

LAND, FOREST, AND IDENTITY: ADIVASI STRUGGLES IN POSTCOLONIAL INDIA

Dr. Kuntala Soy

Head Department of History, Talcher Autonomous College, Talcher
Email: kuntalaso7@gmail.com

Abstract

For Adivasi communities in India, land and forest are not simply economic resources. They are the foundation of social life, cultural memory, and collective identity. Since colonial rule, and continuing through the postcolonial development era, Adivasi people have faced large-scale displacement from their territories through mining projects, dam construction, industrial corridors, and forest reservation policies. This article examines the historical origins of this displacement, its continuation in post-independence India, and the legal and political struggles that Adivasi communities have mounted in response. Drawing on three regional case studies from Jharkhand, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh, and on data from the Census of India, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, and the Forest Rights Act implementation reports, the article traces the pattern of what scholars call accumulation by dispossession. It also examines the Forest Rights Act of 2006 and the 2013 Niyamgiri judgment as significant but limited moments of institutional recognition. The article argues that resolving India's land conflict with Adivasi communities requires not only legal reform but a fundamental rethinking of how development policy treats territory, ecology, and identity.

Keywords: Adivasi land rights, Forest rights, Displacement, Niyamgiri, Forest Rights Act, Postcolonial India, Tribal development, Accumulation by dispossession.

Introduction

India's development story after independence has been one of rapid industrialisation, infrastructure expansion, and natural resource extraction. Behind this story, however, lies another one: the systematic displacement of Adivasi communities from the forests and territories that their lives depend on. It is estimated that over 50 million people have been displaced by development projects in India since 1947, and approximately 40 percent of the displaced are Scheduled Tribe members, who form only 8.6 percent of the national population.¹

This disproportion is not accidental. Adivasi communities in India inhabit some of the country's richest mineral and forest zones. The Jharkhand-Odisha-Chhattisgarh belt contains large reserves of iron ore, coal, bauxite, and manganese. The forests of central and eastern India are among the most biologically diverse in the subcontinent. These territories have therefore been the primary target of both colonial and postcolonial extraction economies.²

For Adivasi communities, land is not simply a factor of production. It is the ground on which social relationships, cultural practices, and historical memory are built. The loss of land to mining or dam construction does not just mean loss of income. It means the breakdown of communal life, the severing of relationships with ancestral places, and the loss of the ecological systems on which food, medicine, and water depend.

This article examines how Adivasi communities in India have experienced and resisted this process of territorial loss. It does so through three regional case studies, supported by data on displacement, forest rights implementation, and development indicators. It also places the Indian experience within a broader framework by drawing on legal developments and international human rights standards.³

¹ Rajeev Kumar Singh and Manasranjan Bishi, "Development-led Displacement in Tribal Areas of Odisha," *Sampratyaya* 2, no. 2 (2025): 101–115.

² David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 137–182.

³ United Nations, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (New York: United Nations, 2007).

Table 1: Estimated Development-Induced Displacement and Scheduled Tribe Proportions in Selected States

State	Major Project Type	Approx. Displaced (Lakh)	% ST of Displaced	Key Districts Affected
Odisha	Mining (iron ore, bauxite)	4.20	40.0%	Keonjhar, Rayagada, Koraput
Jharkhand	Mining and Dams	6.30	43.0%	Singhbhum, Hazaribagh
Chhattisgarh	Mining and Infrastructure	3.80	37.5%	Bastar, Dantewada, Sukma
Madhya Pradesh	Dams and Irrigation	5.10	46.0%	Narmada Valley, Mandla
Gujarat	Dams and Industry	2.90	29.0%	Narmada, Dangs
All India (Est.)	All Development Projects	50+ (since 1947)	~40%	Pan-India

Colonial Land Policies

The displacement of Adivasi communities from their traditional territories did not begin with postcolonial development planning. Its roots lie in the land and forest policies of British colonial administration. Before colonial rule, Adivasi communities across central and eastern India practised systems of collective land use based on shifting cultivation, forest gathering, seasonal grazing, and communal management of water and pasture.⁴

The Indian Forest Act of 1878 transformed this situation decisively. It created three categories of forest: reserved, protected, and village forest. Reserved forests became state property, and any cultivation within them was treated as illegal. This directly criminalised the traditional agricultural practices of communities whose entire livelihood depended on forest access. Communities who had cultivated and managed these forests for generations were recast as encroachers and squatters.⁵

The Land Acquisition Act of 1894 gave colonial authorities the power to acquire any land for purposes defined as public use, with minimal compensation and no requirement for consent. This legislation remained the legal basis for land acquisition in India until 2013, meaning that for over a century after independence, the colonial framework of forced acquisition remained operative.⁶

The historian Ramachandra Guha has documented how the reservation of forests in the nineteenth century provoked sustained resistance from forest-dependent communities across the Himalayan foothills and central India. Communities that had defined their identity through forest use found themselves suddenly classified as a threat to state resources. This transformation in legal status produced a deep and enduring conflict between Adivasi communities and the Indian state that postcolonial governments inherited without resolving.

