

## Climate Change, Food Security, and Indigenous People: A Human Right Perspective

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### Abstract

The right to food is a Human right; it protects the rights of all human beings to live in dignity, free from hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. Climate Change is a great challenge for the world's population. It poses direct and indirect threats to food security, human security. Climate change is related to environmental conditions, such as droughts and floods and likely to have adverse effects on the capacity to grow a sufficient amount of food for a rapidly increasing population. As a result, food and nutrition security will likely worsen. This paper tries to find out and advocates that the impacts of climate change threatening basic human rights of the Indigenous people such as the right to food, to shelter, to water and to health. It has serious consequences in the long run in terms of equity and human rights.

**Keywords:** Climate Change, Food Security, Human Right, indigenous people

### Introduction

The right to food is a Human right; it protects the right of all human beings to live in dignity, free from hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. The right to food is not about charity, but about ensuring that all people can feed themselves in dignity (Ziegler, 2012). The right to food is protected under international human rights and humanitarian law. The right to food entitled every person to an economic, political and social environment that will allow them to achieve food security in dignity through their own means individuals or groups who do not have the capacity to meet their food needs for reasons beyond their control, such as illness, discrimination, age, unemployment, economic downturn or natural disaster are entitled to be provided with food directly. The obligation to ensure a minimum level necessary to be free from hunger is one of the immediate effects (FAO, 2008). Here comes the concept of

Food security as defined by the United Nations Committee on World Food Security, which means when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

Climate Change is a great challenge for the world's population. It poses direct and indirect threats to food security and human security (Campbell, 2021). The environmental and health consequence of climate change, which disproportionately affects low income countries, profoundly affects human rights and food security, environmental consequence include increased temperatures, excess precipitation in some areas and droughts in others, extreme weather events and increased sea level. Climate change is related to environmental conditions, such as droughts and floods, which are likely to adversely effects on the capacity to grow a sufficient

amount of food for a rapidly increasing population. As a result, food and nutrition security will likely worsen, especially for poor people living in low income countries. The prevalence of acute and chronic childhood under-nutrition with accompanying adverse effects on physical and mental development is likely to increase, especially in those low income countries already seriously affected by malnutrition (levy, 2015).

In addition to all human rights and fundamental freedom recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international covenants on human rights such as the international covenants on civil and political rights and the international covenants on economic, social and cultural rights which rights are to be exercised without discrimination of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. In terms of section 2 of the protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 defined human rights mean the rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed under the constitution or embodied in the international covenants and enforceable by courts in India. As indigenous communities rely on their territories for their material and cultural existence, they are particularly vulnerable to environmental harm. The rights of the indigenous peoples are closely related to the right to a healthy environment. Indigenous people often hold a special link with land and territory. According to the Framework Principle on Human Rights and the Environment affirms that state should take additional measures to protect the rights of

those who are most vulnerable to, or at particular risk from environmental harm, taking into account their needs, risks and capacities.

### **Methodology**

The proposed study is based on analytical, descriptive, and qualitative methods of investigation to conduct the study. The main thrust of this research is to examine the Climate Change, Food Security and Indigenous People: A Human Rights Perspective. In this sense, it is basically analysing the empirical study. This study will be based on secondary data. The secondary data needed for the study will be collected both from paper-based sources which include books, journals, abstracts, research reports, conference papers, newspapers, magazines etc. as well as from electronic sources which includes online databases, internet, videos, broadcasts etc. for gaining an internal insight about the area under study.

### **Indian Perspective**

Indian constitution has provided various fundamental rights to the citizen which are mentioned in part III of the constitutions. Article 21 of the Indian constitution provides rights to life for every citizen and it imposes a duty upon the state to protect this right. Hunger and poverty have always been a constant problem in India. India is one of the developing countries in the world. In the few years, food production increased through the Green Revolution. Even after considering the right to food as a fundamental right under Art 21. Right to life and making it a duty of the state under Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) under Art 39 to ensure no one is deprived of

such right, we have not achieved the goals. Even after making many food Schemes so far; such as Public Food Distribution System (PDS), the Integrated Child Development System (ICDS), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGS), Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) etc. The problem remains unsolved. India is unable to provide sufficient food to its citizen and unable to make access to food for a large number of its population (Mantra, 2020).

Climate change is mainly affecting several economic, environmental and social issues, comprising agricultural production and food security and it also has negative impacts on the four dimensions of food security such as food availability, food accessibility, food utilisation and food stability. In global food markets, effects have already been felt and are expected to be particularly important in some rural locations where crops fail and yield declines. Impacts will be felt in both rural and urban locations where supply chains are interrupted, market price increase, purchasing power falls, assets and employment opportunities are lost, human health is at risk and affected people are unable to cope with these problems.

