

Development in the age of Resource Accumulation, Dispossession and Resistance

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Indian government has experimented with different industrial development policies since independence. An earlier policy involved setting up bodies at the State level such as Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC), Gujarat Infrastructure Development Corporation (GIDC), City and Industrial Development Corporation (CIDCO) etc. These agencies acquired and developed land, and then handed it over to private companies and corporations under various schemes. However, the process did not achieve the desired results: in most cases half of the land acquired remains unutilised, many of the industries today are either sick or defunct or have been converted to other purposes. With the reforms a renewed effort to attract investments and industrialisation began by the successive governments since 90s. The Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Act was a step in that direction of attracting investment. However, SEZs became a symbol of large scale resource transfer from peasantry to corporations: the resulting stiff resistance from people and financial crisis made sure that many SEZs didn't take off. As of February 2014, the Ministry of Commerce has given formal approval to 576 and in principal approval to 49, but of these only 154 are operational, a mere 25%. Most large (1000 plus hectares) SEZs have failed to take off. Among others, Raigad (Maharashtra) and Jhajjar (Haryana), both of 5000 Hectares, promoted by the biggest Indian corporate house, Reliance, have failed to take off due to fierce opposition, and are unlikely to be operational in future.

Industrial Corridors are now proposed as the new model of industrial development by the government and Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) is the first such. Apart from DMIC there are the World Bank supported Eastern Corridor (Amritsar Kolkata Industrial Corridor), the Mumbai – Bangalore – Chennai Corridor with support of the British government, the Kolkata – Chennai Corridor, Bangalore – Mysore Corridor and others, planned or at different stages of planning and execution. The basic idea behind these corridors is the need to create infrastructure so that existing industrial areas can be more accessible and it is easy for new ones to develop. DMIC, which affects nearly 12-13% of the total land mass of India, spans six States and two Union Territories and will impact nearly 17% of the population of the country.

These kind of development projects undermine democratic institutions, since there is a clear exclusion of the role of the local self government institutions. For instance, the gram panchayat [local self-government at the village or small town level] does not have a role in SEZs and a similar pattern seems to be followed here. Similarly there are concerns with regard to land and water grab, serious environmental impacts, the larger question of people's sovereignty and so on.

Along with the Industrial corridors, a large number of electricity generation projects in

coming decades with an emphasis on high economic growth is leading to unplanned infrastructure development, an urban centric growth model at the cost of rural India and wanton appropriation of natural resources by public and private corporations through various privatisation and reforms measures. The current development paradigm in the country is centred around an 8-10 percent growth rate. Such a huge increase in India's energy generation capacity will mean large scale utilisation of land, water, forest, coal and other resources.

While the state and central sectors have a large share in existing TPPs (at 82%), private sector participation is set to increase significantly, with the private sector accounting for 73% of all projects in the pipeline. Also private interests are highly concentrated: 10 private corporate groups are planning to build about 160,000 MW. The construction of large numbers of thermal power plants and dams for meeting the projected electricity targets will have multiple impacts on the environment and livelihood and cause massive social unrest and conflict in India. Maharashtra has logged 44,276 farm suicides since 1997, over a fifth of the national total of 216,500, due to lack of irrigation and the poor financial plight of farmers, most of them from this region. Maharashtra remained the worst State for farm suicides for the tenth successive year, reporting 2,872 as per the data available from National Crime Records Bureau.¹ A larger number of new thermal power plants in the region will further worsen the situation and increase the overall stress level. Many parts of the country are already facing severe shortages of water for drinking and agricultural uses. With a hugely growing population and a penchant for additional large industries there will be unmanageable demand for water in the years to come: this, coupled with a huge addition to coal power capacity, will result in a national crisis.

Large number of thermal power plants, nuclear plants, chemical hubs, ports, airports, industrial corridors and so on developed by private corporations mean resource accumulation at an unprecedented scale. In post colonial India, the resource accumulation have shifted from the exclusive domain of government to few corporations. No wonder the spectrum allocation scam, coal scam and others have been unearthed recently and complicity of various corporate houses in it. The development process in India today has earned the dubious distinction of being crony capitalism. The process of accumulation has rendered nearly displaced 100 million people from their land and livelihood sources since 1947, a huge social cost. These people have resisted against these accumulation processes and worked to develop an alternative discourse of development over the years.

This paper is aimed at looking at these process of resource accumulation in the name of development and resistance to it.

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□ <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/columns/sainath/article995824.ece>

