

# Chronicle of A Struggle and other Writings

Achyut Das & Vidhya Das



an agramee publication

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and other Writings**

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*with a foreword by Prof. Amit Bhaduri*

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## **Foreword**

The year 2006 began with an episode that should shame every citizen of this country. On second January, 2006 the Orissa police massacred twelve tribals in cold blood in the Kalinganagar Industrial Complex area. The only reason was that the tribals and dalits of Kalinganagar had refused to forego passively the right to their homes, land and livelihood to the TATAs. The corporation wants tribal land for a steel plant, regardless of the basic human rights of the tribal communities living there. It goes without saying, the government of Orissa had given this right to the corporation without the consent of the people who would have been affected. To the rest of the country, the case was presented in the media as

primitive tribals trying to stop development, and the progress of the country.

This has become too a familiar pattern , and not only in Orissa. All over India we have been seeing the same pattern repeatedly, forcible uprooting of people, destruction of their livelihood, degradation of environment, all in the name of development and economic progress. The Orissa case is especially poignant because a corrupt and incompetent state government with nothing to show in terms of development of any sort now has blood on its hands in the name of development. It is also revealing because it brings forth with undeniable clarity how the poorest and the most marginalised, those who benefit nothing from so called economic progress of the country, are required to bear the entire burden of it. If development has a cost, so goes this logic of development the poorest must bear it. With minor variations the story is the same everywhere in India, with full consent of both the state and the federal government.

No longer can we postpone asking the crucial question: why is this anti- poor and pro- corporation

model of development accepted by all democratically elected governments? Why are they not more sensitive to the needs and rights of the people, especially the poorest and the most vulnerable. The answer, I would submit, lies in two parts. First, and perhaps more forgivable is a failure of imagination. We borrow models from Western capitalism, more exactly the American model of corporate capitalism as our ideal far too uncritically, because we do not have the intellectual confidence to face and solve our own problems with any degree of originality. However, the other part of the explanation is less forgivable. It involves a sinister alliance between the large, multi-national corporations, the international banks including the IMF and the World Bank, and a compliant and willing national government which is more sensitive to the interests of these bodies than to the interest of the people whom they are supposed to represent. Otherwise, one can not explain the utter callousness towards massacres like Kalinganagar.

This short volume of writings by an activist couple who has the courage and tenacity to fight

against all odds against the combined interests of corporations, financial institutions and compliant governments should be an eye-opener for all who still have eyes to see what is happening around us in the name of development and high rate of growth.

**Prof. Amit Bhaduri**

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## Introduction

*“It is Possible they will Smash us, but tomorrow belongs to the People”.*

Salvador Allende, 1973

*“Like bones to the human body, the axle to the wheel, the wing to the bird, and the air to the wing, so is liberty the essence of life. Whatever is done without it is imperfect.”*

Jose Marti, Cuban Leader

One of the most outstanding examples of the assertions for freedom is the struggle of the Kondhs against the British. The British came to India with substantial experience of bloody wars behind them. They were more like a marauding army of blood thirsty soldiers, the Kondhs had little other than guerrilla tactics, and the knowledge of their country to defend themselves. They lost heavily in their war against the British, but joined in struggle once again when the leaders gave the call for the freedom movement. They were further massacred and martyred. Their sacrifice is little remembered as governments in different states continue the usurpation of their land, forests, and livelihood resources, forcing a sacrifice on them for the chimera of national development.

In the early half of the 1990s, tribals in Kashipur realised that this demon of 'national development' is going to catch up with them and they would be replaced by private and multi-national corporations, who had already made their overt and covert deals with the Government in power. Their land had too much to offer: water, power, wood, huge tracts, and their own cheap labour and a choice of mineral resources, for quick profits. And the infrastructure,

in terms of power projects, road links, railway routes had all been established. With all groundwork done by a cooperative and obedient government, Corporations began to arrive drooling from both sides of their mouth. The locals rose up in protest, but, the corporates had already made their deals with the governments and their protests were silenced by police guns paid by corporate profits.