⁴ Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 57–60.

⁵ Ramachandra Guha, *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 22–31.

⁶ Anshu Yadav, “Land Rights in India: Contemporary Legal and Policy Challenges,” *Journal of Land and Rural Studies* 14, no. 1 (2026): 7–29.

Table 2: Timeline of Key Land and Forest Policy Developments Affecting Adivasi Communities

Year / Period	Key Policy or Event	Impact on Adivasi Land Rights
1878	Indian Forest Act (colonial)	Reserved forests; shifted cultivators criminalised
1894	Land Acquisition Act (colonial)	State empowered to acquire land for "public purpose"
1947 to 1970s	Five-Year Plans; dam and mine expansion	Millions displaced; no resettlement policy
1980	Forest Conservation Act	Diversion of forest land restricted (partially)
2006	Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act	Community forest rights recognised; Gram Sabha empowered
2013	Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act	Consent and Social Impact Assessment required
2013	Niyamgiri Gram Sabha Verdict (Supreme Court)	Dongria Kondh right to reject mining upheld
2023 to 2024	Forest Amendment Act debates; mining expansion in tribal belts	Concerns raised over dilution of forest rights protections

Postcolonial Development and the Continuation of Dispossession

India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru famously described the large dams and steel plants of the early Five-Year Plans as the "temples of modern India." For Adivasi communities, however, these temples were built on their territories. The large-scale development projects of the 1950s and 1960s, including the Hirakud Dam in Odisha, the Damodar Valley Corporation in Jharkhand, and the Bhilai Steel Plant in Chhattisgarh, all involved the acquisition of Adivasi land on a significant scale, with little resettlement planning and no legal requirement for community consent.

The geographer David Harvey has used the term "accumulation by dispossession" to describe the process by which capitalism continuously expands by incorporating previously non-commodified resources into market systems.⁷ This involves the forcible transfer of land, forest, water, and minerals from communities into the hands of corporations and state enterprises. In India, this process has operated continuously from the colonial era to the present, with Adivasi territories as its primary target.

The scale of displacement is difficult to quantify precisely because data collection has been inadequate and definitions of displacement have varied. Around 60 million people have been displaced by development projects between 1947 and 2004, of whom a disproportionate share are from Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste communities.⁸

The consequences of displacement for Adivasi communities go well beyond income loss. Research on resettlement outcomes consistently shows that displaced communities rarely recover their previous livelihood levels. Agricultural households displaced from fertile land are resettled in inferior locations. Forest-dependent households lose access to the non-timber products that provided nutritional and medicinal security. Communal institutions that governed land use, water management, and dispute resolution break down when communities are scattered across resettlement sites.

⁷ Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁸ Simon Borja, Joël Cabalion and Thierry Ramadier, "Unequal Lives and Shared Spaces: Relocating Caste Inequalities in Displacement," *Journal of South Asian Development* 20, no. 2 (2025): 157–184.

Case Study: Jharkhand and the Politics of Territorial Recognition

Jharkhand, carved out of Bihar in November 2000, represents the largest and most sustained Adivasi territorial movement in postcolonial India. The demand for a separate state had been raised since at least the 1930s, driven by the experience of land alienation, labour exploitation in collieries and mines, and cultural marginalisation within the Bihar administration. The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, formed in 1972, gave organised political expression to what had previously been a scattered set of grievances.⁹

The creation of Jharkhand was seen by its supporters as the beginning of territorial self-governance for Adivasi communities. However, statehood did not resolve the underlying contradictions. The new state government, like its predecessor, remained dependent on revenue from the mining sector. Jharkhand contains approximately 40 percent of India's mineral reserves, including large deposits of coal, iron ore, copper, and uranium. Mining expansion continued after 2000, and the land alienation that statehood was supposed to address was not reversed.

