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Adivasis' Atruggle Against Displacement
In Jharkhand

By Gladson Dungdung

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Jharkhand is known as the abode of Adivasis (the indigenous people, constitutionally they are called as scheduled tribe), the land of struggle and mineral rich state in India. "Jharkhand" literally means 'the land of forests' came into existence as 28th state of the Indian union on 15th of November, 2000 after a long mass struggle, which took place in the 20th century for the realization of a beautiful dream of the Adivasi heroes – Tilka Manjhi, Sidhu-Kanhu and Birsa Munda. The dream was to form exploitation free, humane and just Jharkhand, where the Adivasis can practice their ownership rights over the natural resources, enjoy autonomy and rule themselves as earlier they used to. The outsiders perceive Jharkhand as the abode of uncivilized, uneducated and the most backward people i.e. Adivasis therefore the region was mostly neglected in terms of the development but its natural resources were highly exploited. The Adivasis were alienated from their resources, exploited and injustices were done to them in the name of development, civilization and nationalism.

Jharkhand is an important state from the viewpoint of Adivasi population. As per the Census 2001, their total population in the state is 70,87,068 including 35,65,960 male and 35,21,108 female, which consists 26.3% of the total population (26,945,829) of the state though they were more than 50 percent before the independence of India. The growth of the Adivasi population is steadily declining. It was 17.3 per cent in 2001, which is lower by 6 per cent if compared with the growth (23.3 per cent) in 1991. The state has a total of thirty two (32) sub-communities of the Adivasis. Among them Santal, Oraon, Munda, Ho and Kharia are the major Adivasi groups in the state. The major Adivasi populations (91.7 percent) reside in villages and merely 8.3 percent have shifted to the urban areas. The rapid industrialization is one of the major reasons for population declination of the Adivasis.

Jharkhand is witness of unending struggle for mineral resources as the state contains 40 percent of India's precious minerals like Uranium, Mica, Bauxite, Granite, Gold, Silver, Graphite, Magnetite, Dolomite, Fireclay, Quartz, Feldspar, Coal, Iron and Copper. Forests and woodlands occupy more than 29% of the state which is amongst the highest in India. But unfortunately, the exploitation and injustice are prevalent in the state. Irony is the political leaders of Adivasis do not realize it even today. They have signed 102 MoUs (memorandum of understanding) for establishing steel factories, power plants and mining industries with the estimated investment of Rs 4,67,240 crore, which require approximately 200,000 acres of land, which directly means the displacement of approximately 1 million people.

The government, the Industrialists and the Media are putting hard efforts to convince the people by propagating the messages that the industrialization is only way to develop the young Jharkhand therefore the villagers must surrender their land for the development projects, which would provide them jobs, infrastructure and boost the economy of the state. But the Adivasis are not convinced with the ideas as 91.7 percent of them still rely on agriculture, forest produces and livestock for their survival. They are resisting against displacement, attacking the company's officials and not allowing them to enter into the villages. Consequently, the government is unable to execute the MoUs at the

grassroots.

There has been turmoil against displacement in the state. On 1st of October 2008, the villagers attacked on the Kohinoor steel plant near Jamshedpur, seized 70 trucks and stopped the work. They alleged that after acquiring their agricultural land, the company neither compensated nor gave them jobs as promised and the company is also causing huge environmental affect in agriculture, water sources and public health therefore they would not allow the company to destroy their livelihoods. In another case, the villagers attacked 3 surveyors of Bhushan steel Yusuf Ahmad, Sheetal Kumar and Sahdev Singh when they were conducting land survey near Sarmanda River at Potka of East Singhbhum district. The villagers caught them, painted on their faces with cow dung, asked them to eat straw and cow dung, garlanded with shoes and paraded in the villagers on 11 September 08. Somari Hembrom of Roladih village (Potka) justified it by saying, "We had already declared for not giving our precious land to the Bhushan Company but despite of this, these people were measuring our land without informing us therefore they were taught a lesson".

Similarly, the villagers attacked Jupiter Cement factory, beaten the workers and stopped the factory on 11 September 2008 at Kharsawan alleging for violating the land related laws. The Indian CEO, Project head and other officials of the steel giant Arcelor Mittal Company were not allowed to enter into the villages in Torpa- Kamdara region near Ranchi several times. The people of Tontopasi in Saraikela-Kharsawan district are not allowing the Tata Steel to acquire land for its Greenfield Project. In another case, the Adivasis of Dumka district have imposed "Janta Curfew" (public curfew) in Kathikund and Sikaripada blocks with the slogan "We shall give up our lives but not land." against the proposed power plant of CESC Limited, where police firing took place on 6 of December, 2008 caused the killing of two activists – Lakhiram Tuddu and Saigat Marandi and another 7 activists were severely injured. The people resistances have forced the Tata Steel, Arcelor Mittal Company, Jindal Steel, Esser Steel and CESE Limited to leave the proposed areas.