In January, 2001, a Judicial Commission of Inquiry was instituted to probe into the killing of tribal people in Maikanch. The Commission took three years, but pinned the blame squarely on the government and the police.

To quote from the report: "Many questions crop up regarding the action and attitude of the police on this aspect. If the real intention of the police was for the purpose of investigation into the previous day's incident, it escapes one's comprehension as to why such a large force armed with guns has been deployed. If the real purpose was investigation, one would have expected the police authorities to stop near the place of occurrence before Makianch Crossing for the purpose of finding out telltale signs of any violence as alleged in the FIR..... if the

purpose was to arrest the culprits as per the FIR, Achyut Das allegedly being the main instigator, one would have thought that police would first try to locate and examine, if not arrest him in connection with the incident..... The very fact that such a large force had been taken is indicative of the fact that the police has information that there would be a large gathering inside Maikanch on 16<sup>th</sup>. If in fact they had such information, it is not understood as to why the police people wanted to go inside the village even for the purpose of investigation as it could have been well anticipated by them that such an action may lead to an unavoidable confrontation. If on the other hand, the police had no such information; there was also no justification for such a large contingent to enter the village, *unless of course, the intention was to teach the protesters a lesson. ....(Italics mine)*

“There is no doubt that the action of the police in assaulting two tribal women had the effect of magnifying the tension. Even at that stage, when the police people were retreating, there was no apparent danger. This is evident from the fact that many of the witnesses have stated that while retreating, some of them were walking back in

normal pace, which would go to show that there had not been any violent action from the side of the villagers initially. Materials on record show that the cows and the cowherd boy who received bullet injury were hit at a place behind the school which is slightly away from the hillock on the right side of the road, where the crowd had gathered. If the attack was from the front side, and the right side of the road, and maybe from the left side of the road, it is not understood as to why the firing was also towards the backside of the school. The statements made by several tribal people that there was indiscriminate firing, which resulted in the death of three persons, and three cows and injuries to several other person appears more probable.

“It is claimed by the State (police people) and the Executive Magistrate that there was firing from the side of the Tribal people damaging the jeep of Kashipur PS. Apart from the fact that no ballistic report has been produced before the Commission to corroborate such a claim, the statement of Sitia Jhadiani elicited in the cross-examination does not support such a stand. It has to be remembered that initially an affidavit of Sitia Jhadiani has been filed by Shri G.P. Mohanty, Advocate, wherein it has

been indicated that there was no aggression on the part of the tribal people and the police people were to be blamed for the entire firing. Subsequently, on the basis of her petition filed through another Advocate, she was examined as witness No. 32 and in course of examination, she has taken a stand that she had not filed any such affidavit. .... During cross-examination, even though she has stated that the people belonging to different villages, were hiding when the police came, and had attacked the police and vehicles, she specifically stated that she has not seen any gun, with any of the villagers. In view of this statement that the villagers did not have guns,.....the stand taken by the State that there was firing on behalf of the villagers which had damaged the police jeep is not acceptable.

“Many of the witnesses claimed on behalf of the State Government that at every point of time, before ordering tear gasing, lathi charge and firing, as the case may be, the Executive Magistrate was announcing through Megaphone warning the members of the mob. This does not receive any support from the statement of the Executive Magistrate himself.....

“The evidence of the Magistrate also shows that he has merely given order for firing, but number of rounds to be fired was decided by the police officials particularly, the OIC Kashipur.”

In its “Other Conclusions and Suggestions”, the P.K. Mishra Commission Report points out that “..... in the name of progress or industrialisation, there should not be senseless destruction of the environment, particularly the forests, we cannot afford to remain backward merely for the sake of so-called environmental protection. India and particularly Orissa cannot forgo industrial development so as to live for ever in penury, but at the same time, we cannot afford to mortgage the future of our progeny by senseless environmental destruction. Obviously, a balance has to be struck between the need for growth and the need for protection of the environment.”