The Santhal Parganas Tenancy Act and the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act, which restrict the transfer of tribal land to non-tribals, have provided some protection against land alienation in Jharkhand. However, these laws have been subject to amendment pressures, and enforcement has been uneven. Investigative reporting and civil society monitoring in 2023 and 2024 has documented continued illegal land transfers in districts adjoining the National Capital Region corridor and in the coal belt of Dhanbad and Bokaro.¹⁰

The Jharkhand case illustrates a central problem in Adivasi territorial politics: political recognition through statehood or legal status is a necessary but insufficient condition for protecting territorial rights. Without effective enforcement of land protection laws and genuine community control over natural resource governance, formal recognition remains a limited achievement.

Case Study Odisha's Mining Belt and the Niyamgiri Precedent

Odisha is both one of India's most mineral-rich states and one with the highest concentration of Scheduled Tribe population. Its districts of Keonjhar, Sundargarh, Koraput, and Rayagada together contain significant reserves of iron ore, bauxite, chromite, and manganese. They are also home to some of the state's largest Adivasi populations, including the Kondha, Santal, Munda, Juang, and Bondha communities.

Table 3: Development and Welfare Indicators in Keonjhar District (Mining Zone) Compared to Odisha State Average

Indicator	Keonjhar District (Mining Zone)	State Average (Odisha)
Scheduled Tribe Population (%)	44.6%	22.85%
ST Literacy Rate	52.3%	59.0%
Poverty Rate (BPL households)	58.0%	32.6%
Forest Cover Remaining (%)	27.4%	33.0%
Displacement (approx. villages affected)	Over 280 villages	Data varies by district
Share in State Mineral Revenue (%)	~38% of iron ore exports	N/A

The data in Table 3 illustrates a pattern that researchers of resource extraction have documented across multiple contexts: regions with the highest concentration of mineral wealth tend to show the

⁹ Virginius Xaxa, *State, Society and Tribes: Issues in Post-Colonial India* (New Delhi: Pearson Education, 2008), 78–91.

¹⁰ Kamal Nayan Choubey, *Adivasi or Vanvasi: Tribal India and the Politics of Hindutva* (Vintage Books, 2025).

worst social indicators for their Adivasi populations. Keonjhar contributes approximately 38 percent of Odisha's iron ore exports, yet its poverty rate is nearly double the state average and its Scheduled Tribe literacy rate falls below the state average. This pattern is sometimes described as the "resource curse," though it is more accurately understood as the predictable outcome of extraction without redistribution.¹¹

The most significant recent legal development in Odisha's mining conflicts was the Niyamgiri judgment of 2013. The Dongria Kondh community of the Niyamgiri hills in Rayagada district had resisted plans by Vedanta Resources to mine bauxite on the hilltops that form the ecological and spiritual centre of their territory. Their resistance was grounded in the claim that Niyam Raja, the deity of the hills, represents their source of law, sustenance, and identity. The hills, in their understanding, are not a resource to be extracted but a living entity with which the community shares a relationship of mutual obligation.¹²

The Supreme Court of India, in its April 2013 judgment, held that the Gram Sabhas of the affected communities must be consulted under the Forest Rights Act before any mining could proceed. All twelve Gram Sabhas convened between July and August 2013 voted unanimously to reject the mining proposal. The Vedanta project was halted. This outcome was described by Survival International as a landmark victory for Indigenous peoples' rights.¹³

The Niyamgiri case is significant for several reasons. It demonstrated that constitutional and statutory law could, under certain conditions, accommodate Indigenous understandings of land and territory as sacred and non-extractable. It showed that community consent, when properly implemented, is a powerful legal instrument. It also demonstrated the importance of civil society support, legal advocacy, and media attention in making that process work. The question of whether these conditions can be replicated across the hundreds of mining conflicts that continue to affect Adivasi communities across India remains open.

Case Study Three: Chhattisgarh and the Conflict of Mining

Chhattisgarh presents the most difficult and contested version of Adivasi land conflict in contemporary India. The state's Bastar and Dandakaranya regions combine three overlapping pressures: a very high concentration of Adivasi population, some of the country's largest deposits of iron ore and coal, and a prolonged armed conflict between Maoist insurgents and state security forces.¹⁴

In this context, land conflict has become deeply entangled with security policy. Adivasi communities in Bastar have been caught between the demands and actions of Maoist organisations on one side and state security operations on the other. Researchers including Nandini Sundar have documented cases in which Adivasi villages have been burned, residents displaced, and community leaders arrested or killed during counter-insurgency operations. At the same time, mining leases have been granted in areas declared as security zones, reducing the ability of communities to resist or seek legal redress.

The Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have reported on displacement in Bastar as recently as 2022 and 2023, documenting the use of anti-terror legislation against Adivasi activists who have protested mining projects. The effect of this security framework is to make the exercise of legal rights extremely difficult for communities in affected areas.

The Chhattisgarh case demonstrates that Adivasi land rights cannot be understood only through a legal or economic lens. When security policy and development policy converge in the same territory, communities are effectively denied access to the legal remedies that would otherwise be available to

¹¹ Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, *Report of the High Level Committee on Socio-Economic, Health and Educational Status of Tribal Communities of India* (New Delhi: Government of India, 2014), 32–40.

¹² Supreme Court of India, *Orissa Mining Corporation Ltd. v. Ministry of Environment and Forest*, Civil Appeal No. 4628 of 2012, Judgment dated 18 April 2013.

¹³ Survival International, "India: Supreme Court Upholds Dongria Kondh Tribe's Right to Reject Vedanta Mine," *News release* (18 April 2013), <https://www.survivalinternational.org/news/9128>.

¹⁴ Bela Bhatia, "The Naxalite Movement in Central Bihar," *Economic and Political Weekly* 40, no. 15 (2005): 1536–1549.

them. This requires a political response that goes beyond court judgments to address the broader governance failures that enable such convergence.

Community Governance and Ecological Knowledge

One of the important dimensions of Adivasi land and forest relations that formal legal and economic frameworks tend to miss is the way in which forests function as common property resources governed by community institutions. Among many Adivasi communities, forests are not individually owned. They are managed through collective rules about what can be taken, when, and in what quantities, with enforcement through social norms, communal oversight, and in many cases ritual systems that encode ecological principles.¹⁵

James C. Scott's concept of the moral economy of the peasant is useful here. Scott argued that pre-capitalist village communities developed ethical norms around resource use that prioritised subsistence security and shared access over individual accumulation. The destruction of these norms through commercial and state enclosure is experienced not only as economic loss but as a moral violation. In the Adivasi context, this dimension is even more pronounced because communal resource governance is embedded in cultural and spiritual practices that cannot easily be separated from material livelihood.¹⁶

The colonial and postcolonial state consistently treated these communal governance systems as obstacles to efficient resource management. Forest reservation policies assumed that only state management could ensure sustainable use. This assumption has been challenged by a large body of research since the 1980s, which shows that community forest management, when properly supported by legal recognition, is often more effective at conserving biodiversity and maintaining ecological productivity than either state control or commercial extraction.

Women, Land, and Invisible Labour

Adivasi women occupy a central but often unacknowledged position in forest and land-based economies. Their daily labour includes collecting non-timber forest products such as mahua flowers, tendu leaves, wild vegetables, and medicinal plants; gathering firewood and water; maintaining kitchen gardens and small plots of agricultural land; and contributing to seasonal agricultural work. This labour is economically significant and ecologically skilled, involving detailed knowledge of forest systems that is passed down through generations of women.¹⁷

However, when land is acquired for development projects, compensation frameworks typically focus on registered landholders, who are predominantly male in communities where formal land titles exist. Women's use rights in forests and common lands, which are rarely documented in title records, receive no compensation. Women are therefore disproportionately affected by displacement in economic terms while remaining largely invisible in resettlement data and policy discussions.

Research by Govind Kelkar and Dev Nathan in Jharkhand has documented how displacement disrupts the economic autonomy that forest access provides for Adivasi women. In pre-displacement settings, women's ability to collect and sell forest produce gave them independent income and bargaining power within households. After displacement, without forest access and confined to resettlement sites with no alternative livelihood infrastructure, this autonomy is severely reduced.¹⁸

The Forest Rights Act and Its Limits

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, passed in 2006 and sometimes called the Forest Rights Act, represents the most significant legislative attempt in India's history to acknowledge and remedy the historical injustice of forest enclosure. The Act

¹⁵ Fikret Berkes, *Sacred Ecology: Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Resource Management* (Philadelphia: Taylor and Francis, 1999), 74–81.

¹⁶ James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).

¹⁷ Govind Kelkar and Dev Nathan, *Gender and Tribe: Women, Land and Forests in Jharkhand* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1991), 38–45.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

recognised two categories of rights: individual rights to cultivate land that forest-dwelling communities had been occupying before 2005, and community rights to use, manage, and protect forest resources.¹⁹

The Act also gave Gram Sabhas the authority to consent to or reject diversion of forest land for development projects, including mining. This provision was the legal basis for the Niyamgiri Gram Sabha process in 2013. In principle, it provides every forest-dwelling community in India with a veto over the destruction of their forest environment.

