

Update

Series 18

Adivasi in India

■

Adivasi, Mining and Monopoly Capital

■

'War on Adivasi'

March 2010

Introduction

Dantewada is the southern-most district of Chhattisgarh. It has borders with Orissa in the east and Andhra Pradesh in the south. 62% of the district is covered with dense forests mostly inhabited by the adivasis, who are 79% of the population of the district. Dantewada produces *most of the iron ores* of the state. But, it is

“among the top 10 most backward districts in the country. Only 22 per cent of households in Dantewada have access to electricity, though the district boasts of the presence of Essar Steel.... Literacy rate in Dantewada is as low as 30 per cent.” (Rich Lands Poor People, Is Sustainable Mining Possible? Centre for Science and Environment, 2008)

The profile of the districts like Bijapur, Bastar, Kanker—adjacent to Dantewada (better known as *Bastar region* of Chhattisgarh)—are almost same: i.e., *rich in minerals; inhabited mostly by the adivasis; abysmally poor and underdeveloped also*. These districts are now famous names—not for the Essars or Tatas. They are now famous for the biggest internal paramilitary onslaught in the history. Thousands of security personnel and elite police forces are now combing the jungles for Adivasis branding them naxals or maoists. Adivasis— many of those are hunters by nature—are now chased and being hunted indiscriminately both by the security forces and the butchers of Salwa Judum. Hundreds are either killed or maimed; women are raped; children are tortured mercilessly; fingers and tongue of a two-year old child are cut off; thousands of huts have been torched and razed to the ground; belongings looted; 644 villages are evacuated; more than 3.5 lakh adivasis have either been displaced or have fled to the nearest states! It is not a war-zone of Iraq or Afghanistan. It is a poor region of Chhattisgarh—now a battlefield of the Indian paramilitary forces! The war perpetrated is called as ‘Operation Green Hunt’ (OGH).

One can remember the region commonly named as *KBK (Kalahandi-Bolangir-Koraput)* belt of Orissa ‘famous’ for high records of undernourishment, poverty and starvation deaths amongst the Adivasis. And,

“Around 90% people of this region still live in villages. Female literacy is only 24.72%. As per the 1997 census of BPL families, about 72% families are *below poverty line* live in this region.... More specifically, 49 CD Blocks of KBK districts are regarded as “*very backward*” and 28 CD Blocks are considered as “backward”. Persistent crop failure, lack of access to the basic service and entitlements, starvation, malnutrition and migration are the leading manifestations in the region. (www.mail-archive.com/national-forum-of-india@yahoogroups.co.in/msg00103.html)

More than half of the population of the region are Adivasis. And, under the soil of the KBK and adjoining districts like Rayagada, lurk the *rich reserves of bauxite*—the mother-ore of Aluminium—largely used in the makings of aircraft and cars. Aluminium is called a “strategic metal” in modern warfare. Moreover, the imperialist countries like the USA have no bauxite. Deposits in Japan and Europe are depleting fast. Hence, the KBK region and adjacent districts have now become hot-famous, but not for ‘starvation deaths’ like before. It now ‘boasts’ of bauxite for which big multinationals and Indian monopoly houses are investing massively. Right at this moment this rich land is preparing for bloodbath in the hands of the security forces. This may be called as the Orissa chapter of ‘Operation Green Hunt’.

Possibly, no-one can forget the adivasi people languishing under severe condition of undernourishment, semi-starvation and ‘unknown’ diseases in the *eastern part of Maharashtra bordering Chhattisgarh*. The districts like Gadchiroli, Amravati, Yavatmal, Chandrapur and Bhandara of Vidharva region are largely adivasi-inhabited and few of which are also ‘infested’ with Naxalites “sneaking” from Chhattisgarh. OGH is also going on here fiercely with unprecedented “success”.

One may remember also the name of *Amlasole*, a hamlet of West Midnapur—once famed for starvation deaths in left-ruled West Bengal. This place is not far enough from *Lalgarh* where the age-old anguish and sufferings of the Adivasis at the hands of police, administration, contractors, businessmen, wood-mafia, and foresters erupted in November 2008. This place, also called as ‘Jangalmahal’ is another battlefield of the security forces of India. Indiscriminate torturing of the Adivasis, sudden combing of the villages and forests, vandalism during the search-operations, looting and razing of the

houses, firing at the protest rallies, killing, beating coupled with arrests are the general norms of the Jangalmahal. This is the Bengal-version of OGH.

The security forces of India, comprising hundreds of thousands of paramilitary forces along with scores of police forces are now engaged in a full-blown war in the villages of terrains, hills and jungles of central and eastern India. The operation, named as “Operation Green Hunt” (or ‘OGH’) is the bigger than the biggest of any security operations unleashed in the interior of the country. The stated motive of the operation is to nab and flush out the ‘maoists’—called as “the gravest internal security threats” by the prime minister.

The paramilitary operations are teathed with the most sophisticated ammunitions, helicopters, unmanned drones used in the battlefields of Afghanistan and Iraq, satellite-assisted surveillance system along with the most modern weaponries. The war was initiated in the month of July-August of 2009 in the southern districts of Chhattisgarh and in the districts of Maharashtra-Karnataka bordering Chhattisgarh. Within a few months, the operation is escalated across *eight states* of the eastern and central-eastern India including Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar, and West Bengal.

After initiating the joint operations at the Jangalmahal of West Bengal in the month of June of 2009, G K Pillai, the Secretary to the Home Ministry admitted candidly that “*Lalgarh*” was the “*Laboratory*” of the Operation Green Hunt to be conducted in the states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand etc.

The government will go for Lalgarh-type operation in various states, especially in Chhattisgarh, to deal with one of the country’s biggest problems.

“Lalgarh is the laboratory for us and this will be reflected in what we are going to do in other Naxal-infested areas like Chhattisgarh.... (20.08.2009, <http://www.zeenews.com/news556970.html>)

The paramilitary offensive was escalated in full swing from the month of July-August of 2009 in several states like Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Orissa, etc. Within few months it was converted into a full-scale war against the people of India, particularly against the adivasis. If any one closely follow the pattern of action of the security forces in

this war, it will be revealed that the war-zones are *concentrated in the adivasi-inhabited regions*.

But, with whom the war is fought with? What is the real motive behind this operation? It's now an open secret that the real target of this operation is to clear the resistances made by the people (mainly Adivasis) on the path of the so-called industrialisation & development in the central and eastern states—particularly in Orissa, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. The Adivasis (along with the non-ativasis in some places) have waged struggles against the plunder of the minerals and forest-products; against the destruction of the rivers, waterbodies, forests and environment; against the forcible occupation of the lands, jungles and waters from the hands of the Adivasis; and against their ouster (or displacement). In fact, in many places, the projects declared by the state governments in the above states have almost come to a halt due to these resistances waged by the Adivasis. The big-ticket investments of the foreign mining and industrial companies like Arcelor-Mittal, Posco, Vedanta, Rio-Tinto, BHP Billiton, De Beers and Indian monopolies like Tata, Birla, Jindal, Essars, etc are hit by several roadblocks in these states and many of them cannot even begin the initial operations of their projects. Though some of the MNCs and Indian corporates are ready to take 'watch and see' policy to make their projects materialised, many of them are restless and are exerting immense pressure on the governments at the centre and states to clear the obstacles. Arcelor-Mittal and Posco are among of those who are threatening to pull out from the race of investments. The foreign and corporate interests behind the OGH were apparent by the anxious statements of foreign and domestic business media and mouthpieces representing the interests of imperialist and monopoly capital. These representatives are making valiant 'chest-beating' gesture to eliminate the blockades before the projects.

Actually, these war-mongers are shouting that 'he who are against the government, are actually the maoists' or are 'supporters' of the maoists or are 'sympathisers'. In fact, any form of protest and dissent against government policies is being branded and persecuted as 'anti-national' or against 'national interests, and all forms of resistance are being termed as 'naxalism' or 'maoism'. In the same breath, the adivasis who have made resistances in mineral-rich regions are branded as 'maoists'. And thus the killings, torturing, looting, arson, gang-rapes of the adivasi people with subsequent arbitrary

arrests, slapping of the draconian acts like UAPA are justified by none other than a 'democratic' government!

So severe is the barbarism that the apex court, which has given permission to many of the projects of the corporate houses, now slammed the government:

The Supreme Court on Monday severely criticised the Union Government for the recent killings of tribals in Dantewada allegedly by security forces in the name of fighting Naxals.

"Should everything ordered in the name of operations? Is there no concern for human or Fundamental Rights? We want to know why such incidents took place and how the security forces conducted themselves," a two-member bench of Justices B Sudershan Reddy and SS Nijjar observed.

"If someone is fighting or sympathising with Naxals so what? First you say that operations are conducted against Naxals, then Naxal sympathisers and then sympathisers of such sympathisers. What is all this?" the court asked while hearing a petition on killing of over 10 tribals in Chhattisgarh. (22.10.2010, <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/antinaxal-operation-has-to-be-just-sc-tells-govt/110536-3.html?from=tn>)

No one does know where will this offensive culminate. But few things might be certain. The offensive will certainly kill and maim thousands of adivasis; will uproot millions of them; will crush the livelihoods and dwelling places of thousands more; and will devastate thousands of acres of pristine forests, hills, rivers, waterbodies, ecology etc.

Voices of protests against the murderous operations have been developing. Rallies, conventions, protest-meetings have been held in several cities of the countries. Eminent personalities of different walks of life have raised the voices of protest against the operation. Moreover, these personalities alongwith many organisations protested the heinous acts of the administration to brand all these protests as 'maoists'. Several adivasi organisations in Orissa and Jharkhand have vent their voices of protest also. We are hoping that these voices will be louder in coming days creating enough pressures on the governments. But, it is required to develop stronger mass-movements in all the cities, particularly in the affected states.

We have to grasp some deeper points behind the smokescreen of current onslaught. In fact, this imperialist-dictated, monopoly-led state operation demands a closer scrutiny from different angles:

1. It is the first time that the struggles and voices of the Adivasi people of India (particularly in the central and eastern parts) are being heard so loudly that barring the hangers-on of ruling classes of India, no-one can turn a blind eye to it. The present situation has forced many of the activists to count the potential of the adivasi people in the resistance struggles as well as in the coming democratic revolution in the country. And, the situation has inspired us to enquire the crude realities under which the adivasis are forced to live.

2. Closer examination of the designs behind the current murderous operation against the adivasis—indiscriminately branding them as ‘maoists’; examinations of the motive of the imperialist and monopoly companies—mining and industrial—behind the offensive.

Adivasis in Central and Eastern India

Adivasi land alienation is quite a major issue in Jharkhand. During 1951 to 1991 about 22 lakh acres of land has been alienated from them. This was done for setting up industries, mines, large dams, sanctuaries, highway and also illegal transfer of land to non-Adivasis and the practices of the moneylender system too snatched land from the tribals.

— *'Land for the Landless'*, by Gladstone Dungdung, 23.05.2008, www.tehelka.com

India has two halves. One half is composed of minority Indians. They are mostly urban, elite, enlightened people of 'twenty-first century'; gifted massively by the New Economic Policy; making bucks and extracting booties from the liberalisation, stock markets, business contracts and contacts with upper echelons.

Another half are the majority Indians. Impoverished, malnourished, under- or non-educated, non-enlightened, downtrodden, oppressed and exploited masses of working people toiling in the fields, jungles and factories. A significant portion of these people are adivasis—administratively called as scheduled tribes or tribals. A human rights organisation PUCL writes:

Scheduled Tribes is an administrative term used for purposes of 'administering' certain specific constitutional privileges, protection and benefits for specific sections of peoples considered historically disadvantaged and 'backward'.

However, this administrative term does not exactly match all the peoples called 'Adivasis'. Out of the 5653 distinct communities in India, 635 are considered to be 'tribes' or 'Adivasis'.... For practical purposes, the United Nations and multilateral agencies generally consider the STs as 'indigenous peoples'.... India... is the nation with the *highest concentration* of 'indigenous peoples' in the world! (*The Adivasis of India—A History of Discrimination, Conflict, and Resistance, PUCL Bulletin, February 2003; <http://www.pucl.org/>*)

According to the Census of 2001, adivasi population of the country is *8.43 crore*, constituting *8.2%* of the total population. "Of these, about 16 million [i.e., 1.6 crore] live in the states of north-eastern India.... [*R*]oughly *70 million [i.e., 7 crore]* tribals... live in the heart of India, in a more-or-less contiguous hill and forest belt that extends across the

states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar and West Bengal”: writes a historian. (*Adivasi, Naxalites and Indian Democracy*, by Ramchandra Guha, 11.08.2007, *Economic & Political Weekly (EPW)*)

Table: Major Adivasi States (except north-east India) (in %)

States	Proportion to the total ST population in India	Proportion to the total ST population in the state
Madhya Pradesh	14.5	20.3
Maharashtra	10.2	8.9
Orissa	9.7	22.1
Gujarat	8.9	14.8
Rajasthan	8.4	12.6
Jharkhand	8.4	26.3
Chhattisgarh	7.8	31.8
Andhra Pradesh	6.0	6.6
West Bengal	5.2	5.5

(Source: Census, 2001)

Table provides more detail figures about the spread of the adivasi population across some of the states. It has been found that a large percentage of population of *Chhattisgarh* (31.8%), *Jharkhand* (26.3%) and *Orissa* (22.1%) are adivasis. Overwhelming majority of these adivasis live in forest-covered hilly regions. Hence the life and livelihoods of these adivasis are *intricately connected with forests* apart from agricultural practices. The *average forest cover* at the national level is 23%. A study on adivasi people, forests and mining states that:

Barring Gujarat, the forest cover in the remaining top five mining states—Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Madhya Pradesh—is *above the national average*. *Chhattisgarh has the highest forest cover: around 43 per cent*. *Jharkhand* has forests on 30 per cent of its land, while *Orissa and Madhya Pradesh* have forest cover on 27 and 26 per cent of their lands, respectively. (*Rich Lands Poor People, Is Sustainable Mining Possible? Centre for Science and Environment, 2008*)

The Jangalmahal of West Bengal, where adivasis are fighting the state-sponsored terror till date, is also covered with thick forests. Details of the Adivasi people in some of the major states are as the following:

Chhattisgarh: The Scheduled Tribe (ST) population of Chhattisgarh State is 6,616,596 constituting *31.8 per cent* of the total population of the State. The State has a total of forty-two (42) Scheduled Tribes and all have been enumerated at 2001 census. As many as *94.7 per cent* of ST population resides in *rural areas*. At the district level, tribals have their highest concentration in Dantewada (78.5 per cent) followed by Bastar (66.3 per cent) and Jashpur (63.2 per cent) districts. (*Census, 2001*)

According to the official website of Chhattisgarh, *44 per cent* of its land is under forests, which make up *12 per cent* of the nation's forest land. Most of the dense forests are concentrated in the northern districts of Surguja, Koriya, Jaspur and Korba and the southern districts of Bastar, Kanker and Dantewada—regions rich in mineral resources. In fact, all the mineral districts in the state have high forest cover exceeding more than 30 per cent of their geographic areas. In the case of Dantewada, Korba and Koriya, the forest cover is as much as 64, 51 and 63 per cent respectively. (*Rich Lands Poor People, Is Sustainable Mining Possible? Centre for Science and Environment, 2008*)

Jharkhand: The Scheduled Tribe (ST) population of Jharkhand State is as per 2001 census 7,087,068 constituting *26.3 per cent* of the total population (26,945,829) of the State. The state has a total of thirty (30) Scheduled Tribes.... The Scheduled Tribes are primarily rural as *91.7 per cent* of them reside in villages. District wise distribution of ST population shows that Gumla district has the highest proportion of STs (68.4 per cent). The STs constitute more than half of the total population in Lohardaga and Pashchimi Singhbhum districts whereas Ranchi and Pakaur districts have 41.8-44.6 per cent tribal population. (*Census, 2001*)

The State of Forest Report 2003 of the Forest Survey of India puts the forest cover in Jharkhand at almost 30 per cent; of this, 82 per cent consists of protected forests, 17 per cent is reserved forests, and the remaining 3,349 ha are unclassified forests. Jharkhand accounts for *nine per cent* of the country's forest cover, and its forests are rich reserves of biodiversity. (*Rich Lands Poor People, Is Sustainable Mining Possible? Centre for Science and Environment, 2008*)

Orissa: As per 2001 Census, the Scheduled Tribe (ST) population of the State of Orissa is 8,145,081. This constitutes *22.1 percent* of the total population of the State and 9.7 per cent of the total tribal population of the country. The State has a total of sixty-two (62) Scheduled Tribes.... The Scheduled Tribe population in the State is overwhelmingly rural, with *94.5 per cent* residing in *villages*. District wise distribution of ST population shows that Malkangiri district has the highest proportion of STs (57.4 per cent) followed by Mayurbhanj (56.6 per cent), Rayagada (55.8 per cent) and Nabarangapur (55 per cent). [*Census, 2001*] More than two-thirds of Orissa is made up of hilly forests. (*Rich Lands Poor People, Is Sustainable Mining Possible? Centre for Science and Environment, 2008*)

West Bengal: The Scheduled Tribes population of West Bengal is 4,406,794 constituting 5.5 per cent of the total population of the state.... The STs in the state are predominantly residing in the *rural areas (93.9 per cent)*. The percentage of Adivasis residing in three districts, i.e., undivided Midnapur, Purulia and Bankura—constituting the Jangalmahal—is 36.1%. The forest covers of these districts are 18.6%, 29.7% and 21.5% respectively. But, mineral resources in these districts are found in traces.