It appears that the government has only taken heed of this last observation of the Commission, which in fact has little or no bearing on the incident for which the commission was set up, and decided to sacrifice their tribal communities for the sake of industrial development. After the report, the Utkal

Alumina was given the go ahead with all manner of support from the Orissa Government and a loyal press, work started with further brutal repression.

The destruction of tribal livelihoods has continued apace in different parts of the state. In 2004, the Vedanta began its Alumina refinery project in the Niyamgiri Hills, a breathtaking tract of Precambrian mountains, revered by the tribal people as 'Niyam Raja'. Several questions were raised about the way the project was cleared by the Orissa Government, and the Centrally Empowered Committee of the Supreme Court gave a negative report, condemning the of violation of environmental laws, and fundamental rights of the tribal people by the Vedanta. A second committee was sent by the Supreme Court, which gave an even more damaging report of violation of basic laws and rights of the local people. The Supreme Court has asked for yet another report, before it gives the final verdict!

In the northern districts of Orissa, sponge iron factories have mushroomed, spewing effluents into rivers, and spoiling agricultural land. In Sundargarh district alone, more than 60 sponge iron factories

have affected people in nearly 600 villages. Similar are the stories in the districts of Mayurbhanj, and Keonjhar where sponge iron plants have spoilt rivers, and laid waste tribal lands. Protests by tribal villages, are suppressed by arrests, and false cases.

The main article in this book was published just a few months before the Kalinganagar event, and in its analysis of tribal responses almost foretells the event. The massacre, for it is little else, is only the last in a series so far. One fervently hoped, after the event that now at least the state would see reason, and begin a dialogue and discussion with the tribal communities on what should be the human face of development, instead of selling the land and the state to profit centred corporations. But, that is not to be, Resettlement and Rehabilitation policies and Acts are provided as the pat solution. It does not need an astute mind to realise, they are but the gloss on the inhuman scale of disaster that the government hand in glove with private and multi-national corporations plans to perpetrate on the indigenous world. This gloss will give them the excuse to go ahead with more such projects, till perhaps there will be no indigenous peoples left. The ethnic cleansing will be complete.

This small booklet is an effort to highlight the courage and endurance of the tribal people as they make desperate bids to survive. The last five hundred years' history of the indigenous communities is a history of decimation and genocide, justified by western led paradigms of 'scientific' development. Now, in our own country, governments have taken to cleansing of the tribal people, following a western lead paradigm of globalisation. In the four write-ups in this book we seek to understand the responses of the local communities to such repression, and the global processes that seek an annihilation of all things wise and wonderful. We hope that a time will come when ancient wisdoms will once again be valued, and we shall learn to live together, and not on the destroyed and forgotten histories and identities of our brethren, the tribal people of our country.

**Vidhya Das**

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## **Chronicle of A Struggle; The Kashipur Anti-Mining Movement**

In 1993, 21 tribal women met the Chief Minister in Orissa to demand action on a 10-point charter of demands. Pointing out the havoc caused by displacement due to large-scale projects the women appealed to the Chief Minister to put a check on the mining activities coming up in Rayagada and Kalahandi. They cited the example of the Upper Indravati project where thousands of displaced families were suffering untold hardships. "They got compensation money did they not?" the Chief Minister shot back. The discussion ended there.

Extensive bauxite mining was being planned in the region, which forms part of the East Coast deposits. These are high-grade deposits, with low

silica content, which place India in the enviable (or unenviable, depending from which angle you look at it) position of becoming the lowest cost producer of high quality, internationally competitive alumina.<sup>1</sup> The Baphlimali deposits, part of these reserves and the site of the ongoing struggle in Kashipur, occur on the northwest border of the Kashipur Block in Rayagada District. These deposits have been identified as the bauxite source for the Utkal Alumina project, with a deposit life of more than 60 years for a One Million Tonnes Per Annum (MTPA) plant. Additional reserves of a similar grade have also been identified in nearby areas, including Kodingamali and Sasbahumali, that could be tapped to provide for a 60-year plant life at two MTPA. According to the promoters, "Utkal is the lowest cost greenfield opportunity in our knowledge."