Interestingly, the corporate houses have not given up their hopes and attempting to enter into the region through the back doors. They are playing many tricks and also luring people with the huge monetary packages for acquiring land. The global steel giant Arcelor Mittal Company is a crucial example to understand how the companies attempt to trick the Adivasis. The Arcelor Mittal Company signed a MoU with the Jharkhand government on October 8, 2005 for setting up a steel plant with the capacity of 12 million tones per annum at an estimated investment of Rs 40,000 crore. The company requires 25,000 acre of land and 20,000 unit water per hour for the steel plant and a township in Torpa-Kamdara region of Khunti and Gumla district. Since, the company needs huge water, a mega Dam will be constructed at Koel-Karo River for ensuring the water supply to the steel plant. According to the plan, the steel plant will be set up by the end of 2009 and the production will begin from 2012. Consequently, there will be a mass displacement of Adivasis as 256 villages would be affected completely by the project.

The people of Jharkhand especially the Adivasis have been undergoing through the adverse affect of the unjust modern development processes for more than a century therefore another mass movement against the Arcelor Mittal Company began in 2005 in the region under the banner of "Adivasi-Moolvasi Astitava Raksha Manch". The people are resisting against industrialization in the region and not ready to give even one inch of their remaining lands. They have declared that "they need grains not iron for feeding their stomach". Consequently, the Mittal Company was unable to enter into the region. Therefore it began playing tricks with the people. Eight months after the MoU was signed, Laxmi Mittal the owner of the company visited India in July 2006 to explore more investment prospects, but he was quite upset with the progress of the project in Jharkhand and warned the state government that mega project could be shifted to the neighbouring Orissa if the project continued at a snail's pace. But by then, Arjun Munda then the Chief Minister of Jharkhand had already made history signing MoUs with 43 companies. He could very well afford to tell Mittal he was free to choose between the two states.

This is when the idea of flaunting Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) struck Mittal. Soon, Arcelor-Mittal Foundation was launched in 2007 with the objective of investing in social programmes, and promoting Arcelor-Mittal's commitment to society and sustainable development, focusing in particular on the communities where it operates. It is also said that the Foundation will seek to develop partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to drive the programme forward. But the hidden agenda of the foundation seems to be to use the local NGOs to find a foothold in the project areas. It was obvious from the start the foundation was going to pour large funds to enhance its public relations.

Arcelor-Mittal's activities gathered momentum with the appointment of Sanak Mishra as the CEO of the Indian project. The announcement of CSR programmes started, which was in the form of election campaigns. The first move was to launch an ITI (Industrial Training Institute) in Khunti, slated to open from 2009. 50 percent of the total candidates were selected by the state government and the rest by the company. Half of the seats were reserved for Adivasi students and 50 scholarships were to be awarded on merit to deserving local students of the region. The ITI was projected as a catalyst of change for the Adivasi community. Meanwhile, the Mittal was told about the Adivasis' love for hockey. Soon, the company was sponsoring hockey tournament for girls and boys of Khunti and Gumla districts. The training for boys and girls started with the support of the district and the state hockey federations. The next step was to lure NGOs with huge funds. Finally, the company declared \$300 million CSR programme, which would be spent for Rehabilitation & Resettlement package for the state. But it also didn't work.

The company made a new holy business strategy to join hands with the church based social services institutions as the region is highly dominated by the Christians Adivasis. Earlier, the vice president of the Arcelor Mittal Company, Remi Boyer, who has more faith in the holy business for overcoming on the mass movement, had said that the church is ready to co-operate the company in land acquisition. Consequently, the Arcelor Mittal Company and Don Bosco Society made a secret agreement for holy business, under which the company would bear the cost of ITI training for Adivasi youth of the proposed project area and the Don Bosco Society would provide training in its ITI centre based at Kokar, Ranchi. But when it came into the notice of a forum of Adivasi called "Jharkhand Indigenous People's Forum", it intervened on the matter immediately.