Adivasi People and Forests

During 1998-2005, 216 mining projects were granted forest clearance annually, as against 19 per year during 1980-97.

—January, 2009; <http://infochangeindia.org/200901077561/Environment/Analysis/>

We have observed earlier that livelihoods of the adivasi people are closely intertwined with the forests. The relations of adivasis with the forests are reciprocal and natural. They collect a variety of forest products from the forest lands to sustain their living, notable among which are saal-seeds, tendu leaf, harra, mahua flower/seed, tora, tamarind, mango kernels, bamboo, gums, etc. They sell these forest products either in the underdeveloped markets and/or to the intermediaries at throw-away prices or use it as their daily needs. They have known from their ancestors the science to preserve the forests and trees and the ecology of the flora and fauna. They know how to cultivate in the forests protecting the plants. The particular method of cultivation known as 'jhoom' practised by them instead of ruining the forests help in growing shoots and fresh vegetation. From time immemorial they had learned the practice of preservation of the overall ecology of the forests.

The first infringements on the adivasi-rights over the forests came from the colonial rulers. The interests of the British rulers were firstly to lay claims on the timbers required for the development of railway lines in India as well as for export to their country. Secondly, with the discovery of abundant mining resources beneath the soil of the forests, the colonialists took control over it. A well-documented book writes the following:

The forest department was created in 1868 by the British for overseeing 'scientific forestry'—forestry for production of commercially valuable timber to the exclusion of other species. Majority of the country's forest areas were converted into state-controlled reserved forests and protected forests under the Indian Forest Act of 1865 and 1927. According to one study, in 50 years of British rule (from 1855 to about 1908), *Sal* forest tract of the sub-Himalayan belt of UP had alone yielded over 1.5 crore rupees to the exchequer (Rs 3 lakh per annum). On the other hand, the annual income from *chaukis*

that charged royalties on export of non-timber forest produce was estimated to be a quarter of that amount.

The fact that vast areas were for community use and management and did not have any private ownership facilitated the process of appropriation. In the classic colonial attitude, non-private ownership was considered as no ownership at all.... (*Abandoned: Development & Displacement, Perspectives, January 2008*)

In fact, the rulers of pre- and post-1947 India had introduced a *zamindari* system over the forests and lives of the adivasis. A writer discusses the following:

The first of these is the Indian Forest Act 1927. The British relied on a dubious legal principle called “res nullius”, which means that any property which does not have a documented legal owner can be assumed to be legally unburdened, and they appropriated vast tracts of forest land in this country in the areas in which they ruled directly and handed them over to the forest department they created for the purpose. As the adivasis had a communitarian oral culture there was little conception of private property in land among them and absolutely no documentation. Thus in one stroke the British dispossessed lakhs of adivasis in the central Indian region of their ancestral lands. This was from the point of view of the adivasis an even worse development as compared to the zamindari system that the British imposed on the peasants in general as it made them into criminals and bonded labourers of the forest department. Even though the Indian Forest Act does have some principles of natural justice embedded in it in the form of a procedure for objections and appeals, these were all arcane to the adivasis and so they were deprived of the so-called liberal democratic “rule of law”. Unfortunately, the Indian government after independence continued with this highly unjust statute and brought large tracts of forest areas in the princely states that acceded to it under its purview and once again adivasis living on forest lands were dispossessed and denied the benefits of the “rule of law”. Thus, while on paper the zamindari system was abolished after independence, the zamindari of the forest department over the forest areas and the adivasis was extended and today it remains the largest landholder in the country. Without a repeal of this act and its replacement with a community forestry statute giving a central role to the adivasis, there is no hope of any justice for the latter.

The second nefarious statute introduced by the British was the Land Acquisition Act 1894. Once again the British relied on another dubious legal principle called “eminent

domain” which means that the state has the first right on any land that it wishes to use for a “public purpose” and can forcibly acquire it from a private person if it so desires. The public purpose has not been defined and it has been left to the state to decide what it is. Once again even though there are provisions in this law for objections and appeals, they are so arcane that it is impossible for adivasis to go to the courts and ensure their rights under them. Moreover, the provisions for compensation for the acquired land are fundamentally flawed. The Indian government continued with this act too after independence and used it indiscriminately to acquire land for development projects, either without any compensation at all or for a song and to dispossess the adivasis.

These two acts were in fact presciently introduced by the British because without them industrial development in Britain for which natural resources had to be extracted from India would not have been possible. So also industrial development in post-independence India required heavy extraction of natural resources and consequently the independent Indian state thought it prudent to continue with these anti-adivasi laws.

The British were wily rulers, however, and so when confronted with massive adivasi militancy in opposition to the deleterious effects these laws had on their livelihoods, they also enacted certain provisions in the Government of India Act of 1935 which provided for protection of adivasis from such depredation. These provisions were later amended and enhanced to form the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution which governs the administration of adivasi areas in the central Indian region... This provided for adivasi areas in a state being delineated as scheduled areas and the formation of a Tribes Advisory Council consisting of scheduled tribe (ST) legislators that was to advise the governor of the state who was given the responsibility for overseeing the administration of these scheduled areas....

[T]heoretically it is possible for the governor of a state on the advice of the Tribes Advisory Council to prevent the application of or repeal the Indian Forest Act and the Land Acquisition Act. However, this has never happened because it is not a binding provision but only a suggestion like the Directive Principles of State Policy, which finally has to depend on the executive for its implementation. (*Adivasis and Unjust Laws, Rahul Banerjee, 29.09.2007, EPW*)

In fact, the new rulers of India after the so-called independence continued most of the colonial acts & laws. Alongside were maintained the exploitations and rules of the big

bourgeoisie and big landlords over the vast masses of people. The bureaucratic state machinery was kept intact with some cosmetic changes. Hence, the adivasi people never got either the real freedom and/or sovereignty from the clutches of the new rulers who were tightly bonded with the imperialist masters with hundreds of threads. Under these circumstances, the fifth schedule of the Indian constitution could not safeguard the adivasis from the expropriation of the land and forest.

Likewise, the PESA Act (Provisions of the Panchayats: Extension to the Scheduled Areas Act), introduced with much fanfare in 1996 could not protect the adivasis. The place of the above-mentioned advisory council was taken over by the elected representatives of the adivasis. In general, these elected representatives were from the Panchayats and/or village conferences (gram-sabhas). The 'friends' of the adivasis, i.e., the government itself and several NGOs called the PESA Act as historic and wished that this Act will help the adivasis to establish their claims over the land-forest-water (jain-jangal-jal). Soon the wishes vanished into the blue. The leaders (pradhans) of adivasis, who are tied with and dependent on the ruling classes, bureaucratic officialdom, administration, moneylenders, intermediaries, contractors, etc with thousands of interlacing interests became the elected representatives of the adivasis exercising their traditional control over them. In many cases, the nexus of the administration, police, mining tycoons, land mafias extracted the consents of the gram-sabha under direct threat of violence and torture. In a few cases, though the gram-sabha vehemently opposed acquisitions of the land and forests, neither the governor nor the administration was interested to implement it. Hence the 'historic' act like Pesa remained fruitless under the present structure of the state-machineries.

But the adivasi people were becoming restless over the forcible and unjust acquisition of land-forest-water by central/state governments (and also in different countries of the poor and underdeveloped world). Since 1990s, many NGOs as well as the World Bank become 'worried' at the development of spontaneous revolts of the adivasis (or indigenous people) which faced brutal oppression from the governments. In fact, they became perturbed by the facts that these protests created obstacles to the once 'easy' take-over of the forests from the hands of the adivasis. Then came a prescription of the World Bank advocating that the adivasis must have ownership of the forests as well as rights of direct bargaining with the corporates instead the mediation of the governments. Thus the ideas

of 'free market' of land & forests was floated. New Forest Act 2006 of the Indian government are more or less based on this idea. Now the gram-sabhas are 'empowered' to hand over the ownership to individual and/or groups of adivasis of forest land (not exceeding 4 hectares) near the villages. Can one deny the fact that the present structure of state-machineries serving the interests of the multinationals-corporates-landlords-foresters-contractors-intermediaries-mafia, etc might not deliver the desired results? Let's see what will happen in the near future.

After 'independence', particularly during 1990-2008 period more forest lands had been snatched away from adivasi-hands either for consolidating the zamindari of forest department or for the so-called development and industrialisation programmes:

- Between 1951 and 1988, the Forest Act was used to enlarge the national forest estate by another 250 lakh hectares (from 410 to 670 lakh hectares). Based on unreliable paper records, non-private lands of erstwhile princely states and *zamindars* were declared state forests, largely through blanket notifications.... Tribal areas, due to poor recording of customary rights, bore the brunt of this expansion spree. **Sixty percent of 'state' forests** today are concentrated in **187 tribal districts** confined to only one-third of the country. While the abolition of *zamindari* system somewhat freed tenants in the plains from landlord oppression [!?!], in hilly forested areas it threw millions of forest dwellers into clutches of a far more oppressive *zamindar*—the forest department (which today controls **23 percent** of the country's territory). (*Abandoned: Development & Displacement, Perspectives, January 2008*)
- During 1950 and 1976] ...approximately 0.5 million hectares of forestland was diverted for river valley projects consequent to the modernization principle. Large areas were also diverted for industries and townships (0.134 million hectares), infrastructure development (0.061million hectares) and miscellaneous uses (1.008 million hectares). (*National Land Reforms Policy, Committee On State Agrarian Relations and Unfinished Task of Land Reforms, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India; [http://www.rd.ap.gov.in/IKPLand/MRD Committee Report V 01 Mar 09.pdf](http://www.rd.ap.gov.in/IKPLand/MRD%20Committee%20Report%20V%2001%20Mar%2009.pdf)*)

- The maximum diversion of forestland... has been for the reason of regularization of encroachment in different states.... For regularization purposes total diversion of forestland till June 2008, was 776882.52 hectares. The next highest diversion is under the category of 'Others' (16.18 percent of total diversion). Excluding the extent of forest diverted for defense use, the **diversion for mining, hydel and irrigation projects** constitute almost equal magnitude and the percentage is quite significant (approximately **29% for mining and hydel projects and 4.27% for irrigation projects**). (*ibid*)
- The maximum diversion took place in the last decade, that is, from 2001 to 2008 (June) approximately **55% of the total diversion of forestland occurred from 2001 to 2008**. (*ibid*)
- According to recent 'forest clearances' offered by MoEF [Ministry of Environment and Forests] that clearly indicated towards 'neo-liberal agenda' created critical pressure on forestland. In the month of July-August 2008 itself, final forest clearance has been granted to 35 projects including an area of 4544.396 hectares. (*ibid*)
- In **Chhattisgarh**, the **total forestland diverted from 1980 to 2003 was 17166.501 hectares**, of which **67.22 percent** was diverted for **mining**. (*ibid*)
- In **Orissa**, 295 projects were approved, diverting 331.36 sq kms of forestland. Some sources stated that 27479.65 hectares of forestland was diverted from January 1989 to December 2006, out of which 11242.08 hectares were cleared for **115 mining projects** in the State. About 7375 hectares of forestland was diverted for irrigation projects while 2551 hectares of forestland was diverted for industrial projects. (*ibid*)

Clearly, above-mentioned pictures on diversions of forestland for various purposes, particularly after the adoption of 'neo-liberalism', indicate the possible magnitude of detachments and displacements of adivasis from their lands. The ouster of the adivasis was far more serious during the last few years when the big foreign mining companies, Indian monopolies rushed to explore mineral resources buried under the forestlands.

Box: Knocked out by Bauxite

Kado Dei's eyes fill with tears as she talks of the day her husband didn't come home. "My husband had gone to distribute leaflets for a meeting against the company. He had gone to five or six villages. When I put the water to boil for cooking, I got a message that there was a dead body on the road, so we rushed there. It was Sukru, my husband." Her husband had been run over by a car allegedly driven by employees of Vedanta Alumina Limited (VAL), a company that her husband, and much of the area, was campaigning against.

"Before, the company people had asked us to vacate the village asking how much money would we take for our land but we said that we would not leave our Mother Earth. The company has come here to kill us—they are not worried about killing people. The driver bribed the police and the matter was dropped."

"For food, I have to go from one door to another... I don't have food all the time and I am dependant on the village, they call me and give..."

According to Bratindi Jena, an activist who works with the tribe Kado and her husband belong to, there have been several incidents of violence against those vocal in opposition to "the company".

Near Kado's village is a stream, part of the Vamsadhara river, one of the two that flow from Niyamgiri mountain in the Karlapat Hills of Orissa—one of the least developed states in the country. The area is home to an extraordinary range of wild, and largely endangered, species and protected under Section 18 of the Wildlife Protection Act. (*Source: <http://www.minesandcommunities.org/article.php?a=23&highlight=displacement,in,india>*)

Mad Rush for Mining and Adivasi People

The opening statement of the 1994 draft of the National Rehabilitation Policy reads: “It is expected that there will be large-scale investments, both on account of internal generation of capital and increased inflow of foreign investments, thereby creating an enhanced demand for land to be provided within a shorter time-span in an increasingly competitive market-ruled economic structure. Majority of our mineral resources... are located in the remote and backward areas mostly inhabited by tribals”.

—Quoted in *‘Land as livelihood vs land as commodity’*, By Walter Fernandes,
<http://infochangeindia.org/200804167047/Agenda/Battles-Over-Land/Land-as-livelihood-vs-land-as-commodity.html>

India had taken a path of industrial development largely depending on imperialist capital and technology. In this path of so-called development and industrialisation some industries, mines, power projects (both hydel and thermal), dams, infrastructural utilities, etc had been set up. Newly formed industries needed raw materials like minerals. Not surprisingly, these mineral reserves were found in the forests and hills largely inhabited by the adivasis. Hence mines were dug up. Mines & industries needed power supply. So, power projects were developed in the hills—not for the adivasis—but for these mining & industrial activities. Mines & industries required huge amount of water. Hence dams were set up blocking or diverting the natural course of the rivers inundating large tracts of adivasi lands. Moreover, this ‘development’ had been done with little respect to the ecological balances of the hills, forests, and habitats. With this exploitation was added the imperialist plunder of natural resources, particularly the minerals which devastated the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of adivasis displacing them with state sponsored violence.

Since the 1990s this process was accelerated with further liberalisation of the economy. New economic policies along with a new industrial policy was introduced in 1991. A new mining policy was adopted in 1993 clearing much of the obstacles before the imperialist plunder of the natural resources. Hence the foreign exploitation of the resources—which was continued since the ‘independence’—had been increased greatly. The erstwhile reserved sectors in the mining for the public enterprises have been opened

up for the foreign and private monopolies. In the later phase the mining sector has been opened for 100% foreign direct investment leading to maximum plunder of natural resources. Public sector mining and mines-related industrial companies have been privatised. With these processes of opening up, the rules for setting up mine-based smelting plants, sponge iron plants, power plants, dams, infrastructural utilities, etc have been liberalised further preserving minimum regulations.