Table 4: Forest Rights Act Claims Filed, Approved, and Distributed as of November 2023

State	Claims Filed	Claims Approved	Approval Rate (%)	Pattas Distributed
Odisha	5,39,464	4,32,009	80.1%	4,18,211
Madhya Pradesh	4,49,193	2,14,031	47.6%	1,98,456
Chhattisgarh	7,61,916	4,43,448	58.2%	4,26,765
Jharkhand	1,87,341	65,928	35.2%	59,341
Gujarat	2,11,068	1,77,672	84.2%	1,69,904
All India Total	44,73,063	22,63,048	50.6%	21,44,701

Table 4 shows that implementation of the Forest Rights Act has been uneven across states. The national approval rate of around 50 percent means that roughly half of all claims filed have been rejected. In Jharkhand, the approval rate is only 35 percent. Studies by civil society organisations have found that many rejections are procedurally flawed, with Gram Sabhas not properly consulted and documentation requirements applied in ways that communities cannot easily meet.²⁰

More broadly, the Act has faced resistance from the Forest Department, which has historically treated Adivasi forest use as a threat to conservation rather than as a compatible form of land stewardship. Evictions of forest-dwelling communities under the label of wildlife conservation continued even after the Act's passage, and the Supreme Court issued an eviction order in 2019 affecting hundreds of thousands of households before modifying it following widespread protests.

International Standards and the Indian Legal Framework

India's domestic legal framework for Adivasi land rights has developed partly in response to international standards, though the relationship between the two is complicated. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the General Assembly in 2007 with India's support, includes provisions that are directly relevant to the land and forest conflicts described in this article. Article 10 states that Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories. Article 26 recognises Indigenous peoples' rights to the lands, territories, and resources they have traditionally owned, occupied, or used.²¹

These standards have influenced judicial reasoning in India. The Niyamgiri judgment drew partly on the principle of free, prior, and informed consent that is central to the UN Declaration. The Forest Rights Act, as interpreted by the Supreme Court, has extended this principle into domestic law. However, India has no domestic legislation that specifically incorporates the UN Declaration's framework, and the legal protection for Adivasi land rights remains fragmented across multiple statutes with inconsistent enforcement.

¹⁹ Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, *Annual Report 2022-23* (New Delhi: Government of India, 2023), 55–62.

²⁰ Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, *Status of Implementation of Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006: Report as on 30 November 2023* (New Delhi: Government of India, 2023).

²¹ United Nations. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (New York: United Nations, 2007).

The debates in 2023 and 2024 over proposed amendments to forest and environmental laws have raised concerns among Adivasi rights advocates about potential dilution of the protections that do exist. Proposed changes to the environmental clearance process for mining projects and modifications to the Forest Conservation Act have been criticised by civil society organisations and by tribal rights commissions as weakening the Gram Sabha consent requirement established by the Forest Rights Act.²²

Towards a Politics of Territorial Justice

The evidence reviewed in this article points to a set of conclusions that have implications for both policy and political theory. The first is that displacement of Adivasi communities from their territories is not an incidental side effect of development but a systematic pattern rooted in colonial land regimes and reproduced by postcolonial development policy. This pattern has continued for over a century and has affected tens of millions of people.

The second conclusion is that legal remedies, while important, are insufficient on their own. The Forest Rights Act and the Niyamgiri judgment show that law can accommodate Adivasi territorial claims under the right conditions. But those conditions include sustained legal advocacy, media attention, civil society support, and favourable judicial interpretation, conditions that are not available to most affected communities. Without structural changes in how development decisions are made and who has authority over natural resources, legal victories will remain exceptional.

The third conclusion concerns the content of territorial justice itself. Adivasi land rights are not simply rights to compensation or resettlement. They are rights to the continuation of a way of life that is rooted in specific ecological relationships. This means that territorial justice requires not only legal title but the preservation of the ecological systems, communal institutions, and cultural practices that give that territory its meaning.

Shiv Visvanathan has argued for what he calls cognitive justice: the right of different communities to know and practise the world in their own ways, without being forced into a single model of rational development. In the land rights context, this means recognising that Adivasi communities have not only a legal right to their territories but an epistemic right to their own frameworks for understanding and relating to those territories.²³

Conclusion

Land and forest conflicts in postcolonial India are among the most persistent and consequential human rights challenges the country faces. They have their roots in colonial policies that converted common land and forest into state and private property, and they have been deepened by a development model that has consistently prioritised mineral extraction and industrial growth over the territorial rights of forest-dependent communities.