The crux of India's food problem pertains not so much to increasing food availability but to the distribution of food. There are various challenges that India faces in attaining food security. Natural calamities like excessive rainfall, accessibility of water for irrigation purposes, drought soil erosion, undulating topography and various soil types such as degraded soil, infertile soil, acidic and alkaline soil, non-improvement in agriculture facilities, growth in population, lack of education and job opportunities have

further added to the problems. Another challenge that India faces in attaining food security is dependence on monsoon and well labour on daily wages basis which tends to be variable at different times thus food procurement and access are fluctuating. The income of the family governs the access to food affordability and inflation acts as fuel in the fire. PDS (Public Distribution is not satisfactorily functional hampering distribution of food at a low price). Thus, there is a need to shift from the current inefficient, expensive, perennial and corruption-ridden institutional arrangement to those that will guarantee cheap delivery and distribution of requisite qualities of food grains in a transparent manner. To curb existing problems of food security the government has implemented various programmes; despite ensuring ample availability of food existence of food insecurity at the micro-level in the country has remained a formidable challenge for India. (Jain, 2016)

The impacts of global climate change on the socio-economic structure in India are sparse and scattered and the climate change issue has been widely accepted as a major challenge of sustainable development in an agricultural based country like India, studies related to food security such as: access, availability, and affordability are the need of the study, as to make national and regional development path more sustainable with respect to climate change (Gurditta,2016)

### **Defining Indigenous people**

There is no single universal definition of indigenous and tribal peoples. Convention No.169 provides a set of objective and subjective criteria that may be used to

identify these groups. Using the terms indigenous and tribal peoples are giving

both groups the same set of rights.

**Identifying indigenous peoples**

The ILO indigenous and tribal people’s convention, 1989 (No.169), set out criteria for identifying the peoples concerned

	Subjective Criteria	Objective criteria
Indigenous peoples	Self-identification as belonging to an indigenous people.	Descent from populations who inhabited the country or geographical region at the time of consequent, colonization or establishment of present state boundaries. They retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, irrespective of their legal status.
Tribal peoples	Self-identification as belonging to a tribal people.	Their social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community. Their status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws and regulations.

Source: ILO,2017

Furthermore, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples has noted that in several countries, for instance in the Asian region, while the vast majority of the population may be considered, in a literal sense, indigenous to the regions, particular groups that distinguish themselves from the broader population and fall within the scope of the international concern for indigenous peoples. These include, among others, groups that are referred to as “tribal people. “Hill tribes”, “Scheduled tribe”, and “Adivasis” or “Janajatis” which in some countries, although not recognised as “indigenous peoples”, receive targeted attention in development planning, programmes and schemes. In Africa, the working group on indigenous populations and the communities of the African

Commission on Human and people’s rights have made important contributions to clarifying the concept of indigenous peoples in the African context, taking into consideration the case of nomadic and pastoral communities (ILO, 2017).

Indigenous people in the Indian subcontinent are generally called tribal or “Adivasi” and India has the second largest concentration of tribal population after that of the African continent. Presently, 705 ethnic groups are notified as Scheduled Tribes in the country. There are about the total population of Scheduled Tribes is 84,326, 240 as per the Census 2011 which accounts for 8.2% of the total population of the country. The majority of the Scheduled Tribe population live in rural areas and their population is 10.4% of the total rural population of the country(Census,2011). The

areas comprising a large number of states like Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal and North-East regions habited by the tribal people in India are known as "Scheduled Tribe. Those tribal people are living mainly in forest and mountainous regions, within the close proximity of nature. Thus, most of those Adivasis depends on forests and forest resources for their livelihood. Tribal has been facing so many socio-economic and psychological problems since historical times. Now there has been an addition such as climatic and environmental changes which expedited their hardship immensely. These primitive tribal communities of India have virtually reached a state of total collapse and their sufferings have been enhanced due to changes in climate and ecology(Bandyopadhyay, 2019).

### **Climate Change and Indigenous people in India; An overview**

Climate change in India, in general has become increasingly volatile over the last few decades. Extreme events like floods and drought indicate climate change which used to affects badly the indigenous rural people of India. It is argued that India will be among the worst hit countries that may face calamities like floods, heatwaves and reduced Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Climate change and its ways of affecting the present world is a burning issue, no doubt. But rarely do its impacts on the indigenous groups get a mention, even though they are among the worst affected. The close relationship between some indigenous people with their natural environments makes them especially sensitive to the effects

of global warming. In some place cases, people's way of life and even their way of existence are being threatened by climate change (Bandyopadhyay,2019).

Climate change is greatly affected the indigenous people living in India. The rights of the indigenous population are often live in some of the most vulnerable ecosystems and suffer from some of the worst effects of environmental degradation. The lives of indigenous peoples are most vulnerable to climate change because of indigenous people close relationship with the environment. Due to the low socio-economic condition and less access to quality of health care service. Indigenous people have a restricted capacity to adapt to rapid changes in the environment for this reason, indigenous communities are often more vulnerable to the effects of environmental degradation and more at risk of human rights violations caused by the effects of climate change. Indigenous people are completely dependent on the environment due to climate change the rights to the indigenous people such as the right to food, the right to water and the health rights are completely violated.