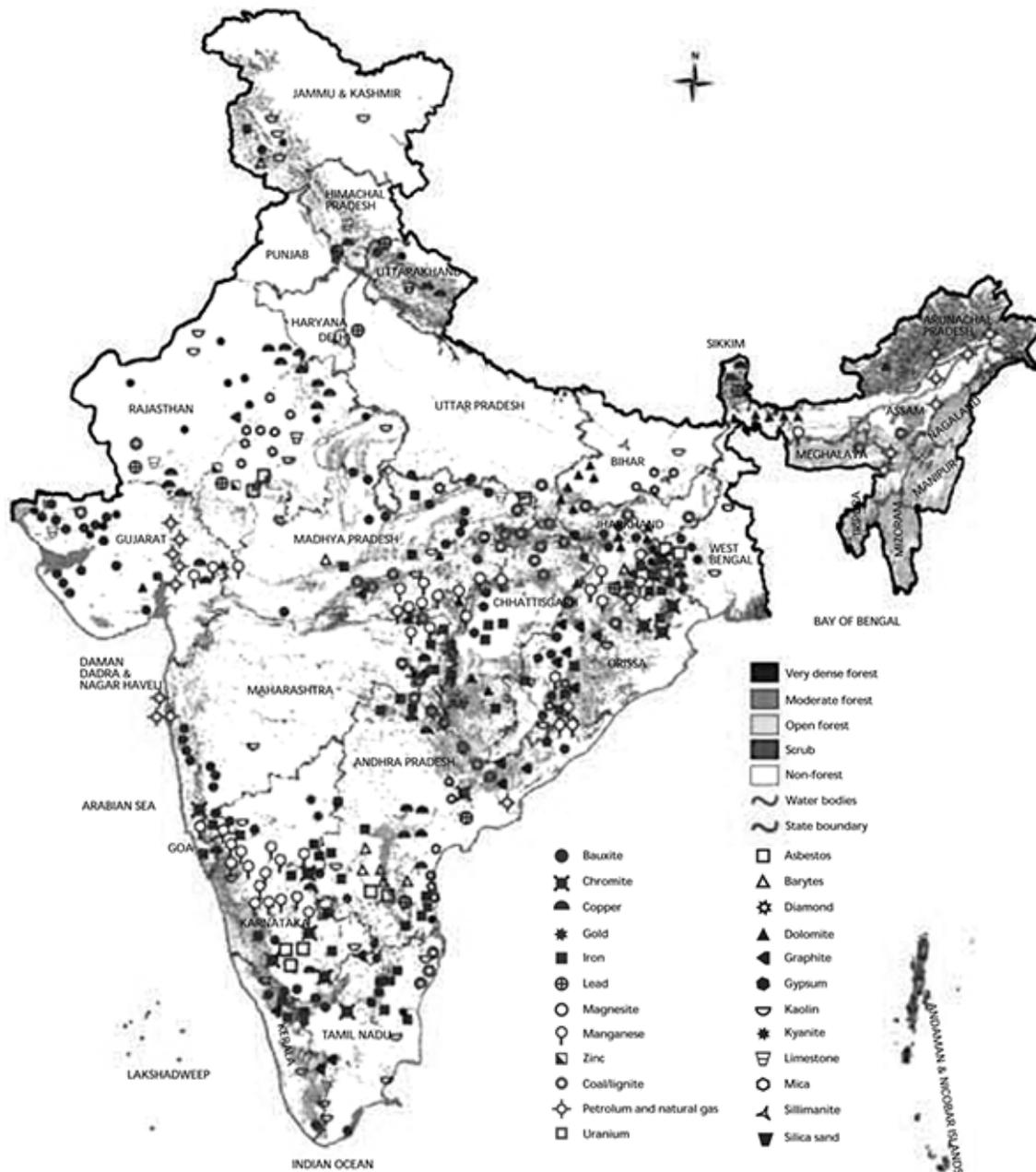
The mad rush for present investments in the Indian mining sector was prominent from 2003 with the hikes in international prices of minerals. Investments of lakhs of crores of rupees have been flooding the mining sector of India, particularly in the states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, etc. Hills and forests of these states laden with minerals have become the hotspots. Before going into details of these mining frenzy we must have a clear picture about mining potential of India along with several states inhabited by crores of adivasi people.

India:

India is a mineral-rich country. It has a vast geological potential of over **20,000** known mineral deposits, and is in the **top ranks** in production of some key minerals such as **coal, iron ore, chromite and bauxite**. According to the Geological Survey of India (GSI), the national exploring agency, the country is yet to tap its complete potential: **it has huge reserves of important minerals awaiting exploration and exploitation.**

Unfortunately for India, almost all its minerals are in the same regions that hold its greenest forests and most abundant river systems. These lands are also largely **inhabited by India's poorest and most marginalised people—the scheduled tribes and scheduled castes**—who depend on the very same forests and watersheds for their survival.

India: Minerals and Forests



(Source: *Rich Lands Poor People, Is Sustainable Mining Possible?* Centre for Science and Environment, 2008)

Mining in India, therefore, is not a simple 'dig and sell' proposition as it is made out to be by industry. It is, in fact, a highly complex socio-economic and environmental challenge: **at stake are natural resources as well as people—forests, wildlife, water, environmental quality and livelihoods....**

In general, India's major mineral-producing districts are characterized by large forest covers, big tribal populations and a high incidence of poverty and backwardness. **The average forest cover of the 50 major mineral-producing districts stands at 28 per cent;** the total forest cover in these districts is 11,890,400 hectare (ha)—**18 per cent** of the total forest cover in the country.

Six of these districts have forest cover more than 50 per cent of their geographical areas. Of the 50 districts, about 62 per cent have a forest cover that is more than the national average of 20.6 per cent. The districts where forest cover is less than 10 per cent are—usually—either those where mining has been going on for a long time or those that are located in arid and semi-arid regions. Districts like Dhanbad in Jharkhand, Jajpur in Orissa and Burdwan in West Bengal fall in the first category: long years of mining have devastated their forests....

Mining and quarrying has destroyed large tracts of forest land in these areas. One estimate by the government puts the **total forest land diverted for mining between 1980 and 2005 at 95,003 ha.** Other sources point to a much higher figure. Based on information available from various sources including the Union ministry of environment and forests (MoEF), the total forest land diverted for mining in India has been estimated to be **as high as 1,64,610 ha.**

Even this figure would be higher if it took into account the forest land diverted before 1980 when many coal mines took over vast areas of land—mostly forests. Examples are Hazaribagh and Dhanbad in Jharkhand and Burdwan in West Bengal.

What makes things especially complicated for India is its large tribal population... Most of these tribes inhabit lands that are mineral-rich: **90 per cent of India's coal and 80 per cent of its other minerals are found in tribal areas. Of the 50 major mining districts of the country, almost half are tribal districts....**

As most tribals also inhabit forest areas, their livelihoods and economy are closely intertwined with the fate of the forests and water sources. According to the Forest Survey

of India, Dehradun, **the average forest cover in tribal districts of the country is 37 per cent, which is 85 per cent more than the national average.**

Forest degradation due to mining and other development projects has significantly depleted the ecosystem, rendering the tribal population more socially and economically vulnerable. The impact, naturally, has been disproportionately higher on these already poverty-stricken and marginalised people.... (*Rich Lands Poor People, Is Sustainable Mining Possible? Centre for Science and Environment, 2008*)

Chhattisgarh:

Chhattisgarh is one of the richest states in India in terms of mineral wealth, producing 28 major minerals. The key minerals are coal and iron ore. Around 16 per cent of India's coal is in Chhattisgarh; it also holds 10 per cent of the country's iron ore, five per cent of its limestone, five per cent of its bauxite and 88 per cent of its tin. The state accounts for almost one-third of the diamond reserves of the country as well.

The mineral reserves are distributed across the state; the richest districts, however, are Bastar, Surguja, Korba and Dantewada—they, incidentally, are also tribal-dominated and the most forested. These are also the districts where most of the new mining and industrialisation projects are coming up.

Chhattisgarh is the fifth largest contributor to the value of minerals produced in India. It ranks sixth in contribution to fuel mineral value, third in metallic mineral value and sixth in non-metallic mineral value....

Almost 90,000 ha of land in the state is under mining of major minerals and coal. The top five most mined districts in the state are Korba, Koriya, Surguja, Raigarh and Durg: these together account for 90 per cent of the total land under mining. Districts like Dantewada, which have drawn most of the new investments, are yet to join this list....

Dantewada, which accounts for 20 per cent of the forest cover of the state, has around **2,010 ha of land under mining for iron ore, tin and corundum.** The *Dantewada District Report* indicts the mining for the destruction of the district's forest wealth: **one-third** of Dantewada's forests have been **degraded**—this, when 40 per cent of livelihoods in the district are forest-based....

Data given to the parliament on the diversion of forest land to mining projects in the state says that about 14,421 ha of forest land has been diverted between 1980-2005. **The**

state ranks second in terms of total forest land diverted for mining projects in the country—accounting for 15 per cent.... [ibid]

Jharkhand:

Unfortunately for Jharkhand and its tribal population, much of the state's vast mineral wealth is located under these forests. For example, out of the total forests in the state, the maximum— 17 per cent—is in the district of West Singhbhum, which incidentally, produces 99 per cent of the iron ore in the state. Out of the total geographic area in the district, almost 39 per cent is forested. It is also one of the most mined districts in the state.

West Singhbhum is not an isolated case. **Hazaribagh** is the **second highest producer of coal** in the state. Around **35 per cent** of the district's area is covered with forests.

The cases of Gumla, Ranchi and East Singhbhum are similar. The percentage of area under forest cover in all the mining districts, barring Dhanbad and Bokaro, is more than 20 per cent. In the case of Chatra, the third highest coal-producing district in the state, almost 50 per cent of the area is under forest cover. Moreover, the presence of minerals and mining operations has already affected the forest cover in this district. The forest cover in Dhanbad district is low because it has been under mining for decades. The forest cover in the Damodar valley, **once 65 per cent, stands at only 0.05 per cent today....**

According to the MoEF, between 1985-2004, **more than 9,000 ha of forest land had been diverted for mining in Jharkhand**—approximately 10 per cent of the total forest land diverted for mining in India. This does not include the thousands of hectares of forests diverted and devastated by coal mines. (*ibid*)

Orissa:

It is a mineral hotspot as well—accounting for 24 per cent of India's reserves of coal, 17 per cent of its iron ore, 98 per cent of chromite, 51 per cent of bauxite, and 35 per cent of manganese.

Orissa also holds a key position as a mineral producer. It leads the country in the production of iron ore with a share of 28 per cent. In 2004-05, the state also accounted for 41 per cent of India's total production of bauxite, 99 per cent of its chromite, 29 per

cent of dolomite, 46 per cent of pyroxenite, 37 per cent of manganese and 41 per cent of quartzite.

It is, therefore, not surprising that industries are flocking to set up base in the state. *The Hindu Business Line* (July 24, 2006) reports that the state has received private investment worth **Rs 4,00,000 crore in mineral-based industries**. It boasts the presence of all the big names in Indian industry—TISCO, SAIL, NALCO and Hindalco, among others. Several multinationals and leaders in the mining sector (Pohang Iron & Steel Company, Arcelor Mittal, Rio Tinto and ALCAN) have already acquired mining leases here or are in the process of doing so. According to the Federation of Indian Mineral Industries, the South African diamond giant, De Beers, has also acquired rights to explore over 8,500 sq km in the state. (*ibid*)

What are the causes behind the recent mad rush for minerals in India? In fact, the recent spurt in demand and prices in the international market have led the scramble for minerals in India. India is producing more iron not for its own market, but for the export to foreign soil. Such are the rush that even the soil in Karnataka and Goa, **laden with 50% iron** is being exported to the foreign markets, particularly to China! What's a 'boon' for the Indian economy! Follow the next excerpt:

The mining industry is having a dream run because world prices of minerals, ores and metals have reached record levels. The prices are in the midst of a multi-year upward trend, which started in 2002 on the back of unprecedented demand from China. The year 2006 saw prices skyrocketing further—**up 48 per cent** since the beginning of the year. Between 2002 and 2005, the index of world prices of minerals, ores and metals had doubled. During this period, the prices of **iron ore increased by 118.5 per cent, copper prices shot up by 136 per cent, lead prices by 116 per cent, nickel prices by 118 per cent and aluminium prices by 41 per cent**. By 2005, nickel was at its highest price in 15 years, copper and tin were at their highest in 10 years, and aluminum was at a six-year high. The real price of iron ore was at a 15-year high. Clearly, the mining industry is going through a boom, and the “good times” are expected to last.

The most important factor that has led to these price increases has been the **demand from China**. From 1990-2000, China's metals demand grew at an average of 10 per cent annually; from 2000-2005, it skipped on at 17 per cent per year. Today, China is the world's number one miner of coal, lead, zinc and iron ore and the top producer of steel,

aluminium, refined zinc, tin and lead. But its domestic mining industry cannot meet the demands of its manufacturing sector. The result: China is importing everything, including bauxite, copper, iron ore, zinc, lead and nickel, to feed its metals industry.

Take the examples of iron ore and aluminium. China has been the largest steel producer for nearly a decade, producing about one-third of the world's steel: this is more than three times the production of Japan and the US, the second and third largest producers. Between 1990 and 2000, China's steel production nearly doubled, growing at a rate of more than six per cent. The demand for iron ore during this period was largely met domestically. But between 2000 and 2005, steel production nearly tripled, rising at an astounding average rate of more than 22 per cent. To meet the iron ore requirements of its steel industry, therefore, China moved to imports. Between 2000 and 2004, China imported **two-thirds** of the world's traded iron ore, and its imports grew at a rate of more than 30 per cent annually....

The increase in minerals and metals prices have ushered in an era of frenzied mining and profiteering. Mines that were uneconomical and closed have been opened to meet the Chinese demand. There is a rush to open up new mines and metal manufacturing plants. Countries like India, which have large deposits of bauxite and iron ore, have taken to mining extensively to feed the growing Chinese demand, besides their own growing metals industries.

Naturally, mining and metals companies never had it so good. During 2004 and 2005, the global mining industry's performance has exceeded that of the market as a whole by over **300 per cent**. With net profits **eight times** that of 2002, 2005 had proved to be a very good year for mining companies, driven by the high prices of copper, gold, iron ore and coal. The top 40 global mining companies (which represent over 80 per cent of the world industry by market capitalisation) reported a 59 per cent increase in aggregate net profits for 2005—up from US \$28 billion in 2004 to US \$45 billion. The aggregate profits of these companies were a mere US \$5 billion in 2002. For instance, in 2005, mining multinational BHP Billiton's profits more than doubled for the first half of the year, largely due to China's demand; Brazil's Rio Tinto, one of the largest mining companies in the world, provided China with 25 per cent of its imported iron ore....

There is a general sense of optimism that prices will remain high as countries like India catch up with China. A PriceWaterhouseCoopers survey of the global minerals and metals scenario reflects this sense of optimism: "India is on the path to a sustained high

level of growth. The rapidly growing private sector and massive investments in building infrastructure across the huge country are expected to trigger considerable demand for minerals in the foreseeable future. This will provide great opportunities for increased revenues for the global mining industry.”

Indian mining industry has, so far, not disappointed the global consultancy firm. The value of mineral production in the country has **tripled** since the liberalisation of the mining sector in 1993: from about Rs 25,000 crore in 1993-94 to more than Rs 84,000 crore in 2005-06.²⁹ The compound annual growth rate (CAGR) in the value of mineral production in the country during 1993-2005 has been an astounding **10.7 per cent**.

Post-liberalisation, mineral production in the country has bounced ahead on the back of increase in the production of coal, lignite, natural gas, bauxite, chromite, iron ore and limestone. During 1993-2005:

- Iron ore production grew at a CAGR of 8.25 per cent. The total production of iron ore increased from about 59 MT in 1993-94 to 154 MT in 2005-06.
- Bauxite production grew at a CAGR of almost seven per cent: it increased from more than five MT in 1993-94 to about 12 MT in 2005-06.
- Total coal and lignite production grew at a CAGR of four per cent, having jumped from 267 MT in 1993-94 to 437 MT in 2005-06.
- The production of chromite grew at a CAGR of 10 per cent, from 1.06 MT in 1993-94 to three MT in 2005-06....
- The production of limestone grew at a CAGR of six per cent, having more than doubled from 83 MT in 1993-94 to 170 MT in 2005-06.... (*ibid*)

These massive demands for minerals, particularly in the global markets, spur the rush for minerals in the above-mentioned states. Recently, the Chief Secretary P Joy Oommen of the **Chhattisgarh** government claims that the state “has received **Rs 4 lakh crore** (Rs 4,000 billion) investment from core industries alone. (04.02.10; <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics/nation/Chhattisgarh-attracts-investments-worth-Rs-4000-bn/articleshow/5535219.cms>) Most of these investments are poured into the mining sector. In **Jharkhand**, the government “signed **102 MoUs** 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, during the last decade” (*Adivasis’ struggle against displacement in Jharkhand*, by Gladson Dungdung, 06.08.2009, <http://mynews.in/fullstory.aspx?passform=enterprisestory&storyid=23121>) Massive inflows are flooded into these sectors in **Orissa** also. Follow the excerpt below:

Orissa has lined up investments exceeding **Rs 6 lakh crore** in mineral-based industries like steel, power, alumina and aluminium. Muralidhar Chandrakant Bhandare, the governor of the state has disclosed this data on Monday while delivering his speech on the opening day of the budget session at the Orissa State Assembly....

The governor said about **49 MoUs** have been signed with various **steel** promoters for setting up of plants. “The proposed investment is in the order of about **Rs 2 lakh crore** with the estimated production of about 74.66 million tonne per annum of **steel**” he said. (10.02.2009; <http://www.financialexpress.com/news/orissa-attracts-over-rs-6-lakh-cr-investment-in-steel-power/421258/>)

Though these lands are attracting billions of dollar of investments with lightning speed, the people of these ‘rich lands’ are abysmally ‘poor’. The economic & social exploitations faced by the adivasis are extreme.

Exploitation: Economic and Social

“I cannot force somebody to eat one thing or another; and I can’t change people’s eating habits. If they prefer to eat mango kernel, which often becomes infected with fungus, what can anybody do? But I agree, poverty is rampant here.”—Bishnupada Sethi, District Collector, Rayagada

“Just because we like the taste of mango kernel or imli ka dana (tamarind seeds), it doesn’t mean that we prefer to eat that instead of rice. You people like pickles with your food; but can you eat pickles for an entire meal?”—An unlettered woman of Dikaral village in Kashipur block of Rayagada district, Orissa.

