

“Confluence and Anomaly of East-West Perspectives on Development: The Advent of Tata Steel on Local and *Adivasi* (Indigenous) Communities in India.”

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Abstract

Since the end of the Second World War, modernization theories prompted the adoption and imposition of western economic and political development models on many developing countries and former colonies. History has borne out and studies have demonstrated their limits and shortcomings. At best, they have led to ineffectiveness of western institutions and practices in non- western contexts. At worst, they have resulted in the failure of political and economic systems in the Global South, especially in former colonies.

Over the past few decades, moving away from modernization and theories of political development, countries have shifted to adopting the concept of human development. The concept of human development does to bind countries to western models of development and focuses on welfare and rights. As a developing country traverses on the path to industrialization, do the values enshrined within human development align with the goals of profit and prosperity? This paper addresses this debate and the larger question of the duality of industrialization as key to growth and the tradeoff that countries and businesses have to make to balance profit and welfare. Although we cannot deny the ethnocentrism of the modernization theories and the benefits of a more global approach to human development, there are complexities and nuances to that approach as well.

This paper takes a deeper look at such questions through a case study of Tata Steel. Tata Steel is one of the leading steel manufacturing corporations in India with a growing global footprint. It is an integral part of the Tata Group, established by Jamsetji Tata in 1868. It is a global conglomerate consisting of 30 companies across a diverse set of products and services ranging from salt and software, to more. Tata Steel is a household name in India and a leading flagbearer of industrial development and social responsibility. This paper traces the story of industrialization in India through the growth and expansion of Tata Steel in colonial and post-colonial India and its impact on the lives of the local population and the *Adivasi* communities, many of whose lands were claimed by the company to set up the steel plants and ancillary towns that were to serve them. Through this analysis, the paper shows that even though Tata is well known for its commitment to welfare and sustainability, it continues to have to adapt to local needs and find solutions to balance them with company goals. The welfare of local and native residents, especially those who are displaced in the process of setting up the factories and manufacturing centers remain critical in the company’s quest to balance welfare over corporate profit. Through this analysis, the paper thus examines the complexities of the role of businesses such as Tata Steel, a champion of national and global priorities in sustainability and social responsibility. It is more a story of confluence and anomalies that go beyond stringent confines of east-west perspectives.

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