of PPSP (2008) the people adjuncts to bagmundi and the tribals of ajodhya have abide to change their perspective towards the hydroelectric project in ajodhya hill. An Eco-based developmental issues become popular in the area where protection of biodiversity and development of tourism got importance. Therefore the perspective of development has been sifted to sustainable development. Keeping the perspective of sustainable development and protection of biodiversity in mind the tribals of ajodhya hill has been started a mass movement against the TPSP in ajodhya in a collective way. In February 2019 the judgments of court gives more energy to the movements even the judgment gives recognition of their demand.

Major failures in Governance (PPSP & TPSP of Purulia):

- During the execution of PPSP (900 MW) a huge deforestation had noticed but no such alternative forestation program has been implemented.
- After the PPSP various 'Geomorphic Changes' has been noticed in Ajodhya Hill.
- Irregularities and Corruption in Local Area Development Program adopted during the project.
- Prevarication of Forest Governance. (JFM , FPC, EDC and Forest Rights Act has been avoided)

Relevance of Forest Rights Act-2006 (FRA) in Hydroelectric Projects: Basic theme of the Act is about the recognition of rights of the traditional forest dwellers. (FRA-2006 has specified thirteen (13) basic rights of the tribes)According to the Forest Rights Act, 2006 if a forest land has to be acquired, then at least 50% of the affected population dependent on the land has to give consent in gram sabha, and one third of the villagers have to be women. In the case of TPSP the villagers of Ajodhya hill area are demanding that no such Gram Sabha meeting had held ever. Even complete process to constitute a village unit in term of forest governance is also neglected. Therefore the Forest Protection Committee(s) in different village of Ajodhya hill areas are opposing this project. Gram Sabha is the grassroots level lowest body formed by the all voters in a Panchayat, it is the basic unit of each panchayat in India. Gram Sabha could be considered as Cabinet of the village. In view of the significance of such village governing unit it must be argued that Gram Sabha and FPC are essential to form any developmental policies and to take any administrative decision in terms of sustainable development. Legally it is acknowledged through Forest Rights Act and various forest policies. Theoretically we are well enriched about sustainable development and social movements but during the execution of various act and policies the issue of eco-politics become challenged.

New Social Movement and the TPSP:

In consideration of the features of any new social movement the mass movement conducted by the forest dwellers of Ajodhya hill may considered as new social movement. It has been noticed that there are some

Common features among The Movement against TPSP and New Social Movement which are very significant to categorize this movement as new social movement. These are; i) the movement against the TPSP is completely apolitical in nature ii) its deals with the recognition of tribal rights iii) its deals with the issues of sustainable development. iv) it doesn't focus in any political-economic-military rights and v) the issues they have been raised also a part of human rights. The Movement against TPSP is not a Tribal Movement only or an Environmental Movement only. The reason behind this are i) though the movement is move forwarded by the tribal's but it includes others traditional forest dwellers ii) students, lawyers, teachers and others community.

Core theme of this movement is the recognition of rights of the community and the primary demands are- Tribals of Ajodhya hill are fighting to protect the forest and hill range. They are well organized in view of mass movement and various social activities. They are xenophobic in nature and believe in collective action. Already they have established the "Ajodhya Buru Banchao Andolan Samiti" Tribals are fully against the TPS Project. They believe that this project is violating their forest rights and betrays their spirit also. They are ready to welcome any kind of eco based tourism project. On the eve of world indigenous people day a comprehensive mass rally also organized by various local group and community on 9th August 2021 in Ajodhya hill range. In this rally they represented their unity by the participation of 2 active members from each village of Ajodhya rang. They believe that their culture and development should be enhanced naturally and it may be in favors of sustainable development. It never be as intervention. May this grassroots movement not acted nationally and globally but the issue and the way of movement must be considered globally. It may be happened that this movement may gifted a prototype of the movement leads by Greta Thunberg globally.

III. CONCLUDING OBSERVATION:

- For TPSP both the Central & State government did some irregularities regarding the hydroelectric project in Ajodhya hill of Purulia District.
- The protection of environment and recognition of forest rights of the traditional forest dwellers is being neglected.
- 4 hydroelectric project in Ajodhya hill is within an aerial distance of 10 to 15 KM which becomes a major challenge to protect biodiversity and wildlife.
- During the PPSP (1998-2007) the traditional forest dwellers of Ajodhya hill was unable to recognize the demerits & irregularities of the project.
- During 1998 to 2007 the local people just watched and observed the hydroelectric project from a developmental perspective.
- After the commencement of PPSP (2008) the people adjuncts to baghmundi and the tribal's of Ajodhya have abide to change their perspective towards the hydroelectric project in Ajodhya hill.
- Eco-based developmental issues become popular in the area where protection of biodiversity and development of tourism got important.
- The perspective of development has been shifted towards sustainable development and its helps to birth a new social movement. In February 2019 the judgments of court gives the recognition of the demand. Finally, it could be said that the Indian subaltern group & tribal have a clear faith on state but in term of environment and the pattern of livelihood they never used to deal state intervention. The movement against TPSP also emerged as a new addition to the list or history of new social movement in India.

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