“And, some of them even had a bank balance.”— former Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee, citing the result of an “investigation” into starvation death; quoted in ‘The spectre of starvation’, by Rashida Bhagat, <http://www.thehindu.com/fline/fl1821/18210420.htm>

The adivasis of the central and eastern India are the poorest of the poorest people in India. **More than 90%** of these adivasis—particularly in the states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal—are **rural** and therefore are forced to depend on agricultural practices and collection of forest products. Those who are able to cultivate pieces of land on their own or on communal basis, can acquire foods for only two-three months. In the remaining months of a year they work as agricultural labourer or collect forest products. They sell the forest products either in underdeveloped markets or to the intermediaries and moneylenders at throw-away prices. In fact, most of them are not even accustomed with the weights and measures of the modern capitalist system:

The majority of tribals living in Bastar villages cannot read or write. They do not clearly understand the currency system, metric measures, commodity pricing or numerical calculations and do not have any access to external market or information due to their geographical isolation. (*Forest Products of Bastar: A story of Tribal exploitation, BK Ganguly & Kalpana Chaudhury, 12.07.03, EPW*)

Hence, most of adivasis have to depend on the 'honesty' of the intermediaries and traders. These social strata exploit the adivasis tremendously taking opportunities of their ignorance. They are exploited by the forest departments and officials also. The adivasis are tied to these new *avatars* of *zamindars* with feudal bondage. The struggle of the adivasis for reclamation of forest land from the hands of the forest department of the government is in fact intricately linked with struggle to vanquish the feudal remnants of the old society. Moreover, the adivasis are exploited heavily by the intermediaries and moneylenders. Adivasis are also exploited by the non-peasant landowner (i.e., absentee landlords). The struggle of the adivasis to free themselves from these representatives of the old society, is in fact, the struggle for democratic revolution in the country.

We have already noted in the 'Introduction' chapter that backwardness, malnourishment, semi-starvation, lack of education, unemployment, ill-health, non-availability of basic amenities & fresh sources of water, etc are part and parcel of these hapless section of the people. It is the general feature of the adivasi-inhabited regions in India except the north-eastern part. But the most irony is the rampant poverty and backwardness among the adivasis of the mineral-rich districts. Tonnes of ores and minerals are looted by the foreign and Indian corporates from these districts living behind miseries, impoverishment and destituteness. Some of these examples are given in the next excerpts:

States like Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Orissa, that have a high level of dependence on mineral resources, demonstrate low per capita incomes compared to states which do not depend completely on their mineral wealth (examples are Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Gujarat) The mineral-dependent states also have higher levels of poverty, lower growth rates and higher levels of mortality, malnutrition and morbidity....

Of the **50** major mining districts, **60 per cent** figure among the **150 most backward districts** of the country. Four of these mining districts—two from Orissa and one each from Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh—are among the top 25 backward districts of the country; of these districts figure in the top 50 backward districts of the country.... (*Rich Lands Poor People, Is Sustainable Mining Possible? Centre for Science and Environment, 2008*)

Chhattisgarh:

In spite of mining industries operating in Chhattisgarh for many decades now, the state has not seen much development. About 40.5 per cent of the people of the state are living below the poverty line. Infrastructure is poor or almost non-existent in the remote corners of the state. Metalled roads cover only 40 per cent of the 19,720 villages in the state. Chhattisgarh lags behind the national average in terms of percentage of households with power connection and access to drinking water.

The situation in the mining districts is no better. Out of the seven key mining districts in the state, six figure in the list of 150 most backward districts in the country. The iron-bearing districts of Dantewada and Bastar are among the top 10 most backward districts in the country. Only 22 per cent of households in Dantewada have access to electricity, though the district boasts of the presence of Essar Steel. Similarly, in Korba, the coal belt of the state, only 40 per cent of households have access to safe drinking water and only half the households are connected to power. Literacy rate in Dantewada is as low as 30 per cent. The coal mining districts of Surguja and Koriya are at the bottom of the pile. Both are the two most mined districts in the state after Korba. Surguja has less than 30 per cent of its households with water and power, and its per capita income and literacy is lower than the state's average. In Koriya, infant mortality rate is the highest among all districts and more than 50 per cent households have no access to clean water and power.

People have also not gained in terms of employment. For example, in NMDC, out of the total number of employees in executive positions, less than five per cent are tribals. In the company's Bailadila iron ore mines, only 31 per cent of the employees in non-executive positions are local tribals.... (*ibid*)

Jharkhand:

A significant portion of Jharkhand's population, 44 per cent, is below the poverty line and more than six per cent is still unable to get sufficient food. The poverty ratio in the state is much higher than that of the country (26 per cent) as a whole. Compared to the other mining states of the country, only Orissa has more numbers of poor people. Jharkhand also has a high percentage of households without food sufficiency—almost five times more than the national average.

Infrastructure and basic amenities are poor. More than half the population in the state has no access to safe drinking water. Educational facilities are few; there are only 817

schools per million people, much lower than the national average or in states like Chhattisgarh or Orissa. Literary rate is low as well, with just about half the population being literate.

It is, therefore, not surprising that 86 per cent of the state's districts feature in the list of 150 most backward districts of the nation. Other than Dhanbad and Ranchi, all the other mineral producing districts in the state are in the list.... (*ibid*)

Orissa:

For all its mineral wealth, Orissa performs very poorly in terms of human development indicators. The state has a human development index (HDI) of 0.404; in comparison, Kerala's HDI stands at 0.638. This is worse than other mineral-rich states of Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Rajasthan. Taking into account food availability, food access, and food absorption, Orissa has been put in the category of 'severely food insecure' regions. Even the government agrees that the food insecurity is due to "a vulnerable rural population with poor livelihood access".

According to the state's *Human Development Report*, the relative per capita income of Orissa has declined vis-à-vis all other low-income states during the second half of the 1990s—precisely the period when the state went on an industrial overdrive. According to this report, **Orissa's per capita income was three-fourths** that of the **all-India average**, and became **half** by the end of the 1990s....

According to the state's *Human Development Report*, the poverty ratio (number of people below the poverty line divided by the total population) in the southern and northern regions in the state—which include mining districts like Koraput, Sundergarh, Keonjhar, Angul and Mayurbhanj—has **increased** between 1993-94 and 1999-00. This is despite an overall decreasing trend in the poverty ratio in the whole of Orissa. An estimated **75 per cent** of the state's poor live in these southern and northern regions.

In **Keonjhar**, the most mined district of the state, **62 per cent** of the population **lives below the poverty line**. In **Koraput**, the bauxite capital of India, the figure is higher at **79 per cent**. Sundergarh performs a little better with 37 per cent of its population under the poverty line. Tribals and dalit families face the brunt of poverty—they constitute 44-82 per cent of the total number of below the poverty line families in the most mined districts.

All the mineral-rich districts are in the list of the 150 most backward districts of the country. It is obvious that mining's 'wealth' has not reached the people in these districts. Keonjhar ranks 30 in the list of the most backward districts. Others are even worse—Sundergarh is at number 18, and Koraput at number 10. Among the mineral-rich districts, Jajpur does relatively better with a ranking of 136.

Koraput's ranking among the backward districts is reflected by the poor education levels: just over 36 per cent of the population in the district is literate. The literacy rate in Keonjhar is around 60 per cent, while Sundergarh and Angul have rates of 65 and 69 per cent, respectively.... (*ibid*)

The adivasis of **West Bengal** are no better than others. **94%** of the adivasis are **rural**. They are used to struggle to gather their foods and daily needs from agricultural practices; hunting and collection of forest products; as wage labourer either in the fields or in the construction of roads; maintenance of railway line; toiling in the open-cast mines; unskilled jobs such as loading & unloading in the factories etc. In fact, like the other places of central and eastern parts of India, the adivasis of West Bengal also are forced to live as sub-humans. Few years ago when Amlasole hit the frontpage of the media as the epicentre of starvation deaths in West Bengal, the chief minister admitted that "Amlasole is not an isolated incident" (08.07.2004, *Times of India*). During the last few months—after the outburst of adivasis in Lalgarh—several reports in the daily newspapers pointed out the worst conditions in the delivery mechanism of government-aided projects in the Jangalmahal. According to one report: "per capita daily expenditure for household needs, per capita daily expenditure for foods or rice among the adivasis are the **lowest** compared to all other communities in the state". Adjoining table will clarify it. **Half** of the children in the state are anaemic; among the adivasis the rate is **95%** (*National Family Health Survey-2, quoted in 'Lalgrah: Adivasis in West Bengal', published by Nagarik Mancha*). Paschimanchal Development Board comprising 74 blocks of the districts like Purulia, Bankura, West Midnapur, Birbhum & Bardhaman was formed by the WB government in the year of 2000. The report of the Board states that: "electricity reach only **61%** of the rural areas of the region in comparison to **88%** of West Bengal; rate of female-literacy is **46%** (it is 60% in the state); and so on (*ibid*).

Table: Per Capita Expenditure in Rural Areas of West Bengal in 1999-2000 (in Rs)

	Total household expenditure	Expenditure for food	Expenditure for foodgrains
Ideal rate of			
Planning Comm.	512	350	155
Adivasi	376	259	138
Others	463	308	143

(Source: *Uncertainty in Hunger and Food: A Picture of West Bengal*, by Sacchinananda Dutt Roy, Seriban)

Social abuses and deprivation perpetrated on the adivasis are pathetic. The colonialists have branded them trespassers in the forests. It is the colonialists who also branded most of the adivasis as ‘criminals’, ‘thieves’, etc. This tradition has been maintained in the ‘independent’ India also. The native cohorts of the colonial age—now transformed into *babus*—who exploit the adivasis most as *dikus*, forest-officers, collectors, magistrates, policemen, traders, contractors, moneylenders, intermediaries, etc, are following this colonial tradition and don’t recognise the adivasis as human being. Incidentally, overwhelming majority of these social strata are **non-adivasis**. Still they mock them as ‘jungli’. They ridicule them about their foodhabits, traditions, culture, society, etc. Most of the enlightened sections of the present-day *babus* of urban society are totally ignorant about these 8.2 crore human beings. Thus, the old traditions of colonial and feudal exploitation and deprivations on the adivasis are still going on.

These adivasis are now facing their worst experiences. Earlier they had been displaced several times. Now, they are on the brink of perpetual disaster. The government have declared a war to oust them from nearly one crore acres of land!

Saga of Displacement

Most of the displaced families across the country have more or less the same pathetic story as Satish Kishku has. Those who surrendered their land, forest, water, culture and identity for the Dam, Industry, Mining and development projects are struggling for survival today. Their children are with bare back, empty stomach, malnourished, illiterate and without shelter today. And those who resisted against it were coined as the “Anti National” or “Naxalites” so that the ruling elites can get a license to kill them and nobody can question about their cruel and inhuman acts. In both the cases tribals, Dalits and Poor are the losers.

— Gladstone Dungdung, 19.03.2008; www.countercurrents.org/dungdung190308.htm

In the post-'independence' period the adivasis have mainly borne the brunt of the so-called development. For each industrial projects like Tisco or Sail, mining projects like Bailadila or Jharia, dams like Hirakud or Indravati... hundreds of thousands of people have been uprooted and most of the displaced persons are either adivasis or SCs. In fact, each industrial project required mines, each mine required huge amount of water accentuating the distress of the most vulnerable section of the population. Two authors write: “It is a little-known fact that supplying electricity and water to metal factories has always been one of the main reasons for big dams” (*Anthropology of a Genocide: Tribal Movement in Central India against Over-Industrialisation*, by Felix Padel & Samarendra Das, <http://sanhati.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/08/felixpadel-samarendradas.pdf>) A human rights commentator writes the following:

One would be shocked to see the data which suggests that after the independence, approximately **3 crore people were displaced** for setting up the Power Plants, Irrigation Projects, Mining Companies, Steel Industries and many more development projects in the country. Among them, **40 percent** displaced people are **tribals** and **20 percent** are **Dalits**, which means the **60 percent** displaced people are from the marginalized communities, who sacrificed everything for the sake of the “development” but they are still untouched of the development.... (Gladstone Dungdung, 19.03.2008; www.countercurrents.org/dungdung190308.htm)

Walter Fernandes, the director of the Northeastern Social Research Centre at Guwahati delivered some interesting observation in an interview:

...[A]lthough indigenous populations or tribals comprise just over eight percent of India's population of a billion people, 40 percent of all "project displaced persons" are estimated to be tribals....

"So far they have suffered because of large dams that have come on their traditional lands, but lately, as a result of economic liberalisation, the mineral-rich lands they have lived peacefully on for centuries are being eyed by transnationals as well as Indian mining companies," Fernandes said....

"They [Multinationals] are only cracking open the market now and testing legal implications of constitutionally-guaranteed protection for tribal lands, which cannot be easily alienated to non-state players..." he said.

Fernandes said existing legal protections cannot stand up in court because Indian laws recognise individual ownership but not community ownership. Most of the mining land in Orissa is, in fact, the common land of tribals, and therefore, has little protective value.

An immediate worry for activists like Fernandes is that at a time when millions of tribals were awaiting rehabilitation after being displaced by earlier development projects, vast numbers of new displaced persons were being created in Orissa.

According to a paper on tribals drawn up this year the National Advisory Council (NAC), a group of academics and voluntary workers that reports to government, the number of tribals displaced by development projects over the last 50 years exceeds nine million, with only 60 percent of that figure having benefited from any sort of rehabilitation....
(Riches Out from Under India's Orissa Tribals, By Ranjit Devraj, 09.08.2008;
<http://www.ipsnews.net/interna.asp?idnews=29834>)

It must be noted that in the past most of the displaced adivasis could not claim the legal opportunity of rehabilitation because the 1894 Act of Land Acquisition did not give the land-rights to communal owners. Adivasis, who enjoyed communal ownership over the forest and agricultural land in most of the cases are not legally eligible to claim the rehabilitation. Probably for this reason, though the adivasis had been displaced mostly in the past, **only 40%** of them could get any sort of rehabilitation. Curiously many of the **NGOs**, funded by the foreign/imperialist donors are demanding the "opportunity of proper rehabilitation" for the adivasi who would be affected by the present onslaught of the mining and industrial projects in Orissa and other states. These NGOs are in essence

justifying the violent displacement of the adivasis under their sugarcoated programmes.

This might be clarified by the excerpt cited below:

Fearing the powerful political forces that have been set in motion by the “mineral rush” to Orissa, the U.S.-based non-profit group International Watch announced on Aug. 2 a five-million-dollar Tribal Rehabilitation Fund to ensure “proper and human rehabilitation and resettlement of tribals [sic] who would be displaced as a result of the POSCO project.”

International Watch clarified that the five million dollars would be the first instalment for the fund and that more money would be added as rehabilitation and resettlement efforts—for the 4,000 tribal families estimated to be affected—move forward.

International Watch, which plans to open up an office in Bhubaneswar by Aug. 25, warned that the political opposition now building up might “derail the project” that promises to “lift thousands of poor citizens off a life of abject poverty”.... (*ibid*)

Thus, the fear of the (political) backlash of the displacement of the adivasis due to projects like Posco have forced the NGOs and their donors to frame their strategy (of rehabilitation & resettlement) in advance. Vedanta group, another foreign mining company operating in Orissa are promising moon for the adivasis to refrain them from protesting against the Vedanta mines & plants.

Now we look into some revealing figures on violent displacement of the adivasis:

- **Between 1950 and 1991, mining displaced about 26 lakh people**—the second highest toll among all development projects (dams have displaced the maximum numbers.). Of these, not even 25 per cent have been resettled. About **52 per cent** of those displaced were **tribals**. These figures are only for the people who were moved out of their lands; they do not include the thousands who were dependent on the land for their livelihoods, or those whose lives were affected due to disruption of water tables, dumping of overburden on fertile agricultural lands and destruction of forests....

- Of all the people displaced by various development projects, about **41 per cent** have been tribals. **In the case of mining, about 52 per cent of the people displaced were tribals....**
- There are no statistics on the number of people displaced due to mining after 1991. But looking at the data on number of mining projects cleared after 1991 and the amount of forest land diverted for mining, it is clear that large-scale displacement must have happened. In the last 10 years alone (1995-2005), as much as 74,000 ha of forest land has been diverted for mining. (*Rich Lands Poor People, Is Sustainable Mining Possible? Centre for Science and Environment, 2008*)
- **In 4 states**, i.e., Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and AP, during the past 10 years, number of people displaced due to various development projects is **over 1.6 million**. Amongst them, 749,555 people were displaced for various dam projects, 304,698 for industry, 539,351 for mining, 926 people for electricity generation plants and 22,050 for defence establishments. (20.12.07; www.minesandcommunities.org/article.php?a=8377&highlight=displacement,in,india)
- The data of **Jharkhand** shows that 24,15,698 acres of land were acquired in the name of development, where 17,10,787 people were displaced. **In every project approximately 80 to 90 percent tribals and local people were displaced.** Merely 25 percent people were halfway rehabilitated but there are also in the miserable conditions and no one has any idea about the rest of 75 percent displaced people. The benefits of all these development projects were only enjoyed by the Landlords, Project Officers, Engineers, Contractors, Bureaucrats, Politicians and outsiders. (*Uprooted, Abandoned, By Gladson Dungdung, 19.03.2008; Tehelka, <http://www.countercurrents.org/dungdung190308.htm>*)
- **1.5 million** people were displaced in the state [**Orissa**] by development projects **between 1951 and 1995—42 per cent** of these were tribals. **Mining alone** has displaced some **500,000** in the state. There are no recent statistics on the number of people being displaced due to development projects, but everyone agrees that the number would be significant.... However, some independent

estimates peg the displacement figure at “**at least another**” **100,000 people** till now. (*Rich Lands Poor People, Is Sustainable Mining Possible? Centre for Science and Environment, 2008*)

But, these are mere statistics. The real saga of violence and terror perpetrated on the adivasi while ousting them is not revealed from this data. Also are not revealed the desperate resistances and struggles of the adivasi people against the forcible displacement. It will be discussed in the next section.