In 1992, INDAL entered into an agreement with Orissa Mining Corporation for the transfer of its prospecting lease for the Baphlimali Plateau, and subsequently, approached the Government for permission to set up a 100 per cent Export Oriented Unit (EOU) Alumina Refinery plant in Kashipur. Other International players in the aluminium sector, including Norsk Hydro of Norway and Alcan of

Canada joined in equity participation, and the Utkal Alumina International Limited (UAIL) was formed. In 1993, TISCO joined the group, but subsequently withdrew. In December 2001, Norsk Hydro also withdrew from the Joint venture and the UAIL partners are presently Indal (55 per cent share) and Alcan (45 per cent share).

Almost at the same time as UAIL, Larsen & Toubro entered into a partnership with Alcoa for a prospecting lease over the Kutrumali Plateau, on the northeast border of Kashipur. Both the Baphlimali as well as the Kutrumali deposits are bordered by Kalahandi on the other side.

The Chief Minister's negative response at the 1993 meeting did not discourage the tribals of Kashipur. Resolved not to submit to a fate thrust upon them by cold blooded market arithmetic, the people began with petitions and appeals to the administration and the state, and went on to peaceful demonstrations, rallies and road blocks, as the state continued in its indifference. The most important issues raised were:

- Land acquisition in the name of public purpose does not equate to tribal interest. The

influx of non-tribals into the area will change the nature of the scheduled areas as defined by the constitution.

– The identity, culture and socio-economic environment of these indigenous cultures will be affected.

– The process of consultation with the affected population has been totally absent.

Three different organisations, the Baphli Mali Suraksha Parishad, the Prakrutik Sampad Suraksha Parishad and the Anchalik Suraksha Parishad, formed fronts against the work of different corporate partnerships in different parts of the block. Several other people's organisations have also been formed in and around the bauxite deposits of Kashipur, such as the Gaon Mati Surakshya Parishad (against UAIL), the Bankashyam Surakshya Parishad and the Vasundhara Surakshya Parishad (both against the Aditya Birla group), and the Sasabahumali Surakshya Parishad (against Sterlite).

All these people's organisations had a steering group and had strategic linkages with the movements such as the National Alliance of People's

Movements (NAPM), Narmada Bachao Andolan and other national level groups.

As the agitation gathered momentum, the corporate interests struck back. The backlash was through criminal and lumpen elements. Misdirected youth on the lookout for easy money and other incentives were used to suppress the legitimate voice of the indigenous community. In the first incident of its kind, a team of farmers from the neighbouring district of Nabarangpur on a visit to a watershed sight developed by Agramee, were brutally beaten up along with the Agramee workers accompanying them. A case was registered, but, no arrests were made. This doubtless encouraged the paid anti-socials in the area, and they took to terrorising innocent women and men wherever they could. Women stopped going to the market place, they became scared of even going to the riverside for their daily washing. The men were infuriated, but afraid of the 'law' and several confrontations took place. Cases were registered on either side and villagers repeatedly arrested. The paid thugs of the corporates, several with criminal records, walked around with complete freedom. In all this, members of Agramee were implicated time and again in

false cases along with the tribal people, and things went from bad to worse.