The forum wrote letters to the Superior of the Don Bosco Society and the Cardinal Telesphore P. Toppo asking them to make their stance clear on the issue of supporting Arcelor Mittal Company. The forum members also asked the Church leaders whether they are committed to the cause of Adivasis or they have joined hands with corporate for economic gain through the holy business. They also threatened for mass resistance including rally, protest and locking up the ITI Centre of Don Bosco. The forum released its plan and strategy of mass resistance through the media, which created an upheaval in the church arenas. Consequently, the Church leaders and the Superior of Don Bosco were in a huge pressure. Finally, the Don Bosco Society made it clear that it operates in Jharkhand only for the upliftment of Adivasis, Dalits and poor therefore it will not tie up with any corporate house, which takes away the rights of the Adivasis. The tricks of the Arcelor Mittal Company failed.

The Adivasis' struggle against displacement has spread across the state. "Loha Nahi Anaj Chahiye" (We want grains not iron), "Jal, Jungle aur Jamin Hamara Hai" (Land, forest and water belong to us) and "Jan denge, Jamin Nahi Denge" (We will surrender our lives but not land) are a few overwhelming slogans being raised from villages to the state capital. A series of mass meetings, Road blocks and Rallies are being organized in these areas, where thousands of Adivasis and local people participate, shout slogans and echo their voices. The message they want to convey to the government, the industrialists and the middle class is that 'they won't give up agriculture land for the development projects.

There are some prominent organizations of the Adivasis like Bisthapan Virodhi Ekta Manch, Adivasi

Moolvasi Astitva Raksha Manch, Jharkhand Ulgulan Manch, Creaj Jan Mukti Andolan, Jharkhand Mines Area Coordination Committee and Jharkhand Indigenous People's Forum, who play crucial role in the displacement movement in Jharkhand, have cautioned the state government against increasing intrusions of representatives from several industries in villages, registering false cases against anti-displacement activists and threatening the villagers. "Our message is loud and clear that we do not want to give our land for industries", says K.C. Mardi the convener of Bisthapan Virodhi Ekta Manch. "Such attempts should be stopped immediately because the conspiracy to snatch our land would cause social unrest in the villages" he adds.

Dayamani Barla the convener of Adivasi Moolvasi Astitva Raksha Manch, the organization fighting against the Arcelor Mittal at Torpa-Kamdara says, "We will not allow the Arcelor Mittal Company to enter into the villages because one can not be rehabilitated if once displaced. The lands, which we cultivate belong to our ancestors therefore we will not leave it". According to the General Secretary of Crej Jan Mukti Andolan, Jerom Jerold Kujur, the development of agriculture is a need of the hour. He says, "It is more important to boost up agriculture than setting up industries in Jharkhand, as agriculture production in Jharkhand is marginal". "If the government provides irrigation and other facilities to the local farmers, they could reap three crops in a year" he adds.

The corporate houses are in anxiety, worried and uncertain about their future in Jharkhand therefore they are putting pressure on the government for taking action against the displacement activists. As a result, 3 criminal cases were registered against 1025 anti-displacement activists under the sections 307, 147, 148, 149, 323, 341, 342, 427, 506 of IPC and 9 of them were arrested but some of them were released after a huge people's protest. But the leader of Jharkhand Ulgulan Manch, Munni Hansada was kept in Jail for six months.

The fundamental question is why Adivasis do not want to give their land for the development projects, which can provide them jobs? The instant answer can be found in the history of pains and sufferings of the displaced people, which suggests that after the independence, 17,10,787 people were displaced while acquiring 24,15,698 acres of their lands for setting up the Power Plants, Irrigation Projects, Mining Companies, Steel Industries and other development projects in Jharkhand. In every project approximately 80 to 90 percent Adivasis and local people were displaced but merely 25 percent of them were halfway rehabilitated and no one has any idea about the rest 75 percent displaced people. The benefits of these development projects were highly enjoyed by the Landlords, Project Officers, Engineers, Contractors, Bureaucrats, Politicians and outsiders, and those who sacrificed everything for the sake of the "development" are struggling for their survival.

Secondly, the people were betrayed in the name of rehabilitation, compensation and jobs. The promises were not fulfilled and the jobs were given to the outsiders. In the present era, the technologies are mostly used in the companies therefore job opportunities and job security have declined the corporate. For example, when the Tata steel was producing 1 Mt steel, the work force was 70,000 in 1995. The growth of the Tata steel went up to 7 Mt in 2008 but the workforce declined to 20,000. Similarly, in the Heavy Engineering Corporation, Ranchi there were 23,000 employees at the beginning but it declined to 3000 in 2009.