Box: The cry from Kalahandi

Death has come, calling again, in the form of cholera, in Orissa's poverty stricken Kalahandi district. With inadequate potable drinking water, medical facilities and communication network in the remote areas, people have no choice but to resign themselves to fate even as the state government is busy issuing denials about an epidemic.... Few would have forgotten the shame of 2007 when over 100 died of cholera in Rayagada district. Every year hundreds are affected by this man-made tragedy in the KBK (Kalahandi-Balangir-Koraput) region where life is cheap....

As the blame-game begins, the real issues are swept under the carpet until another epidemic or starvation death wakes the administration from its slumber. This callous mindset has taken the lives of many who could perhaps have been saved. When reports of starvation in Kalahandi shook the conscience of the nation in the Eighties, then PM Rajiv Gandhi initiated several special schemes for the region. In 1993 Narasimha Rao vowed to make KBK a laboratory of development and two years later launched the Long Term Action Plan for KBK with an outlay of Rs 6,251 crore.

Where have all these funds gone? Survey after survey finds KBK poorer than it was in 1980. It is not difficult to know where the money disappeared. Schemes were run on paper as money was siphoned off with connivance of corrupt politicians, officials and contractors. The poor tribals are left to survive on mango kernels and wild tubers in difficult times. The backwardness of the region ensures that the voice of the masses is stifled. Cholera in KBK is symptomatic of a deep-seated malaise. More than the epidemic it is the cancer of corruption that has eaten into the vitals of the administration. It is time the issue was addressed squarely and those at the helm of affairs were held accountable. (*11.09.2009, The New Indian Express*)

Plunder, Resistance and Atrocities

“At the very core of the military-industry complex... Aluminum has become the most important single bulk material of modern warfare. No fighting is possible, and no war can be carried to a successful conclusion today, without using and destroying vast quantities of aluminum...Aluminium makes fighter and transport planes possible. Aluminum is needed in atomic weapons, both in their manufacture and in their delivery... Aluminum, and great quantities of it, spell the difference between victory and defeat...”

— Dewey Anderson, *Aluminum for Defence and Prosperity*, Washington: US Public Affairs Institute, 1951; quoted in ‘Anthropology of a Genocide: Tribal Movement in Central India against Over-Industrialisation’, by Felix Padel & Samarendra Das, <http://sanhati.com/literature/915/>

As far as back in the 1990s, a commentator narrates the interests of the foreign MNCs & Indian corporates in the rich mineral reserves of **Orissa**:

Although some of the new proposals are still to be materialised yet the list raises basic question—how can Orissa, a “backward” state, attract such mega investments. The answer to this question is not very difficult if we examine the nature of these new projects. Majority of new projects are solely attracted by the resource wealth of Orissa which is beneath its surface—mineral resources, and therefore, are located in only mineral-rich regions. Orissa has **90 percent** of India’s chrome ore and nickel reserves; **70 percent** of bauxite; and **24 percent** of coal reserves. With no other state having such abundance of natural resources, the TNCs and big business houses have no option but to set up steel, alumina and coal based power projects in Orissa only. Where else can they go? Besides, the state government is offering exceptionally huge subsidies to investors, in the form of guarantees, tax concessions and investment subsidy. The abundance of cheap labour further makes it investor-friendly state. (*Orissa: From “Backward” to “Investor’s Paradise”?* by Kavaljit Singh, August 1997; <http://www.saanet.org/kashipur/articles/kaval.htm>, accessed 25.06.07)

The writer provides us with more detail picture on the imperialist interests in the mineral resources of Orissa which is given in the next excerpt. The article was written in end-90s. The readers may observe that already in the 1990s the policies of Orissa

government have laid the stepping stone of current invasions of the mining/industrial behemoths like Arcelor-Mittal, Posco, Vedanta, Rio Tinto etc. In fact, the Orissa govt. became aggressive since 1990s in preparing grounds for the present-day onslaughts.

These new investments are backed by a number of loans and aided projects by the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and G-7 countries to facilitate the entry of international capital in Orissa. According to IPS study, the World Bank is providing loan guarantees and low-interest loans to a number of projects in Orissa. The World Bank's financed projects include coal sector rehabilitation project, power sector restructuring, Ib valley coal-fired plants, and Talcher coal-fired power project. The World Bank is expected to finance super-highway between Talcher and Gopalpur and four-lane road from Rourkela to Sambalpur. The Balasore-Kharagpur highway is also financed by the World Bank. The ADB is supporting Paradeep port expansion, Orissa power sector restructuring and AES/Ib valley power project. Known G-7 financiers of Orissa's infrastructure include the U.S. government, which loaned \$232 million toward the Ib Valley coal-fired power plant; an additional \$75 million is forthcoming for further investment in Ib Valley's coal-fired power plants. France provided \$607 million toward the construction of an aluminum smelting complex, Nalco; the Kaniha and Ib Valley coal-fired power plants; and the Ananta coal mine. Japan has invested \$125 million in coal mining expansion in Orissa; EXIM Bank of Japan has agreed to co-finance Daitari-Banspani railway line; and OECF of Japan is expected to put \$100 million to promote tourism. The U.K. has invested \$40 million in the upgrading of the Hirakud dam in Orissa, and an additional \$75 million toward the privatization of Orissa's power sector. According to IPS report, the biggest beneficiaries of G-7 government loans and aided projects are big TNCs, such as General Electric, Dodge Phelps, Foster Wheeler, AES, North-East Energy Services, Spectrum Technologies, and Raytheon of US; Stein Industries and Aluminum Pechiney of France; Alcan of Canada; Mitsui of Japan and RTZ-CRA of UK-Australia. (*ibid*)

In 2006, a noted columnist wrote about some of the proposals of investments [read: proposals of plunder]; resistances to displacement and plunder; the corresponding state-atrocities perpetrated on the protesters. In majority cases, the protesters were mainly the adivasi people who were mercilessly brutalised. Still, the resistance-struggle is going on. Follow the excerpt:

Table: Mineral Wealth of Orissa

Mineral	Reserves (million tonnes)	% of India's Reserves	Rank in India
Chromite	183	98.4	1
Bauxite	1,626	69.7	1
Graphite	1.5	32.6	1
Manganese Ore	49	31.8	1
Dolomite	563	12.2	1
Quartzite	-	-	1
Pyrophyllite	-	-	1
Fireclay	88	12.5	2
Quartz	15	1.9	4
Coal	44, 304	23.8	4
Iron Ore	3,120	26.0	5

(Source: Coopers and Lybrand, Prospects for Industrial Development of Orissa. 1996; collected from Orissa: From "Backward" to "Investor's Paradise"? by Kavaljit Singh, August 1997; <http://www.saanet.org/kashipur/articles/kaval.htm>)

Orissa has the highest percentage of India's total deposits of chromite, bauxite, graphite, Manganese ore, and dolomite; fourth in case of coal and fifth in case of iron ore deposits. This government has entered into signing of 46 MOUs with different MNCs expecting of an investment of two lakh and fifty thousand crores of FDI [In fact, the investment is greater than it — *Update*]. This government has invited Hindalco (Birla group), Alcan (Canada), Vedanta (UK), BHP Billiton (UK), Rio Tinto (UK) etc. with an investment of nearly 53,000 crores of rupees for extraction of total deposit of 7330 lakh tons of **bauxite** from the state as per industrial report. This would last, looking to their extraction capacity per year, for coming **75 years only**. Similarly, for extraction of 35,670 lakh tons of **iron ore** this government has invited Tisco, BHP Billiton (UK), Vedanta/ Sterlite, Posco (South Korea), Rio Tinto (UK), Bhusan, Jindal, Mittal, Essar companies to finish the entire deposits. This would last another **45 years** to finish it up. AES of US and Reliance including Vedanta have started power projects using coal for a business of selling of surplus power to the state government.

All these projects would displace nearly **2.5 lakh families or 10,00,000 people**. Against these forceful, displacements when resistance is increasing the response of this government is highly repressive. In **Kalinga Nagar** 13 tribals gave life because of their opposition to the Tata project, 1159 people are facing threat of arrest any time. On 9th

May 2005 while opposing Maharashtra Simlex Company, Kalinga Nagar people faced police lathicharge and 26 tribals mostly women were sent to jail. **Kucheipadar**, a small place in Kashipur block of **Rayagada district** came under state terror in 2005 for their opposition to UAIL (Utkal Alumina International Limited—a joint venture of Alcan of Canada and Hindalco of India). 52 people were arrested in a year. CRPF, Indian Reserve Battalion, Orissa State Armed Police were used to repress people. More recently in **Lanjigada** of **Kalahandi district** 34 tribals were arrested in April 2006 because they opposed forceful occupation of their land by Vedanta Alumina Company of UK. They were demanding either land or job against their land. When local residents opposed **Posco** Company of South Korea to do its survey work in Paradeep area of **Jagatsinghpur** district the Patnaik police came into picture and picked up 9 people in April 2006.

Another 118 people mostly tribals of **Sundergada** district were arrested on 24th March, 2006 when local people, nearly 4000 villagers, came on a rally opposing one Nepaz (Adhunik Metallic) sponge iron factory in Kuarmunda block. Police immediately overpowered and resorted to lathi-charge, chased away most of the agitators and arrested nearly 118 people including boys, girls and women. In **Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Sundergarh** around 130 sponge iron factories are functioning, of which 50 are illegal. In 2005, 64 sponge iron plants got registered and 18 more are in the pipeline waiting for no objection certificates (NOCs). Many are operating even without NOCs. Clearance procedures and Public hearings are unheard of here. In **Sambalpur and Jharsuguda** districts of west Orissa, people are opposing sponge iron projects because these plants contaminate water bodies and air.

In December, 2005 while local people of **Dhenkanal** district opposing construction work of Bhusan Steel Company (of depleted Uranium shell fame) police resorted to lathicharge and 26 people were arrested from the spot. Last year on May 11, 2005, in **Lower Sukhtel Dam project of Bolangir district**, villagers faced police violence and 70 people were picked up, beaten up and tortured in police station because they were opposing laying of a foundation stone of the dam project. Water would be supplied to a bauxite mining company from the reservoir. Similar situation happened to tribals residing in **Nuapada** Sanctuary when they refused forest development evacuation without any resettlement plan. 18 tribals were arrested last year in a face to face situation with forest officials.

People's oppositions to such big projects are not in any way against constitution nor are tribals using violence to press their demands. **These struggles are not meant to take state power into their hands nor do they have any political party affiliation. All these struggles are for survival and livelihood.** As per the government report out of 46 MOUs, works have been started in 10 projects. Out of it, it is known that Vedanta is facing violation of forest laws and UAIL in Kashipur has no clearances of environment, mining as well as forest from the central government but both are going for construction. Tata in Kalinga Nagar did not have the environment clearances when it started its land acquisition and for which firing took place. During last two years the repression by state has increased manifold, even constitutional rights have been ignored in tribal areas in Orissa. Because of the struggles tribals, dalits and peasants are facing ruthlessness of this government.... (*Orissa : Paradise for Private Players, by Debranjana Sarengi, 2006 (date not found), Frontier*)

The resistance struggles of the adivasi people along with the poor and vulnerable sections of the non-advasis had been built up since 1993. They were fighting against the joint venture of Hindalco and Alcan (Canada) in **Kashipur block of Rayagada** district. At first, Alcan withdrew their investments. Soon Hindalco followed suit. The struggle is still going on against the new investors. Adivasi resistances have been developed in many other places of Orissa. Follow the next excerpt.

The invisible interiors of Orissa are now the chosen landscape for globalisation under the direct patronage of the Naveen Patnaik regime. Every profiteer worth his power, connections and clout is eyeing the vast mineral treasure hidden in these untouched ecological marvels of the Eastern Ghats. What they didn't expect is that the quiet, peaceful, original inhabitants of the region, the **advasis, would give them such a dogged, imaginative fight: non-violent civil disobedience and mass resistance. And that too in the face of vicious State terrorism, in alliance with the private armies of privatisation....**

The Orissa government led by Biju Janata Dal's Naveen Patnaik has in the past year intensified the process of opening up its vast mineral wealth for exploitation by various corporate interests, both Indian and multinational. Corporate giants like bhp Billiton (Australia and UK), Rio Tinto (UK), Alcan (Canada), posco (South Korea), Vedanta (UK),

Hindalco (Aditya Birla group) and L&T have been wooed to set up mega extraction projects in the state....

Vedanta claims 'project life' of 25 years at the **Lanjigada-Niyamgiri** bauxite mining and alumina plant. The aluminium giant Utkal Alumina International Limited (uail) specifies a project life of 23 years as per the capacity of plant and bauxite deposits. The ecological damage that this rampant exploitation would cause, and the large-scale human displacement and degradation of life that would result in, are not matters of concern for this government. Their sole obsession is that no non-violent dissent should be allowed, even if there are so many questions left unanswered. This is the essence of globalisation—freedom for capitalist conglomerates to relentlessly expand in search of bigger profits while indigenous people are gagged and crushed. But the amazing thing is that dissent just can't be stopped; it grows in the face of worst oppression.

The **Prakritik Sambad Suraksha Parishad (PSSP)** has been spearheading the struggle against uail—a joint venture of Hindalco and Alcan in Kashipur district. **In December 2000, three adivasis were killed in police firing**, and many were injured. But resistance continued; the projects were stopped. This was unique and unexpected: stoic, unarmed adivasis versus the armed might of the State, industrial lobbies, contractors and their goons.

Since December 2004, police repression has intensified. A heavy police force with the district collector went to **Kucheipadar** village, the tribal epicentre of resistance, to set up a police barrack and outpost. People objected; they were subjected to tear gas and lathicharge. Many activists were sent to jail; some were locked up for four months. The Orissa government had made its intention clear: it was committed to 'fast-track' industrialisation of the region. At any cost. The people did not matter. Nor did the pristine ecology of the region.

The police repression has since followed a rapid pattern of increasing violence. On May 15, 2005, the PSSP called a rally against police atrocity. The local police chief, Kishore Mund, threatened dire consequences if anybody turned up at the rally. Despite the terror in the air, hundreds of people gathered and shouted slogans against the violence unleashed by the police and hired goondas.

The rally intensified the struggle. Villagers in the two blocks of **Kashipur** and **Laxmipur** sent a memorandum to the governor seeking his intervention to cancel the

alumina projects. Many villagers refused the compensation given by the uail despite the police threat that if they did not take it they will be sent to jail. On June 8, villagers from Guguput blocked company vehicles and forced them to return. The PSSP called a meeting on June 15 at Guguput to decide the future course of action. The police resorted to lathicharge. The nexus between the government and the companies is too apparent to be ignored.

India: Minerals and Backwardness



(Source: Rich Lands Poor People, Is Sustainable Mining Possible? Centre for Science and Environment, 2008)

The violence is not restricted to Kashipur. In **Lower Sukhtel**, villagers faced police violence on May 11, 2005, because they were demanding the cancellation of dam projects. One of the projects is supposed to supply water to the aluminium plant proposed in the Gandhamardan area of Bolangir district. In June, in Kalinga Nagar in Jajpur, tribals were beaten up by the police because they refused to leave their land for a mega iron ore project. In Lanjigada, tribals who refused to leave their land, were beaten up by the goons. Sukru Majhi, an activist at Niyamgiri, died in a mysterious accident on March 27, 2005. But no cases have been registered by the police.

The presence of 10 platoons and five magistrates along with senior officials of the police and administration in the region points to the Patnaik government's determination to quell all peaceful struggles.... *(Shallow Grave: Orissa's New Labs of Horror, by Debaranjan Sarangi, 23.07.2005; www.tehelka.com)*

In fact, the government of Orissa has become one of the champions of the 'neoliberal' policies of the imperialist & corporate plunder. The story of plunder continued from Kashipur to Kalinganagar, and from Jagatsinghpur to Niyamgiri and so on.... Moreover, the government has proved its determination to quell any form of protests of the adivasi and non-advasi masses. They have gifted thousands of acres of land in Jagatsingpur district and mining rights in Khandadhar in the forests of **Keonjhar** to the fourth-largest steel producing MNC, **Posco**. But the government of Orissa, assisted by the money-power of Posco could not crush the four-year long resistances of adivasi & non-advasi people:

The Indian government's grant of the final environmental clearance to a Korean giant firm, allowing it to acquire 3,000 acres of 'forest lands' in the eastern state of Orissa, has prompted a fresh spate of protests from more than 4,000 families that will be affected by a proposed mining project.

Pohang Steel Company (POSCO) has been trying to set up operations in Orissa since 2005, which have been stalled since then due to a rash of sometimes violent protest movements, prominent among them being Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti (PPSS or Committee for Resistance against POSCO), against the company's land acquisitions for the project.

The PPSS held its latest protest on Jan. 13 after the steelmaker **obtained the much awaited clearance early this month.** The group is composed of local indigenous or tribal folk whose combined population is estimated at 22,000.

In June 2005 the state government and POSCO signed a Memorandum of Understanding allowing the company to set up a steel plant.

POSCO, which has the largest foreign direct investment in India so far, at 51,000 crores (11 billion U.S. dollars), plans to build a 12-million-tonne steel plant with a 'captive' port in Jagatsinghpur district of Orissa, an integrated township with water supply infrastructure from two important barrages. The project is expected to generate some 45,000 jobs.