In 1997, in a series of confrontations between the mining and anti-mining groups, the Agragamee campus in Sunger Panchayat of Kashipur Block, Rayagada district, and Kerpai Panchayat in Thuamulrampur, Kalahandi district, and the mining camp of Larsen and Toubro in Sunger were attacked and vandalised. In the several cases that were filed as a result, innocent people from several neighbouring villagers were named as offenders and eventually rounded up and imprisoned for 21 days. Once again, the true criminal elements were untouched. In the night, the police raided these villages after the men were arrested, confiscating cooking and agricultural implements as 'weapons of violence'! In December 1998, the state government issued a ban order against Agragamee, instructing all government departments and officers to have no dealings with the organisation and all possible avenues for support were denied. Subsequently, a show-cause notice for deregistration, to cancel Agragamee's Registration under the Societies Act was served. Agragamee's workers were persistently harassed as they were implicated in numerous legal cases.

In another struggle against the UAIL Group in Kucheipadar Panchayat, women blocked the entry of the Norsk Hydro Officers into their village. In the legal battle that followed, the leaders of the movement were arrested, and so were eight members from Agragamee. The corporates, however were still unable to enter the project area, and increased the pressure on the state government to quell people's protests. Neither the state nor the corporates even considered opening up channels of communication with the local community to convince them of the stated 'benefits' of the project. Perhaps this was because no benefits existed. On the contrary, the state increased the police presence in the area, and plans were made to open more police outposts in strategic places.

Gradually, the outside world woke up to the heroic struggle of the tribal people of Kashipur and the media started giving coverage to the other side as well, despite the pressure from the companies concerned. Human rights' groups and activists from other movements came out in support, writing to the Chief Minister, seeking withdrawal of cases against the tribal people, and providing direct support by being with the community and

providing them with inputs for taking the movement forward. Support was also mobilised for an Environment Impact Assessment by an independent group as neither UAIL, nor Larsen & Toubro were providing copies of any studies they had undertaken in the region. A high-level team of former government officials led by Prof. Muchkund Dubey, (Former Foreign Secretary) from the Centre for Social Development (CSD), New Delhi arrived to study the situation in January 1999. Intent on defusing tension and creating an understanding climate for the mineral exploitation and industrial development of an underdeveloped tribal region, the group was aghast at the often-violent police action that had been taken against a tribal community and the courage and conviction of members of the community. Their report highlighted the brave action of the women and the needless intimidatory presence of the police even when there was just a general meeting in the area.

Things started building up in 1999 when an All Party Committee (APC) under the leadership of the young MLA, Bibhishan Majhi was formed to promote mining. Bibhishan had won the elections because of his role in the people's movement against

the mining companies that threatened their land and livelihood. However, as politicians are wont to do, on winning the elections he made a complete U-turn, choosing to forget about the people and his own past. The APC met the Chief Minister, appealing to him to impose a ban on the local voluntary organisations, as they were carrying on anti-mining activities. Money was pumped into the area and the contractor class was mobilised to build roads and bridges in strategic areas. In response, the people organised large protests and demonstrations, drawing crowds 5,000 to 10,000 strong! The all party political formation realised that despite their 'all-party' support, there was no real people's support for them. Indeed, the APC was revealed for what it was, a political formation without people! Tensions built up by December 2000, when the All Party political formation tried to force its way into a people's meeting near Maikanch. Massive police force was deployed with a mandate to use force to crack down violently on the villages which were spearheading the resistance. Eventually, the inevitable happened, and three innocent tribal lives were lost when the police carried out their mandate.

But, as has happened with most civil disobedience movements down the ages, the deaths of Abhilash, Jamdhar and Raghunath only strengthened the movement. The international outcry against this repressive state action forced the Orissa Government to order a judicial commission of inquiry. The inconclusive findings of the Commission was taken as a go ahead signal by the state and UAIL. Following a massive staged public gathering in Tikiri, in which people were provided transport and food to attend the meeting, mining activities were once again taken up with gusto.