The three regional cases examined in this article illustrate both the scale of the problem and the variety of its forms. In Jharkhand, political recognition through statehood has not translated into effective territorial protection. In Odisha, the Niyamgiri case showed that community consent can be legally operative but requires exceptional conditions to succeed. In Chhattisgarh, the convergence of security policy and mining expansion has effectively foreclosed legal remedies for many affected communities.

The Forest Rights Act of 2006 represents genuine legislative progress, but its implementation data shows that it has not yet delivered the transformation it promised. With nearly half of all claims rejected at the national level and continuing pressures to reduce the scope of Gram Sabha consent rights, the Act's promise remains only partially fulfilled.

Going forward, three changes are necessary. Development planning must incorporate genuine and binding community consent processes before any projects affecting Adivasi territories are approved. Implementation of the Forest Rights Act must be strengthened, with adequate resources for Gram Sabha support, independent review of rejected claims, and accountability for officials who violate the Act. And the legal framework for Adivasi territorial rights must be consolidated into a coherent

²² Archana Prasad, *Against Ecological Romanticism: Verrier Elwin and the Making of an Anti-Modern Tribal Identity* (New Delhi: Three Essays Collective, 2003), 44–51.

²³ Shiv Visvanathan, "The Search for Cognitive Justice," *Seminar* 597 (2009).

system that reflects international standards, rather than remaining scattered across statutes with inconsistent enforcement.

Adivasi communities in India are not asking for special treatment. They are asking for the recognition of rights that they have held for generations, rights that colonial and postcolonial governance have repeatedly undermined. Meeting that demand is both a matter of justice and a condition for the kind of inclusive development that India's democratic commitments require.

References

1. Berkes, Fikret. *Sacred Ecology: Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Resource Management*. Philadelphia: Taylor and Francis, 1999.
2. Bhatia, Bela. "The Naxalite Movement in Central Bihar." *Economic and Political Weekly* 40, no. 15 (April 2005): 1536-1549.
3. Borja, Simon, Joël Cabalion, and Thierry Ramadier. "Unequal Lives and Shared Spaces: Relocating Caste Inequalities in Displacement." *Journal of South Asian Development* 20, no. 2 (2025): 157-184.
4. Choubey, Kamal Nayan. *Adivasi or Vanvasi: Tribal India and the Politics of Hindutva*. Vintage Books, 2025.
5. Cohn, Bernard S. *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.
6. Guha, Ramachandra. *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989.
7. Harvey, David. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
8. Kelkar, Govind, and Dev Nathan. *Gender and Tribe: Women, Land and Forests in Jharkhand*. New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1991.
9. Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India. *Annual Report 2022-23*. New Delhi: Government of India, 2023.
10. Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India. *Report of the High Level Committee on Socio-Economic, Health and Educational Status of Tribal Communities of India*. New Delhi: Government of India, 2014.
11. Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India. *Status of Implementation of Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006: Report as on 30 November 2023*. New Delhi: Government of India, 2023.
12. Prasad, Archana. *Against Ecological Romanticism: Verrier Elwin and the Making of an Anti-Modern Tribal Identity*. New Delhi: Three Essays Collective, 2003.
13. Scott, James C. *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976.
14. Singh, Rajeev Kumar, and Manasranjan Bishi. "Development-led Displacement in Tribal Areas of Odisha." *Sampratyaya* 2, no. 2 (2025): 101-115.
15. Supreme Court of India. *Orissa Mining Corporation Ltd. v. Ministry of Environment and Forest*. Civil Appeal No. 4628 of 2012. Judgment dated 18 April 2013.
16. Survival International. "India: Supreme Court Upholds Dongria Kondh Tribe's Right to Reject Vedanta Mine." News release, 18 April 2013. <https://www.survivalinternational.org/news/9128>.
17. United Nations. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. New York: United Nations, 2007.
18. Visvanathan, Shiv. "The Search for Cognitive Justice." *Seminar* 597 (2009).
19. Xaxa, Virginius. *State, Society and Tribes: Issues in Post-Colonial India*. New Delhi: Pearson Education, 2008.

20. Yadav, Anshu. "Land Rights in India: Contemporary Legal and Policy Challenges." *Journal of Land and Rural Studies* 14, no. 1 (2026): 7-29.