India's government policy on mining, cautious till 1997, was amended in 2006 to allow full direct investment by foreign companies. It was seen as a means to 'developing' the country.

Since then, international firms like De Beers and Broken Hill Properties, both with controversial human rights and environmental company practice records in countries like South Africa and Papua New Guinea respectively, have acquired huge prospecting rights in Orissa as well as Madhya Pradesh state in central India.

Alongside China's demand for iron and steel, fuelled by its furious pace of development, iron ore production in India jumped from 59 metric tonnes in 1993-94 to 154 million tonnes (mt) in 2005-06, bauxite from 5 mt to 12 mt in the same period, while coal-production increased from 267 mt to 437 mt....

The Orissa state government's no-holds-barred entry to POSCO gives the company **600 mt of iron ore at half its market price**, enabling it to make significantly handsome profits. This was based on a study conducted by environmental researcher and social activist Manshi Asher of the National Centre for Advocacy Studies (NCAS), based in Pune district in Maharashtra, located on the western coast of India.

The government, which also gives the company tax-free status and incentives, will supply iron ore to POSCO at a discount of 2,000 rupees (approximately 44 U.S. dollars) per tonne, and allow it to export high-quality ore even while it imports low-alumina content ore.

Brazil and China had earlier turned down POSCO's proposed deals due to the company's refusal to buy iron ore at market prices. The company is now facing protests in Uruguay over land acquisition for a carbon sequestration project.

In Orissa, the company will also receive approximately **150,000 million litres of water**, affecting water supply to the nearest city of Cuttack and irrigation to four districts. It will likewise get an **unspecified number of 'captive' coal mines and over 6,000 acres of land** (comprising the newly cleared forest areas for the Korean firm), excluding an unspecified acreage for establishing transportation, water and 'any other project-related infrastructure facilities', as per its agreement, according to Asher.

Official statistics indicate that merely 438 acres of the land involved is private, displacing 471 families. Government records, however, do not reflect that most of the approximately 3,000 acres of land belonging to the forest department have been under cultivation for generations, or used by communities for fodder and non-timbre forest produce....

The PPSS is also worried about the port affecting the livelihoods of nearly 30,000 fisherfolk.

"There are mangroves where the port is planned, and salt mounds that serve to stop seawater flowing in," says Prashant Paikare, spokesperson of PPSS. "What about natural disasters because of their destruction?" he asks....

Concerns about health also hound the project. According to the NCAS study, the local tribal population also faces serious health problems, especially among mine workers in the region. Many others, having lost their lands and forests, appear to have migrated, with their whereabouts unknown.... *(Stalled Korean Mining Operations Face Fresh Protests, by Keya Acharya, 21.01.2010, www.ipenews.net/news.asp?idnews=50054; accessed 03.02.10)*

Moreover, the Orissa government has gifted a hill—yes, an entire hill, called **Niyamgiri** to the **Vedanta-Sterlite** company in **Kalahandi** district. The rights of excavation, exploitation and ruination of a hill are transferred to a foreign company having numbers of dubious records. Strikingly, Mr Chidambaram—the major-general of the current anti-advansi paramilitary operations—is a former director of this Vedanta! The resistances of the adivasis in Niyamgiri was meted with state-terror on number of occasions. Vedanta-Sterlite has succeeded to build a substantial portion of the projects

flouting environmental and constitutional norms. It's so powerful that even the Supreme Court has cleared this project. Still, the struggle is going on.

Bauxite mining activities of Sterlite, which were obstructed by local communities in the Niyamgiri hills in Kalahandi district of Orissa, have now got the go-ahead from the Supreme Court but petitioners say that popular protests will continue and there is no hope for mining in the hills.

The court has asked the company to pay five per cent of their profit or Rs 10 crore for community development annually to be eligible to mine in the hills. However, petitioners Loka Shakti Abhiyan and Wildlife Society of Orissa say that **money cannot be a substitute for the rivers and other wealth of the hills**, which will be lost forever by mining.

Says Prafulla Mahantara of Loka Shakti Abhiyan, a petitioner in the case: "People never asked for anything. So they don't want anything in return for their hills and rivers. They were against any mining in Niyamgiri and will not allow it."

He says popular protests will continue and ultimately it is the people who are supreme, not the court. Sanjay Parikh, a lawyer, says the judgment will, for the first time, fix a price that a company will have to spend on the community. He adds that money cannot be a substitute for the land or river taken away from the people and the court will have to restore the lands of the people.

Sterlite wants to mine bauxite in the Niyamgiri hill area for its proposed Rs 4,000-crore aluminium project....

The Supreme Court order today has come against the advice of its own Court Empowered Committee, which said in 2005 that mining should not be done on the Niyamagiri hills. The mining activities may pollute or even dry up the sources of the rivers which flow from them, thus ruining the cultivation and livelihoods of the people living downhill. (*Tribals may not swap hill for Rs 10 crore, 09.08.2008; Business Standard*)

The importance of iron in the modern civilisation is undisputed. It is also an undisputed fact that many of the modern-day bloody wars/invasions had been orchestrated by the imperial powers to control these sources of the metal. But it may be a little-known fact that barring the British imperialists, the German supremo Hitler had an

interest on iron-deposits of Orissa! *Felix Padel and Samarendra Das* have written in their earlier-mentioned article that: “Hitler, or one of its metallurgists is said to have remarked that ‘he who controls Orissa’s iron, controls the world’! (*Anthropology of a Genocide: Tribal Movement in Central India against Over-Industrialisation*, by Felix Padel & Samarendra Das, <http://sanhati.com/literature/915/>) Earlier we have observed that Orissa has one of the biggest iron ore deposits in India. It has other minerals also. Now waves of investments have been coming fast to gain control over the vast mineral resources. Still one of the media representing the big capitalists laments that the rate of exploitation of these reserves is very much slow. Read the excerpt:

Orissa, which boasts of high mineral reserves, **has tapped less than 1% of its minerals in 2005-06** excepting graphite, chromite and iron ore. Even in the case of iron ore, there has been marginal increase of rate of exploitation to total reserves—from 0.72% in 2003-04 to 1.1% in 2004-05 to 1.03% in 2005-06—largely due to boom in the iron export in the last two years.

Though bauxite deposit in the state is the largest in the country, with some 1,4913 million tonne accounting for 51% of the total reserves, the rate of exploitation remains almost stagnant with a mere 0.28% in 2005-06, according to the latest economic survey of the state government.... (*Orissa mine reserves untapped, Economic Times, 28.03.2007*)

The scramble for iron will go on. Now the capitalists are rushing to control the reserves of bauxite—the ore of the aluminium—the ‘**strategic metal**’ of the modern age. Orissa is extremely rich in high quality of bauxite. Hence, the MNCs are rushing madly to Orissa. The authors write:

In Britain and the US, a regular, guaranteed supply of aluminium at the cheapest possible rate is a matter of highest concern, since it supplies one of the arms industry’s basic resources, and “**aerospace/defence**” is central to both nations’ economy. This is why aluminium is classed as a “**strategic metal**” by the US Administration, meaning its supply is to be guaranteed and stockpiled. (*Anthropology of a Genocide: Tribal Movement in Central India against Over-Industrialisation*, by Felix Padel & Samarendra Das, <http://sanhati.com/literature/915/>)

But who will be paying for this? Certainly the hapless masses of adivasi and other downtrodden people will be sufferer. The adivasis are resisting these attempts tooth and

nail. But the ruling classes of India assisted by and dependent upon the imperialist capital have become ruthless to crush this resistance. They have found an excuse. **They have branded these resistances of the adivasis as ‘maoist’ conspiracy. Though not a single one of the resistances of the adivasis in Orissa have been led by the Maoists or even assisted by their guerilla forces—the government and its lackeys are shouting about the “hands of the maoists”.** So, a civil war has been declared against these people under the pretext of being Maoists. In a recent struggle of Narayanpatna of Koraput district of Orissa, the same thing has happened. Under the banner of **Chasi Mulia Adivasi Sangh (CMAS)**, the adivasis of Narayanpatna reclaimed the occupied land from the non-advasi hands. *Tehelka* reports:

But what is the Chasi Mulia Adivasi Sangh? For more than 15 years, the CMAS has been working in Koraput district on two linked issues: the illegal and fraudulent grabbing of Adivasi land and alcohol addiction. With Adivasis’ rights over ancestral land and the prohibition of transfer of land to non-Scheduled Tribes recognised by the Orissa Scheduled Area Transfer of Immovable Property Act and the Orissa Land Regulations Act, the CMAS mobilised Adivasis to take back land that they claim has been unfairly appropriated by nontribals. (19.12.2009, http://tehelka.com/story_main43.asp?filename=Ne191209a_zone.asp)

Two adivasis were killed and many were injured by the firing of the trigger-happy security forces of Orissa in November 2009. Though the struggle was going on for 15 years under known organisations led by different non-maoist communist organisations, the struggle of Narayanpatna was branded as ‘maoist’ to have license to kill and crush the resistances of the adivasi people (The ‘maoists’ are present in this struggle but are not at the level of leadership). On several occasions, the protesters of Narayanpatna emphatically rejected the maoist tag tied to them. A fact-finding report on Narayanpatna killings found the following:

The CMAS has been persistently branded a frontal organization of the CPI (Maoist) **despite their vehement rebuttal and lack of any evidence to show their Maoist connections.** (30.09.2009, www.countercurrents.org)

A protest launched at Bhubaneswar by the organisation refuted the conspiracy of the government to crush their movement by falsely branding them as 'maoists'. Follow the report published by a mainstream media:

Amidst unprecedented security arrangements, hundreds of tribals gathered in Bhubaneswar on Tuesday to warn the state government that it must be ready to face consequences unless it changes policies.

At joint rally here, the tribals shouted slogans. The posters they were carrying read: "Kana kholi kari suna sarakar. Ama hak, adhikar amaku dia, na deba jabi mariba pai prastuta hua," (Government listen carefully. Give us our rights or be ready to die). **The tribals, mostly from southern districts of Koraput and Rayagada, asked the state government to stop police atrocities on the people in the name of curbing Maoist activities.** They demanded that the government stop allotment of cultivable and forestlands to industrial houses and said they will continue their land-grabbing spree until their rights were restored. They also demanded inclusion of changes in the Land Act and full rights over forestland.

"This is an integrated, anti-feudal and anti-imperialist movement against land lords, liquor mafia and multinational companies, who have grabbed everything that belongs to the poor. This rally is a reminder to the government that time is running out," advisor of Chasi Mulia Adivasi Sangha (CMAS) Gananath Patra said.... (20.10.2009, Times News Network)

Incidentally, Orissa government has arrested Gananath Patra, a veteran leader of CPI (ML), i.e., a non-maoist organisation branding him as a 'maoist' leader. Similar incidents of arrests and confinement in the jails alongwith slapping of the draconian act like UAPA have been perpetrated on hundreds of adivasis—from Lalgarh to Dantewada, from Gadchirole to Kalahandi..., the news of the most of which were not flashed in the media. Many of the activists, journalists, human-rights activists, protesters from the intelligentsia of different fields have been heckled, tortured and confined after slapping them with the same allegations of being 'maoists'. It is our home ministry who calls these protesters: "either you are with us, or with them. If you protest, the administration has been empowered to nab you, and even to kill you in an 'encounter'." Is this not the true face of Operation Green Hunt?

Come back again to our main discussion. It is also in **Jharkhand** where the adivasi people have built up strong resistances against the acquisition of land & mineral resources:

Banduhurang, Turamdih, Jharia, Jaduguda... Jharkhand is resounding today with protest movements against what is clearly being seen as state-sponsored environmental degradation, economic exploitation and displacement. While the government grapples with an **estimated 45 such movements across its districts**, more are likely to erupt with increasing industrialisation. Yet, state officials dismiss these flashpoints as the work of “unscrupulous elements”.

In branding any protest as anti-social and anti-development, the administration finds the perfect justification to unleash the full repressive power of the state in favour of corporate interests. And the stories are numerous—heavy presence of police and paramilitary forces, intimidation of protestors by the district administration, fake cases filed against them, demolition and razing of houses, flattening of fields, *lathi* charges and police firings. It’s a sad sequel to the euphoria that greeted the formation of Jharkhand. The very people for whom Jharkhand was ostensibly created are now being sacrificed in the name of their own state’s development. (*Rich Lands Poor People, Is Sustainable Mining Possible? Centre for Science and Environment, 2008*)

It is stated that in 45 places of Jharkhand the government has to face resistances of the adivasis. Next excerpt provides us little more details about the resistances which have halted many projects:

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....

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....**

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 Singbhum 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, Essar Steel and CESC 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 acres 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....

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....

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.... (*Adivasis’ struggle against displacement in Jharkhand*, by Gladson Dungdung, 06.08.2009, <http://mynews.in/fullstory.aspx?passform=enterprisestory&storyid=23121>; accessed 08.08.09)

The above description is only a part of the whole story. Now, “the corporate houses are in anxiety, worried and uncertain” and “putting pressure on the government for taking action”. But the situation was unfavourable for taking “actions” because of the assembly elections in the state. In fact, the phenomenon of “ayaram-gayaram sarkars” of Jhrakhand where four chief minister have been changed in the last ten years created an “unfavourable situations” to take “resolute” actions “against the displacement activists”. It is reported in the mainstream media that once the new government is sworn in Jharkhand, the governments at the centre will launch their paramilitary offensive. A meeting of Chief Ministers with the Union Home Minister was held on February 9 to chalk out the military strategy of Operation Green Hunt to be launched whole-heartedly in four states of Jharkhand, West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. ‘Soon a bloody offensive like Chhattisgarh will escalate in these regions’, warn the hawkish media.

Now we are turning our eyes to the ‘Ground Zero’ of the present operation: **Chhattisgarh**. What kind of offensives has been conducted in the districts like Dantewada, Bastar, Bijapur, Kanker, etc? Arundhuti Roy, a noted columnist writes:

In order to keep its better-off citizens absolutely safe from these dangerous people, the government has declared war on them. A war, which it tells us, may take between three and five years to win. Odd, isn’t it, that even after the Mumbai attacks of 26/11, the government was prepared to talk with Pakistan? It’s prepared to talk to China. But when it comes to waging war against the poor, it’s playing hard. It’s not enough that Special Police—with totemic names like Greyhounds, Cobras and Scorpions—are scouring the forests with a licence to kill. It’s not enough that the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the Border Security Force (BSF) and the notorious Naga Battalion have already wreaked

havoc and committed unconscionable atrocities in remote forest villages. It's not enough that the government supports and arms the Salwa Judum, the "people's militia" that has killed and raped and burned its way through the forests of Dantewada leaving three hundred thousand people homeless, or on the run. Now the government is going to deploy the Indo-Tibetan Border Police and tens of thousands of paramilitary troops. It plans to set up a brigade headquarters in Bilaspur (which will displace nine villages) and an air base in Rajnandgaon (which will displace seven). Obviously, these decisions were taken a while ago. Surveys have been done, sites chosen. Interesting. War has been in the offing for a while. **And now the helicopters of the Indian air force have been given the right to fire in "self-defence", the very right that the government denies its poorest citizens.**

Fire at whom? How in god's name will the security forces be able to distinguish a Maoist from an ordinary person who is running terrified through the jungle? Will adivasis carrying the bows and arrows they have carried for centuries now count as Maoists too? Are non-combatant Maoist sympathisers valid targets? When I was in Dantewada, the Superintendent of Police showed me pictures of 19 "Maoists" who "his boys" had killed. I asked him how I was supposed to tell they were Maoists. He said, "See Ma'am, they have malaria medicines, Dettol bottles, all these things from outside."... (*Mr Chidambaram's War, by Arundhuti Roy, 09.11.2009, <http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?262519>*)

In the last September & October of 2009, two heinous offensives have been perpetrated in Dantewada. The joint forces composed of paramilitaries, elite polices and the notorious outfit Salwa Judum descended onto the villages: killing, beating, raping, burning and even cutting fingers of a two-year child! PUDR have sent a fact-finding team to the affected villages like Gompad, Gachanpalli and the findings are available in the net (http://www.pudr.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=199&Itemid=60) But it is reported that Chhattisgarh has been converted into a no-entry zone for the rights activists, sympathisers of the adivasis, journalists, etc. Few months ago, a journalist wrote an article about the blanket ban on reporting about the atrocities done by the Salwa Judum. He described that in Chhattisgarh now, **local scribes are paid "for not reporting"** what they see. His accounts will not be out of

context of our discussion because it tells about the **silent terror** running through Chhattisgarh:

**Box: Excerpts of a leaflet circulated in an adivasi rally at Jagdalpur,
Chhattisgarh held on June 1, 2009 on the eve of launching of Operation
Green Hunt**

“Brothers and Sisters, come look at the lethal pro capitalist development of Bastar. In the name of development and employment Bailadilla mines were started. Iron ore is being exported to Japan, South Korea and China at a throwaway price. Railways were started in the name of public interest. There are tens of goods trains but a single passenger train. In 1978 when people were demanding permanent employment they were fired upon and tens of adivasis were killed, thousands of huts were burnt to ashes. Thousands of adivasis were rendered homeless and left to fend for themselves. Women of Bailladilla were dishonoured and sexually abused. We want an account from Bailadailla of Bastar’s purported development.