On September 11, 2004, local newspapers carried reports of Pali (local ward) sabha meetings in this remote block. "All obstacles to the much awaited Utkal Alumina Project have been removed", read the first line of a news report titled "Villagers finally Agree to have an Alumina Plant in Kashipur" in Dainik Bhaskar, a local daily. The report further stated that in three villages, D. Karal, Kendukhunti and Ramibeda, the villagers had unanimously agreed to the establishment of the alumina plant. "The last 10 years of uncertainty surrounding the Rs.5,000 crores alumina project has finally been set to rest" stated the report, explaining that the three Pali Sabhas had been organised by the Rayagada

District Collector with substantial police protection to avoid any untoward incident. But, the report assures us, things went off peacefully, unlike in the past, except for a group of people under the leadership of Bhagwan Majhi who shouted slogans against the project. The District Collector talked to them, assuring that their demands would be looked into. The news report concludes with the statement; a wave of happiness has swept over Rayagada District.

While nobody questioned the validity of a Pali Sabha, (by definition a smaller unit of the Gram Sabha in states with larger Panchayats) organised in the presence of a police force, this action of the District Collector was seen as doing away with all local opposition, and was backed by a statement from the Chief Minister, that anybody coming in the way of mining and industrialisation will be severely dealt with, and so things began to move in the Panchayats of Kucheipadar and Tikiri for the setting up of mining and processing units for bauxite and alumina. A lathi-charge against protesting demonstrators on December 1, 2004, appears to have set the ground for the present phase of the project. Since then, police presence in the region has been

increased manifold, and work is going ahead at gun point. Several people, including women, have been arrested and there is increasing pressure on the people to accept bribes and turn informers, leading to the identification and arrest of key leaders. According to a People's Union for Democratic Rights report; "The area is teeming with armed policemen, including Indian Reserve Battalion (IRB) personnel... after police bullets claimed three lives and injured many more in Maikanch village in 2000, today again terror is in the air. Another Maikanch is just waiting to happen. In an area that desperately needs more schools and healthcare facilities, money is being spent to set up a new police outpost on the company's properties at Doraguda near D. Karal village, that too against the expressed wish of villagers and their panchayat. For all practical purposes, the police are acting like a private army for the company. They are operating out of UAIL premises, and village eyewitnesses allege that the food for the camping policemen comes from the company.

"The terror tactics are many... policemen from Tikiri routinely raid village haats (and villages) in search of people from the protesting villages wanted in one criminal case or another. Not just the leaders

or activists, all villagers live under the shadow of arbitrary arrests. ... The fact of the matter is that only those protesting against the UAIL project are being arrested. All the cases registered in the context of mining are against the protesters.”<sup>2</sup>

Corporates backed by the state are a mighty force, and can move many things. Utkal Alumina International Limited has its sights set on an extremely lucrative alumina project in the Baphlimali deposits in Kashipur. Despite local opposition, they have tried to force their way in. Like other business groups, they have played successfully on the weakness of the Government and quite literally bought them out. Twelve years from its inception, they have been able to push their agenda of profits over people through. It appears that a few tribal lives sacrificed for such valuable alumina is nothing in the larger scheme of things. The way things are going, even more lives could be sacrificed and it would mean nothing to the Birlas and Alcans of this world. So lucrative are the deposits in Baphli Mali that the Engineers India Limited Feasibility Report, projects that the UAIL can become one of the, if not the lowest cost alumina plant in the world!<sup>3</sup>

The Birla group, which has a major equity stake in Indal, (97 per cent), has announced major investments in the aluminium sector in Orissa. Apart from the Utkal Alumina, they also have plans to start the Aditya Birla with the Kodingamali deposits. A Rs.16,000 crore investment is being planned by Hindalco, the flagship company of the Birlas, in the aluminium sector. This plan is targeted to place the Birlas amongst the top 10 producers in the global aluminium market, and give it a comfortable edge over its Indian competitors in business in general and the aluminium sector in particular. The Rs. 16,000 crore investment plan for aluminium will flow into two projects - the Utkal Alumina Project and the Aditya Aluminium Project - both based in Orissa. The bauxite deposits of Orissa have been identified as the biggest reserve of quality bauxite, comparable to the best in the world, attracting global mining giants like the \$15 billion BHP Billiton.<sup>4</sup>