The Job insecurity can be learnt from the Mittal company, which is said to provide 1 lakh, jobs to the people. Presently, the company operates in 60 countries and it has plants in 20 countries but the company has been suffering from the economic crisis since 2008. The demand of company's steel went down to 10 percent. Consequently, the company cut the production in Canada by 45 percent and axed 9,000 employees. It also cut the job of 1000 employees in lowest cost plant in Poland and shut one out of its two blast furnaces in west Belgium. The company had total workforces of 3,26,000 which was cut down to 3,15,867 as a result 10,133 people lost their jobs. The present status shows that the company is totally failure in protection of its employees' rights therefore 2000 employees had attacked the company's headquarter at Lubzumburge. In these circumstances, how can people believe on the propaganda of providing job to the affected people?

Thirdly, In fact the Adivasis had the ownership rights to the natural resources and they judiciously used these resources for their survival. But soon after the East India Company entered into the territory, the Britishers realized the enormous commercial potential of India's natural resources and systematically went about acquiring control over it. In 1793 the "Permanent Settlement Act" was passed, which affected the socio-economic and cultural life of the Adivasis, and their lands slipped into the hands of the Zamindars (landlords). In 1855, the government declared the forests as the government property and the individuals have not right and claim over it. In 1865 the first Forest Act came into force, an avalanche of regulations followed this act. Wherever a loophole was detected in the existing laws a new law would be passed. After the independence, when Indians took over the driving sit they also followed the Britishers' foot steps. The rights over natural resources of the Adivasi were snatched away through the various legislations. The government of India accepts through the Forest Rights Act 2006 that the historical injustice was done on the Adivasi community.

Fourthly, there are numerous laws made for protection of the Adivasis' rights but these laws were never enacted honestly. The Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act 1908 and Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act 1949 prohibit the sale and transfer of Adivasi land to non-Adivasi but the land were illegally snatched away from them. In 1969, the Bihar Scheduled Areas Regulation Act was enforced for prevention and legalization of illegal land transfer and of Adivasis. A special Area Regulation Court was established and the Deputy Commissioner was given special right regarding the sell and transfer of Adivasis land. When the special court started function, a huge number of cases were registered. According to the government's report, 60,464 cases regarding 85,777.22 acres of illegal transfer of land were registered till 2001-2002. Out of these 34,608 cases of 46,797.36 acres of land were considered for hearing and rest 25,856 cases related to 38,979.86 acres of land were dismissed.

But after the hearing merely 21,445 cases regarding 29,829.7 acres of lands were given possession to the original holders and rest remains with the non-Adivasis. Further more 2608 cases of illegal land transfer were registered in 2003-2004, 2657 cases in 2004-2005, 3230 cases in 2005-2006, 3789 cases in 2006-2007 and 5382 cases in 2007-2008, which clearly indicates that the cases of illegal land alienation is increasing rapidly. According to the Annual Report 2004-2005 of the Ministry of Rural Development of the Government of India, Jharkhand topped the list of Adivasi land alienation in India with 86,291 cases involving 10,48,93 acres of land. Similarly, the constitutional rights, provisions for the sixth scheduled Areas and the Extension of Panchayat Act 1996 were never been implemented with the true spirit in the state. The ruling elites always misused these laws for their benefits.

Fifthly, the government of India was unable to bring a law for the rehabilitation of the affected people even after the 62 years of independence but legislation for the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) was passed immediately. Similarly, when the Jharkhand state was created the first chief minister, Babula Marandi brought the Industrial Policy but at the same time, the same government was unable to make a rehabilitation policy. This is why the intention of the state was always questioned and the people are resisting against displacement everywhere. The people were displaced from one place to another in the name of development but they were not rehabilitated. Hence they feel that they were betrayed in the welfare state in the name of "development" and "national interest". Therefore now Adivasis believe that they can protect their land only through the mass struggle.

Finally, one should understand that the displacement is not just shifting people from one place to another but it is destruction of their livelihood resources, culture and identity which they develop by nourishing for the ages. The life cycle of the Adivasis is based on the natural resources therefore their co-existence with the nature can not be questioned. Hence, it is need of the hour to rethink on the present development model. The unjust development process can not be carried on as the Adivasis also have similar rights to life with dignity, freedom and equality guaranteed by the constitution of India. The Adivasis have lost their faith in the state machinery, constitutional authorities and judiciary therefore they have firmly decided not to allow laying down the foundation of corporate development model over their graves.

Gladson Dungdung is a Human Rights Activist and Writer based at Ranchi, Jharkhand. He can be reached at gladsonhractivist@gmail.com or gladson@jharkhandi.com