Four decades ago at a cost of Rs 250 crore Bodh Ghat Dam was proposed and Rs 50 crore was spent on the project but then suspended because of popular agitation against it (2). We would like to record our appreciation and contribution of pro-people Dr B D Sharma (3). So why have they revived the same project at a cost of Rs 3600 cr? How come the Ministry of Environment cleared the project? Instead of Polavaram and Bodh Ghat etc big dams why no irrigation is being promoted through ponds, small dams, check dams, lift irrigation, anicut etc? Despite the people deciding not to give their land, why is it that land belonging to 10 gram panchayats of Lohandiguda is being forcibly acquired? Why are people being threatened and warned? Why is there lathicharge? Why are more than hundred people behind bars? Why are teachers and doctors being used to help Tata acquire our land? Why is it that 300 persons in Nagarnar have been sent to jail? Why is Essar company been given permission to transport iron ore through a pipeline? Why despite the presence of railways has permission been given to divert river water to Bay of Bengal? In whose interest is it when it railway earns Rs 300 per tonne whereas its costs Rs 30 per tonne through the pipeline? Is it not true that in order to benefit Essar to the tune of Rs 270 per tonne people of Bastar and land is being deprived of water? Why?”

(Source: <http://sanhati.com/>)

The story of Kamlesh Painkra probably best explains the situation of journalists in Chhattisgarh today.

Painkra was the first journalist to write about human rights violations by the Salwa Judum. Following his report, he was told by the local superintendent of police (SP) to apologise and admit that his story had been a mistake.

When Painkra refused, he lost his job. His brother, who was a teacher, was put behind bars, ostensibly for sheltering Naxalites.

The district administration cancelled Painkra's licence to sell public distribution system (PDS) grain in the local market for no apparent reason. It was his main source of income.

Painkra was finally forced to flee his home, taking his family with him, when a friendly policeman told him **that the police was going to kill him in an "encounter"**. They still live like refugees.

No local newspaper reported his ordeal.

I tried to help out by asking a few editor friends to hire him as their Dantewada district correspondent. Painkra now lives in Dantewada after fleeing his home district of Bijapur.

Painkra was hired, but the fine print of his appointment letter was interesting. The letter stated that his salary would be Rs 3,000 a month. It went on to say that he would also have to collect advertisements worth Rs 20,000 every month and that his salary would be a proportion of the amount he managed to collect.

"That means that if the advertising money goes down the salary will go down accordingly," Painkra explained.

He declined the offer, saying: "If I have to collect Rs 20,000 every month in a town with a population of less than 25,000, you can imagine from whom I will have to collect the advertisements. How can I do any journalism after that?"

Last month, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) bulldozed Painkra's house in Bijapur to make room for a volleyball ground for soldiers. There were no reports in the papers about this. Painkra's family was not informed of the demolition. Nor was any compensation paid to them.

The pressures on journalists in Chhattisgarh are special.

Some time ago, the Naxals sent an audio CD to every newspaper office in Raipur. The CD contained, among other things, a recording of a conversation, via walkie-talkie, between the same superintendent of police, Bijapur, who had threatened Painkra, and his deputy.

During the conversation, the SP tells his subordinate: “Keep an eye on the area and if you see any journalists just kill them.”

The government reacted by saying the recording was bogus. Police officials in private accept that the voice was indeed that of the SP and that the Naxals had tuned into his conversation on the walkie-talkie.

No national newspaper covered the news. The SP was sent to work in the State Human Rights Commission. (*The art of not writing, by Shubhranshu Choudhary, 27.02.2009, <http://infochangeindia.org/Agenda/Reporting-conflict/The-art-of-not-writing.html>; accessed 27.02.09*)

Please read the full article from the website. The terror and horror of the atrocities perpetrated during the OGH might be revealed more by the following reporting done by two journalists of *Tehelka* who entered the war-zone from the side of Andhra Pradesh:

A three-hour motorcycle ride from the border with Andhra Pradesh’s Khammam district and the thick jungles of Chhattisgarh close in. This is remote terrain—villages are spread out over several kilometres; distances measured by the hours taken to walk from one village to another. Schools, hospitals and motorable paths are not even imagined. This is also a self-declared Maoist stronghold. Outside every village stand red concrete columns 25 feet tall, built in memory of martyrs; easy markers even for the uninitiated.

Across this remote terrain, over seven days, *Tehelka* photographer Tarun Sehrawat and I tracked Adivasis whose lives were destroyed by the **Salwa Judum** in the past four months. This period coincides with the start of Operation Green Hunt, an operation that the Central Government calls a ‘media creation’.

In village after village, Adivasis recount tales of the Judum attacking anyone they could find—**“if they found a woman, they raped her. If it was a man, he was killed.”** None of the witnesses that we met were willing to walk to the police station to file complaints. In their eyes, **the Judum and the police are complicit**. Seeking justice from one against the other would be futile. This was the first time, the Adivasis told us,

that the Judum had entered their villages. And their trail of destruction had often covered two or three villages in the span of a day.... (*We The Non-People*, by Sanjana, 06.02.2010, http://tehelka.com/story_main43.asp?filename=Ne060210we_the.asp)

In fact, the Chhattisgarh government was clearing the grounds for big-ticket investments of Tata, Essar, etc by sponsoring the formation of this notorious gang: '**Salwa Judum**'. It was formed in **2005** by a Congress leader with the sponsoring of BJP government. It also enjoyed the patronage of the Union government also! Read the excerpt below:

In its analysis of the Naxal problem, the annual report of ministry of home affairs mentions "creation of local resistance groups at grass root levels" and "encouraging local resistance groups" as potential counter strategy. These lines are repeated in its 2003-04, 2004-05, and 2005-06 reports with the assurance that the ministry is actively encouraging such methods. (*The myths and facts of Salwa Judum*, Anoop Saha, 22.09.2007, <http://www.merineews.com/>)

Moreover, the experiment of Salwa Judum has been replicated in other states also. In Orissa, Jharkhand, and even in West Bengal, the 'Salwa Judum'-type gangs have been created with direct patronage of the state governments and ruling parties to crush the adivasi resistances. These are Nagrik Suraksha Samiti, Sendra, Tritya Prastuti Samiti, Gana Pratirodh Mancha (in Jangalmahal of West Bengal), etc. The members of these gangs are recruited from the adivasis themselves taking opportunities of their poverty. "It is proposed that young men and women from the villages be made Special Police Officers. Depending upon the size of the village 5-10 SPOs would be needed. These SPOs will receive Rs 1500 per month as honorarium" (*Red Sun: Travels in Naxalite Country*, by Sudip Chakravarti, Penguin). It is estimated that **4500 SPOs** have been recruited in Chhattisgarh,

How this outfit had been and operated is narrated in the following excerpt:

The rise of the Salwa Judum (literally meaning purification hunt in Gondi, but generally billed as a campaign for peace) needs to be seen in the context of the longstanding Naxalite movement in this region, the rapid industrialisation of this mineral-rich area, the continuing poverty of its predominantly adivasi population, and their opposition to

the acquisition of their lands for industrial projects. Officially described as a spontaneous peoples' uprising against Maoist violence, Salwa Judum has over the past year enjoyed the patronage of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led state government, as well as sections of the Congress Party in the state, especially the leader of the opposition in the state assembly....

The essence of the Salwa Judum campaign is the forcible eviction of adivasis from their villages by the government, and their detention in "relief camps". The commonest method of doing this was described by a sarpanch at Dornapal camp, who revealed that a meeting of all sarpanches of the block had been held by the administration, in which they had been instructed to convene meetings to bring all villagers to the camp **by spreading the word that they would be attacked by Naxalites**. Asked whether people are willingly living in camps to avoid Naxalites, one person said: "Who wants to stay in camps? What will happen to the ancestral lands of the people? **It is not true that people are harassed by Naxalites. It is under pressure of Salwa Judum and the police that they are being forced to leave.**" At the beginning of 2006, the government stopped public transport to the interior villages of Dantewada that reportedly had a Maoist presence.... (*Traumas of Adivasi Women in Dantewada, by Joyti Punwani, 27.01.2007, EPW*)

The narrator writes further that "The official figures of April/May 2006 acknowledge that **45,958 persons from 644 villages were forced to live in 22 relief camps run by the state government**" (*ibid*). Read the following reporting briefly describing the brutality and terror pervading in now-a-days Chhattisgarh:

The first big Salwa Judum rally was planned subsequently in Bijapur town. The 'Salwa Judum leader' who announced the rally from a jeep that day works now with the special branch of the police in Dantewada....

An audio recording of the superintendent of police, Bijapur, made at the time that Salwa Judum was acquiring strength has been circulated by the Naxals. It has the SP telling his team on the walkie talkie, "Tell the villagers, they will be given Rs 3 lakh if they join the movement. **Tell them once, tell them twice, if they do not agree burn the village.**"

Police officers privately accepted that the voice on the CD was indeed that of the SP, Bijapur. Officially the government denied it....

When the Salwa Judum came with their bows arrows and guns for self-protection, the villagers in Kotrapal ran away. The old and feeble who could not escape were shot, beaten up, houses and crops were burnt and looted.

BBC's David Loyn visited Kotrapal a year later. He wrote: 'I met a woman who still carries a bullet lodged in her stomach since the night of the attack by government forces last summer, and a man told me that his father and two uncles were shot dead since they could not move out fast enough. In scenes reminiscent of Darfur, I saw several burnt houses, and the villagers said that more than 20 had been burnt in all.'

The New York Times quoted a triumphant Ajay Singh, the Salwa Judum leader in the nearby town of Bhairamgarh, as saying: 'We finished off the village.' Then he clarified: 'People were excited. Of course they destroyed the houses.'...

Like Kotrapal, 644 villages are deemed to have been 'awakened' by the Salwa Judum. This comprises 3.5 lakh people.

Government records show 47,000 people in the camps, though NGOs claim the number is less than 20,000 now.

Three lakh people should be in the villages according to census figures. However, the ration, school and health intervention were stopped to these villages after the start of Salwa Judum.

Although the government denies migration to other states, NGOs say more than 50,000 are living a miserable life in the forests of Andhra Pradesh alone....

Two Public Interest Litigations in the Supreme Court chart a list of **548 killings, 99 rapes and more than 3,000 burnt houses by the Salwa Judum in last three years**. The National Human Rights Commission is currently investigating these allegations.... (*Salwa Judum: Strategy that backfired, Shubhranshu Choudhary, 19.06.2008, <http://www.rediff.com/news/>; accessed 20.07.09*)

It is not surprising at all that whole of the organs & institutions of the governments either at the centre or at the state have complicit relations with the thugs of Salwa Judum. National Human Rights Commission, to whom the case was referred, had not find any concrete evidences against the Salwa Judum! Follow the report published in a business daily: "The NHRC, which had been mandated by the Supreme Court to probe the alleged

excesses committed by the Salwa Judum in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region, has reportedly given a **clean chit** to the group of local volunteers formed to fight Naxalites.... The investigating teams sent by NHRC to look into complaints filed by a few civil liberty activists found no evidence to suggest that the Chhattisgarh government had sponsored the movement.... (26.08.2008,

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/3405294.cms>) What a marvellous piece of work had been done by the apex body of human rights! Oh! Human Rights!! The Chhattisgarh government enacted a draconian law called 'The Special Public Safety Act' (In fact, the Union Government, which enacted UAPA, may pay gratitude to Chhattisgarh government for this pioneering anti-advasi work.) In fact,

The Act allows imprisonment for up to three years if anyone is caught making contributions to 'unlawful' organizations, even if the contributor is not such a member of such an organization. A district magistrate has the right to seize any building or area where 'unlawful activities' take place, and evict occupants. This included even a meeting, a conversation, let alone writing and preparing visual material such as posters—anything the authorities feel can 'create risk' or 'endanger public order, peace and tranquility' or impede the administration of law'. (*Red Sun*, Sudip Chakravarti, Penguin)

It is known now that thousands of adivasis had been arrested and jailed with slapping of this draconian act on them.

But for what sake Salwa Judum was formed? Was it formed only to divide the adivasis to counterbalance the maoists? In fact, the 'maoists' (formerly People's War group of the naxalites) were working for more than twenty years in Andhra Pradesh adjoining the undivided Madhya Pradesh. Discussions and/or analysis on the means taken over by the maoists to win over large sections of the adivasis; the nature of politics of the maoists behind this mobilization, etc are out of context of this series of *Update*. We want to point out just that the 'maoists' have deep links with the adivasi in Chhattisgarh. Hence, the resistance struggles of the adivasis against the projects of MNCs and Indian monopoly houses were **interwoven** with the guerilla supports of the 'maoists'. This type of interdependence would not be observed in Orissa and Jharkhand. Though the 'maoists' are striving hard with their armed tactics to win over the agitating masses in Orissa &

Jharkhand, it has not been so successful that one may call the resistance-movement built up in Orissa and Jharkhand are nothing but the handiwork of the 'maoists'.

The true intent of the formation of Salva Judum might be well illustrated by none other than a government report. Note the following:

The Biggest Grab of Tribal Lands after Columbus

A civil war like situation has gripped the southern districts of Bastar, Dantewara and Bijapur in Chattishgarh. The contestants are the armed squads of tribal men and women of the erstwhile Peoples War Group now known as the Communist Party of India (Maoist) on the one side and the armed tribal fighters of the Salva Judum created and encouraged by the government and supported with the firepower and organization of the central police forces.

This open declared war will go down **as the biggest land grab ever**, if it plays out as per the script. **The drama being scripted by Tata Steel and Essar Steel who wanted 7 villages or thereabouts, each to mine the richest lode of iron ore available in India.** There was initial resistance to land acquisition and displacement from the tribals. The state withdrew its plans under fierce resistance. An argument put forward was 'you don't play foul with the Murias', it's a matter of life and death and Murias don't fear death. A new approach was necessary if the rich lodes of iron ore are to be mined.

The new approach came about with the Salva Judum, euphemistically meaning peace hunt. Ironically the Salva Judum was led by Mahendra Karma, elected on a Congress ticket and the Leader of the Opposition and supported whole heartedly by the BJP led government.

The Salva Judum was headed and peopled by the Murias, some of them erstwhile cadre and local leaders of the Communist Party of India (Maoist). **Behind them are the traders, contractors and miners waiting for a successful result of their strategy. The first financiers of the Salva Judum were Tata and the Essar** in the quest for 'peace'. The first onslaught of the Salva Judum was on Muria villagers who

still owed allegiance to the Communist Party of India (Maoist). It turned out to be an open war between brothers. **640 villages** as per official statistics were **laid bare, burnt to the ground and emptied with the force of the gun and the blessings of the state. 350,000 tribals, half the total population of Dantewada district are displaced, their womenfolk raped, their daughters killed, and their youth maimed.** Those who could not escape into the jungle were herded together into refugee camps run and managed by the Salva Judum. Others continue to hide in the forest or have migrated to the nearby tribal tracts in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa.

640 villages are empty. Villages sitting on tons of iron ore are effectively de-peopled and available for the highest bidder. The latest information that is being circulated is that **both Essar Steel and Tata Steel are willing to take over the empty landscape and manage the mines....** (*National Land Reforms Policy, Committee On State Agrarian Relations and Unfinished Task of Land Reforms, Ministry of Rural Development Government of India, http://www.rd.ap.gov.in/IKPLand/MRD_Committee_Report_V_01_Mar_09.pdf*)

Strikingly, the head of the committee which prepared the report is the Union Rural Development Minister and one of its members is the Secretary to the Land Reforms Department of GoI. They admit that the design behind the formation of the Salwa Judum was to clear the ground of 640 villages for the mining projects of Tata and Essars. Can they deny now the sinister design behind the Operation Green Hunt? Is it not for the crushing of the resistances put forward by the adivasis?

We may conclude this section with the following excerpt (written by an activist of Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha) citing some of the struggles of the adivasis which faced treachery and torture in the hands of the Chhattisgarh administration:

Whether for coal blocks in Raigarh, or a power plant in Premnagar, cement plants in Tilda, or a large industrial area in Rajnandgaon, bauxite mining in Sarguja and Jashpur, sponge iron plants in Raipur or diamond mining in Devbhog, peasants everywhere—particularly adivasis and dalits—are facing and resisting displacement—weakly compromising at some places, facing repression determinedly at others. 41 and now 65 more villages near Raipur are to be displaced for a glittering new capital region of

Corporate Chhattisgarh; 9 villages for an army camp for a revamped High Court premises close to Bilaspur; 7 villages for an air force base in Rajnandgaon. Not to mention the displacement for the Tiger Reserve, Elephant Reserve, Wild life Sanctuaries etc. in Bilaspur, Jashpur and Dhamtari districts... The list is endless....

The struggle to bring into the public domain the MOUs of Tata and Essar in Bastar and Dantewada; the fake gramsabhas in Lohandiguda and Dhurli blocks conducted at gunpoint to obtain consent for land acquisition, and presided over by the Salwa Judum supremo and District Investment Promotion Board Chairman Mahendra Karma; the arrests of vocal villagers including when they were on their way to keep a scheduled appointment with the Governor; the slapping of cases under the National Security Act on activists of the Adivasi Mahasabha; the FIRs that were finally lodged, after repeated complaints, against sundry dalals of Tata for the “fake compensations” given to the wrong persons and even in the name of the dead; these are events about which I and the CMM have had personal knowledge, and about which we have continuously raised our voice....