**Attracting the Hawks:** Orissa has huge reserves of iron ore as well. According to a report in Steelworld, Orissa is endowed with huge natural resources, especially iron ore. The foremost advantage for mining projects in the state is the easy

logistical support. The long coastline has proved beneficial for existing companies and will enable the cheap export of finished goods to all possible locations. As a result, Orissa has become an attractive destination for steel makers.<sup>5</sup> An offshoot of this is the clamour from groups such as the Tatas to build ports such as Dhamra for the import of coal and extraction of steel. This itself will have its own consequences on the livelihoods of thousands of families as well as on the environment.

Underlining Orissa's advantages in the mineral sector, at a session titled "Towards a seamless internal market" at the National conference and Annual Session of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in New Delhi last month, the Chief Minister made an upbeat presentation, pointing out that Orissa was giving emphasis to industrialisation while protecting the environment and that it had signed agreements with the leading industrial houses of India. According to him, Orissa's GDP was targeted to grow at over seven per cent in the next 10 to 12 years.<sup>6</sup>

However, things are not so easy. Orissa has a predominantly agrarian population. The several MOUs that have been signed have already caused

much dissent and dissatisfaction in different parts of the state. In Jajpur, local demonstration against a steel plant which would displace more than 6,000 people from more than 13 villages led to violent police repression and several deaths; in Koraput, 3,000 tribals marched in silent protest against bauxite exploitation in Mali Parvat in Semiliguda Block. The state Government in an effort to throw some sops, has promised to settle household land for more than two lakh landless people in the next three years, and tree planting schemes are to be taken up extensively in the tribal areas.

Would such sops be enough? The processes of governance and administration in this country and especially in Orissa over the last several decades, have pushed tribal communities to the margins of survival. The Chief Minister might talk of settling land and protecting the environment, but almost all change in the tribal areas, over the last two decades has been for the worse, with indicators such as distress migration, malnutrition, drought and crop failure only increasing. In such a scenario, when the long-suffering tribal communities turn round and assert their rights, it is with their backs against a precipice, clinging on to their only remaining means

of survival, their land and forests. History knows that it does not take much to push such a tribal community over the edge.

In Kashipur, the tribal villages have been protesting against the appropriation of their land and homes for mining projects for more than 10 years now. It takes immense courage, perseverance and determination for a tribal community to carry on such resistance for such a long period and against such odds. But now they are up against an armed police force, who have been given a virtual *carte blanche* to repress freedom, without any checks. The war of attrition is almost complete. A people struggling just to survive, fight against injustice with extremely limited means. Governments on the other hand, hand-in-glove as they are with market forces, can mobilise immense forces to put down such movements. Corporations and governments know that sooner or later the local community will give in... and the government which is supposed to be a democracy of, by and for the people, will claim a great 'victory', having defeated its most marginalised peoples in their fight for human rights and justice. In the bargain it will have 'taught a lesson' to other deprived and marginalised sections

who might have similar aspirations! What a victory! In neighbouring Kalahandi district, Sterlite made its entry much later, but the project has progressed much faster. People have already been thrown out of four villages and 'resettled' in colonies to make way for the mining of the beautiful Niyamgiri hills in Lanjigarh for bauxite. Here too, there was local resistance, and mock Gram Sabhas, surrounded by armed police, silencing the people's voices. It was this that probably provided the modus operandi for the Rayagada administration in its efforts to help the cause of UAIL.