### **The Rights to Water and Indigenous people**

India stands to face major challenges on many fronts in so far as the impacts of climate change. Water security is one of the most important threats in this regard. Water resources will come under increasing pressure in the Indian subcontinent due to the changing climate. As a result of an increase in temperature significant changes in rainfall patterns have been observed during the 21st Century in India. A serious

environmental problem has also been witnessed in the Indo-Gangetic Plain Region (IGPR) in the past whereby different rivers (including Kosi, Ganga, Ghaghara, Son, Indus and its tributaries and Yamuna) changed their course several times.

At present, available statistics on water demands show that the agriculture sector is the largest consumer of water in India. About 83% of the available water is used for agriculture alone. If it used judiciously, the demand may come down to about 68% by the year 2050, though agriculture will remain the largest consumer. To meet this demand, augmentation of the existing water resources by the development of an additional source of water or conservation of the existing resources and they are efficient will be needed. The impacts of global warming threats are many and alarming. Water security in terms of quantity and quality pose problems for both developed and developing countries. However, the consequence of future climate change may be felt more severely in developing countries such as India. Whose economically is largely dependent on agriculture and its already under stress due to the current population increase and associated demands for energy, fresh water and food (New Delhi, 2020).

The major impact of climate change on the right to water is the lack of access to fresh water which may the violation of human rights and degrades the quality of life. Changes in the water quantity and quality due to climate change are to increase the vulnerability of poor rural farmers and tribal people living in the forest especially in India. Indigenous people in India who relies more depends upon natural resources for,

medicine, travel and utility in their daily lives are affected badly by on-going climate change. Consequently, they are now facing cultural, health and food security challenges.

### **Food insecurity, malnutrition and indigenous people**

Hunger is a world phenomenon. Throughout history, a portion of the world's population has often experienced sustained periods of hunger. Widespread hunger manifests itself in insufficient food intake and poor diet quality which results in malnutrition and mortality. These result from insufficient food supply because of lack production and lack of access by the people because of lack of purchasing power. Here comes the concept of food insecurity means the non-availability of sustainable physical or economic access to enough safe, nutritious and socially acceptable food for a healthy and productive life. Nutritional consequences of insufficient food or under-nutrition include protein energy malnutrition, anaemia, vitamin A deficiency, iodine deficiency and iron deficiency. Malnutrition is considered to be one of the foremost causes of morbidity and mortality in children throughout the world. Poverty and hunger both are serious threats to food security. A large section of people suffers from food and nutrition insecurity in India, the worst affected groups are landless or land poor households in rural areas and especially the people who belong to the tribal group. the major cause of food insecurity that natural disasters such as drought and climate change, shortage of farmland, lack of functional multiparty democratic systems, land reform policy, lack of appropriate policies and institutions, lack of rural infrastructures (schools, roads,

markets, and health), population growth, lack of education.

Indigenous people's food systems are today at a juncture in time where, unless properly analysed and supported by the right policy interventions risk disappearance or full assimilation by the dominant cultures mainstreamed in the globalization process. Markets along with climate change effects and pressures from external actors encroaching indigenous territories and ancestral lands are probably the factors that are transforming indigenous people food system at the fastest rate. These circumstances are causing the largest long lasting and, in some cases, irreversible effects on the continuity and sustainability of the indigenous people food system in India (FAO,2021)

### Conclusion

Food and nutrition security is central to individual dignity and foundational to the enjoyment of the human right. People's ability to access food is heavily defined by structural and social conditions. As climate change exacerbates food and nutrition insecurity, negatively impacting the health of the most vulnerable, climate change adaptation strategies must address the right to food and health. Protecting the

wellbeing of disproportionately affected populations by adopting human rights based approach to food and nutrition security (Ayala,2017). India is the home of a huge proportion of people suffering from, malnutrition, and hunger and food insecurity in the world today. There have been a large number of government schemes and programmes instead of the large number of schemes and programmes India has not been able to achieve freedom from hunger and starvation. The Global Hunger Index report of the International Food Policy Research Institute shows concerning decrease in India's Hunger Index. India now ranks 101st position out of 116 countries and also India's position decreased in the Global Food Security Index. India is ranked at 71st position in the Global Food Security Index 2021 of 113 countries. As indigenous communities rely on their territories for their material and cultural existence, they are particularly vulnerable to environmental harm. The rights of the indigenous peoples are closely related to the right to a healthy environment. The state should take additional measures to protect the rights of those who are most vulnerable to, or at particular risk from environmental harm, taking into account their needs, risks and capacities.

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