Chandra Bhushan, a researcher on mineral policy writes: “India announced a new National Mineral Policy (for non-coal and non-fuel minerals) in early April, after two-and-a-half years of wrangling between mineral-rich states and the central government, between steel-makers, iron ore miners and exporters. The objective of this policy, NMP-2008, is clear: **it will promote privately-owned, large-scale, mechanized mines—if they happen to be controlled by multinationals, still better....** NMP-2008 ignores the fact that mining in India is not only about minerals and a simple ‘dig and sell’ proposition, it is about tribals and backward castes and their land and livelihood alienation. It is about poverty, backwardness and Naxalism. It is also about deforestation and biodiversity impact, water security and pollution.”

Ravi Tiwari, General Secretary of the Chhattisgarh Cement Manufacturers’ Association accidentally blurts out the truth when he states in an article dated 25/9/2007 in the “Jansatta”: **“This State is as rich under its soil, as those who dwell on it are economically impoverished.”** He tells us that Chhattisgarh has more than 28 precious mineral resources including limestone, dolomite, coal, iron ore, diamond, gold, quartzite, tin ore, tin metal, granite, corundum, marble, beryl, bauxite, uranium, alexandrite, copper, silica, fluorite and garnet. In September 2008, a road blockade by hundreds of villagers of the “Jameen Bachao Sangharsh Samiti” stalled a proposal for

handing over an area of 105 square kilometers situated in 30 villages of Kunkuri Tehsil of district Jashpur to the Jindal Power and Steel Limited “to prospect for gold, diamond, platinum group of minerals, precious and semiprecious gemstones”....

Seven percent of the country’s bauxite, about 198 million tones, is available in the Sarguja, Jashpur, Kawardha, Kanker and Bastar districts. It is being mined at present in Sarguja by the now privatized Balco (Sterlite) company in Chhattisgarh and the Hindalco company of Uttar Pradesh. More than 200 adivasi families have lost their lands to Hindalco so far and the process is still continuing. Although there is theoretically a lease agreement, which states that the company would restore the land to its original condition as far as is practicable, but in reality no rent whatsoever is paid, and in the name of employment one person from the affected family works as lowly paid contract labour. Discontent is rife among these landless adivasi miners. It is pertinent that Dheeraj Jaiswal, a notorious SPO in erstwhile SP Kalluri’s retinue charged of many fake encounters and rapes in the name of fighting Naxals, doubles up as a goonda for Hindalco to keep its labour in order. Bauxite is processed into aluminium, an important input in the aviation and defence industry. There is a global bottleneck in this mineral, hence the corporate hawks are very much on the lookout for potential deposits.

Sixteen percent of the country’s coal, a whopping 39,545 million tones is to be found in the Raigarh, Sarguja, Koriya and Korba districts of northern Chhattisgarh. On 5th January 2007, the adivasis of Village Khamariya, Tehsil Tamnar were subjected to vicious and brutal lathicharge when in a public hearing ostensibly arranged by the district administration, but clearly dominated by the Jindal company, they raised objections to giving up their lands to the Jindal Coal Mines.

The public hearings for environmental clearances for three more power projects including AES Chhattisgarh Power (a joint venture with the American energy giant) were recently stalled by villagers protesting that they had not been notified and they apprehended widespread pollution.

The Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Ltd (IFFCO) had to withdraw its proposal of setting up a 1000 mw coal-based thermal power plant in Premnagar in Sarguja district in March after strong protests. The villagers organized in the “Gram Sabha Parishad” had attacked IFFCO officials conducting “secret surveys” and had protested the diversion of the Atem river for the plant. When the company persisted and got their leader arrested, over 1,000 people marched to the police station to get him released. The new site

subsequently chosen by IFFCO, 10 km away, also came into serious controversy recently, when villagers who had passed a resolution against the project, found that their Sarpanch was being whisked away secretly to a meeting in a police jeep, disguised as a policeman! All this would have been amusing, had it not been so dead serious....

The Bastar region is one of the richest in mineral resources—not only in iron ore, but also perhaps a host of other unexplored minerals including limestone, bauxite, and even diamond and uranium. In 2005 it was not only with Tata and Essar and Texas Power Generation that confidential MOUs were signed allotting iron ore deposits, coal blocks, water reservoirs and hectares and hectares of land, but scores of companies were given prospecting and mining licenses.... (*Gravest displacement, Bravest resistance, by Sudha Bharadwaj, 01.06.2009, <http://sanhati.com/>; accessed on 20.07.09*)

Box: The Status of the Current Offensive

1. The offensive will be spread over the next **five years**.
2. A special forces school, a special forces unit and an army brigade HQ will be set up near Bilaspur. The army is looking for **1,800 acres of land** to set up the infrastructure.
3. The IAF is looking for **300 acres** for its base
4. Home Ministry is sitting on a plan to redeploy the Rashtriya Rifles. RR and BSF unlike other paramilitary forces, have heavy weaponry like medium-range machine guns, mortars and rocket launchers.
5. For now, **27 battalions** of the Border Security Force and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police will be moved into Chhattisgarh, Orissa and Maharashtra.
6. The paramilitary forces will be supported by six Mi-17 IAF choppers.
7. The helicopters will have on board the IAF's special force, the GARUDS, to secure the chopper and conduct combat search and rescue operations.
8. The offensive will be in seven phases. Each phase has been marked area-wise as Operating Areas (OAs).
9. OA-1 involves moving along a north-south axis from Kanker, Chhattisgarh, and on an east-west axis from Gadchiroli in Maharashtra and span the Abuj Marh forests used by the Maoists as a training centre and logistics base. (*Outlook, 26 Oct 2009*)

Corporate Interests behind the Offensive

...there is an entire universe of primary, secondary and tertiary stakeholders. These people don't have to declare their interests, but they're allowed to use their positions and good offices to further them. How will we ever know which political party, which ministers, which MPs, which politicians, which judges, which NGOs, which expert consultants, which police officers, have a direct or indirect stake in the booty? How will we know which newspapers reporting the latest Maoist "atrocities", which TV channels "reporting directly from Ground Zero"—or, more accurately, making it a point not to report from Ground Zero, or even more accurately, lying blatantly from Ground Zero—are stakeholders?

—*Mr Chidambaram's War*, by Arundhati Roy,

<http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?262519>

In the above discussion the interests of the foreign and domestic companies behind the present offensive have been clarified amply. Still we have to know more about the sinister designs behind the current offensive. In 2008, *Business Week*, one of the foremost champions of the imperialist interests wrote an article about the unrest developing in the mineral-rich India hampering their stakes. Their concerns are expressed below:

In May [of 2008] a special report from the Planning Commission, a government think tank, detailed the extent of the danger and the "collective failure" in social and economic policy that caused it. The report comes five months after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh shocked the country with a candid admission: "The Naxal groups...are targeting all aspects of economic activity...[including] vital infrastructure so as to cripple transport and logistical capabilities and slow down any development. [We] cannot rest in peace until we have eliminated this virus."...

The other reason for sounding the alarm stems from the increasingly **close proximity** between the corporate world and the forest domain of the Naxalites. India's emergence as a hot growth market depended at first on the tech outsourcing boom in Bangalore and elsewhere. Now the world is discovering the skill and productivity of India's manufacturers as well. Meanwhile India's **affluent urban consumers** have started buying autos, appliances, and homes, and they're demanding improvements in the

country's roads, bridges, and railroads. To stoke Indian manufacturing and **satisfy consumers**, the **country needs cement, steel, and electric power in record amounts**. In steel alone, India almost has to double capacity from 60 million tons a year now to 110 million tons. **"We need a suitable social and economic environment to meet this national challenge," says Essar Steel chief Jatinder Mehra.**

...India has lots of unmined iron ore and coal—the essential ingredients of steel and electric power. Anxious to revive their moribund economies, the poor but resource-rich states of eastern India have given mining and land rights to Indian and multinational companies. Yet these deposits lie mostly in territory where the Naxals operate. Chhattisgarh, a state in eastern India across from Mumbai and a hotbed of Naxalite activity, has 23% of India's iron ore deposits and abundant coal. It has signed memoranda of understanding and other agreements worth billions with Tata Steel and ArcelorMittal (MT), De Beers Consolidated Mines, BHP Billiton (BHP), and Rio Tinto (RTP). Other states have cut similar deals. And U.S. companies like Caterpillar (CAT) want to sell equipment to the mining companies now digging in eastern India.

The appearance of mining crews, construction workers, and truckers in the forest has seriously **alarmed the tribals** who have lived in these regions from time immemorial. The tribals are a minority—about 85 million strong—who descend from India's original inhabitants and are largely nature worshippers. They are desperately poor, but unlike the poverty of the urban masses in Mumbai or Kolkata, their suffering has remained largely hidden to outsiders and most Indians, caught up as they are in the country's **incredible growth**. The Naxalites, however, know the tribals well and have recruited from their ranks for decades.

Judging from their past experience with development, **the tribals have a right to be afraid of the mining and building that threaten to change their lands**. "Tribals in India, like all indigenous people, are already the most displaced people in the country, having made way for major dams and other projects," says Meenakshi Ganguly, South Asia chief researcher for Human Rights Watch, which is compiling a report on the Naxal movement. The tribals are supposed to be justly compensated for any land used by the companies, but the states' record in this area is patchy at best... (*In India, Death to Global Business*, Manjeet Kripalani, 07.05.2008, *Business Week*)

Thus, in so many (jugglery of) words, the *Business Week* asserted for a solution to the problem faced by the "tribals" along the path of "incredible growth" of Indian economy!

They are keen to make the investments hassle-free. Another media of international fame rang the alarm-bell in the same tune as above:

Reuters reported that the growing Maoist insurgency in India over large swathes of the mineral rich countryside could **soon hurt some industrial investment plans** just as the country suffers an economic slowdown.

While the economic impact may be small compared with India's trillion dollar economy, the insurgency and the sense that it is worsening signals that India does not fully control its own territory and adds to risks for companies mulling investments.

The **Lalgarh incident** worried the country's third largest steel producer, JSW Steel, which is setting up a USD 7 billion, 10 million tonne steel plant near Lalgarh. Mr Biswadip Gupta CEO of the company's West Bengal operations "**We are waiting and watching, so are the others.** On top of the economic woes, you have the problem of Maoists now. It is very jittery." ... (*Maoist insurgency hurting industrial development in India, Reuters, 10.07.2009*)

But the most interesting observations were put forward by none other than a Indian business organisation—FICCI. Firstly, and strikingly, the report of the FICCI (named as report of 'Task Force on National Security and Terrorism') used almost identical words and sentences what were written in the column of *Business Week*; secondly the FICCI could not conceal real motive behind such a offensive like Operation Green Hunt. Due to lack of space we cannot reproduce the FICCI article here (it can be obtained easily in the net). Or, one can access the last issues of *Fronline (February 13-26, 2010)* which bares open the real motive of the Indian corporate house in such a major offensive in adivasi-dominated regions.

Concluding Remarks

The adivasi movement developed in the central and eastern parts of the country has thrown several questions to be probed and answered. In fact, barring a few minorities, overwhelming majority of the progressive democratic section of the Indian people have little knowledge and idea about the life & struggle of the adivasis. Since 'independence', the adivasis have fought many times against the so-called development and forest projects which mercilessly ousted them without minimum rehabilitation. Since the 1990s, with the advent of the liberalisation of the economy, the attacks of the ruling classes in collaboration with the imperialist forces have accentuated. During the last decade the onslaughts on the adivasi lands & livelihoods have been magnified many times. Protesting adivasis were massacred, dislocated and thrown at the feet of the modern capitalism with utmost violence.

It is argued many times that this course of 'development' is 'flawed' and must be 'corrected'. It is argued also that capitalism of 'western' features have been violently imposed on the 'pristine' life of the adivasis. It is advocated that there could be another course of the 'development' preserving the age-old sacred practices, customs and culture of the adivasis. It may be called as an 'alternative' course of development, etc. Moreover, it is strongly argued that the 'old classical' path/model of 'democratic revolution' is also a 'western' concept' and hence, untenable in the Indian context. In the mosaic of 'eastern' or Indian condition new path/model must be evolved and would be practised, etc.

Update has no ready-made answers to these questions/ideas. We are presenting here some of our thoughts in the current context of the adivasi struggle developed over a large part of the country. These thought may be useful in finding answers to the above-mentioned questions.

We have to understand the internal dynamics of the capitalist path of development undertaken in our country. In this era of imperialism, the capitalism in India (and in many 'eastern'/developing/underdeveloped countries is bound to be dependant upon the imperialist/finance capital. There is no alternative course seen since the transformation of capitalism into the age of imperialism. During this era, the dependant capitalism in our

country, tied with thousands of threads to the imperialist capital have compelled to preserve (and they preserve willingly) the old remnants of feudal mode of oppression and exploitation over society.

Present onslaughts of 'development' & 'industrialisation' undertaken by the ruling classes of India are nothing but a continuation of these policies or path. Obeying the internal dynamics of capitalism, the finance capital is intruding into the unexplored parts of the globe, into the 'pristine' land of forests & hills of India, predominantly inhabited by the 'pristine' adivasis, laden with mineral resources—battering the obstacles with fiercest violence. The capitalism has done this in Latin America. Capitalism are doing this in Africa now. They cannot but leave these resources of the earth to be unexplored and non-exploited. This is the vary nature of capitalism to be understood and realised. There is no other course of development under the present state-machineries run by the present ruling clique of big bougeoisie and landlords preserving many of the old remnants of feudal mode of production and relations. If anyone think about any alternative path of development preserving the present rule of the bourgeoisie and landlord is nothing but utopians who reject the internal dynamics of capitalism whether of 'western' or 'eastern'. Hence, the primary aspect of the 'Indian' path development is the question of state power. Until the present state-structure and corresponding power over it remains intact, there would be no talk or no idea of 'alternative development'.

The relation of the adivasis with the forest may be natural and spontaneous, but certainly it is remnant of a type of backward production relation. The communal ownership that the adivasis enjoy over forest and land is not only retrogressive with respect to the development of the productive forces, but is also a stagnating obstruction in its path. Also due to the massive backwardness of the productive forces, hunger, fasting, malnutrition, ill-health has become part and parcel of adivasis' life. Thus the result of their effort to maintain their communal life has been pathetic. On one hand, due to the massive dependence on nature's 'piety', they are forced to bear through a type of inhuman existence throughout the years; they are deprived of the amenities of advanced livelihood, housing, food- education-health, etc. On the other hand, due to this over-dependence, once they are alienated from their communal ownership or right over water-land-forest, they are very quickly reduced to absolutely helpless mass of people without any shelter.

This tearing away of their traditional rights or forced eviction pushes them under the fierce marauding boots of the capitalist society— where they are more than often forced to work as the lowest tiers of unskilled workers, as porters or in other lowly jobs. Thus in every way they are deprived of the opportunity for self-development; kept far away from being recognized as an equal human being. The prime cause behind this is the system of exploitation thrust upon them and the backwardness in which they are caught up.

What is the nature of these feudal mode of production and relations operating within the adivasi people? Firstly, the forest department of the government itself has imposed a feudal ('zamindari') system upon the adivasis by expropriating the rights of the forest from them. Under the present state-structure ruled by the present ruling classes, no legislation or act could hand over the rights over the forest to the adivasis people. Hence, the struggle for reclamation of the forest land from the clutches of the forest department and officials is in fact intertwined with any (future) struggle of the adivasis against the feudal system. Secondly, the large sections of the adivasis are cultivators also. They have no rights over the land which they cultivate. Like the scores of Indian peasants, the adivasis are languishing under the feudal exploitations of the absentee landlords cornering large tracts of agricultural lands. Moreover, the adivasis are exploited by numerous intermediaries, moneylenders, contractors, traders, babus, etc. In this respect, the struggle to uproot the old feudal system and mode of production are common to both of the numerous landless peasants and landless adivasis. Hence, the struggle of the adivasis to vanquish the old system is nothing but in common to both working class and landless & poor peasants of India. Hence, it is the bounden duty of the true democratic forces to align their activities in such a way that the unity of the exploited masses of the people is forged. This can be accomplished only with the arousal of the vast sections of the workers, peasants, adivasis alongwith all the oppressed people into conscious political activities. It must be remembered also that this task of democratic revolution only be carried forward by the people themselves, but not by the isolated armed actions of some people.

Any other path other than this, particularly the path of retaining the 'pristine' relationship of the adivasis with blind forces of nature could not help the adivasis to liberate themselves from the 'developmental onslaughts' of the ruling classes as well as

old feudal bondage and exploitations. Hence, while opposing and resisting the present military offensive against the adivasis, while opposing and resisting the plunder of the mineral resources by the multinationals and Indian monopoly houses; while opposing the harassment, any confinement and arbitrary arrests of the struggling adivasis and protesting people; while demanding the repeal of the UAPA and other black Acts at the state-level; while opposing the present path of 'development' & 'industrialisation' undertaken by the ruling classes; we have to focus on the truth that the present exploitative feudal system reigning over the adivasis must be uprooted by the united revolutionary democratic forces of the working class, landless & poor peasants, adivasis, and other oppressed people.