However, Sterlite's operations have been questioned by the Centrally Empowered Committee (CEC), on the grounds of legal violation of environmental laws. The company's plea not to consider the order by the Central Empowered Committee was rejected by the Supreme Court on May 13, 2005. But reports indicate that on the ground, things are going from bad to worse. The earlier Forest Secretary, who had a pro-people profile has been changed, and the state appears to have turned a blind eye to the Supreme Court's Decision! A letter in the Independent Media Network carried on May 27, 2005 reports "The work is proceeding

at a ferocious pace despite the CEC/Supreme Court rulings, and... with blatant disregard for human life. There seem to have been well over 100 deaths... I've heard accounts of at least a dozen work deaths, (during my visit to Belambar in Lanjigarh yesterday)."<sup>6</sup>

Of late, the Kashipur movement has slowed down, with the state joining hands with the MNCs to bribe, divide, lure and above all terrorise the people through a massive police presence, which has the mandate to repress through midnight village raids, uncontrolled use of the lathi, threats and even sexual abuse. Innocent villagers now have serious legal charges against them. Many have been served non-bailable warrants. New police barracks are under construction in many places and old ones are being expanded. For the 'development' of the tribal people, a large-capacity jail has been promised near Kashipur town! The administration proudly claims, that it has 'taken care' of the anti-mining people and groups. The media is almost entirely bought over and is falling over itself to promote the cause of the MNCs. Reliable sources have even told us that the elections to the Orissa Journalists' Union is being financed by the mining corporations! Larsen &

Toubro and Aditya Aluminium, which were lying low after the Maikanch police firing have also resurfaced and are about to start their operations. But it is wrong to say that the Kashipur movement has melted away. On May 25, 2005 there was a fairly large demonstration despite the presence of 10 police platoons and the sealing of all roads to Kashipur.

Kashipur is simmering and it is anybody's guess what the future portends. Pushed to the brink, whether the people will choose the path of violence or civil disobedience is to be seen in the coming months. The movement has little political support, with the Congress, Biju Janata Dal and Bharatiya Janata Party openly backing the corporations. Civil society organisations in Orissa has have also sought to distance themselves from the Kashipur movement, fearing a state backlash. The government of Orissa claims that the Samatha judgment is not applicable to Orissa meaning that any amount of land in scheduled areas can be acquired for mining and industries. Perhaps the intention is that the tribals can be dispensed with in this so-called process of 'development'.

In the tribal regions, where humans live in close proximity to nature, the forests and wildlife can

perhaps help human communities much more than an elected government, as our wildlife and environmental laws are much stronger than human rights laws. With the intervention of the CEC, the struggle of the tribal communities in Lanjigarh has gained strength from the environmental activists. In Kashipur, too, the environmental question needs to be properly raised. Bauxite mining is one of the most environmentally-destructive processes known. The slag to ore ratio is 3:1, which means that for every tonne of alumina produced, there will be three tonnes of highly caustic slag! This will be dumped as red mud in downstream areas, destroying agricultural land, surface and sub-soil water, and causing unnamed diseases and ailments. UAIL does not even appear to have obtained environmental clearance for the project. According to a Canadian based Kashipur solidarity group, 'Alcan't in India', despite, earlier verbal agreements, Alcan, UAIL's Canadian partner, has refused to disclose any part of the 1995 Environmental Impact Assessment prepared by Engineers India Ltd., during their meeting with Michael Hanley, CEO of Alcan's Bauxite and Aluminium Division, on June 16, 2004. According to Hanley, the project's governmental approval had expired three years ago and was thus

no longer relevant to the proposed project. (probeinternational website, Saanet.org, July 7, 2004).

Humans and animals share a common environment, a common planet. If there is sensitivity about the environment, there will be sensitivity about human beings too and vice versa. Governments cannot just run ahead with plans for industrial development and ignore the voices of indigenous human communities. They might do so using legal and supra-legal loopholes, but, in the long run, this is a recipe for environmental disaster. And the long-run is fast becoming the short run, as the planet heats up, the ice caps in the Arctic and Antarctic melt and sea levels rise across the earth. The struggle of the people of Kashipur is not just a struggle of a tribal David against an MNC Goliath, it is a voice of sanity, that seeks to re-establish the bonds that human beings have with other inhabitants on this lonely planet.

**Achyut Das**  
**Vidya Das**

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## **The Anti-Mining Struggle in Kashipur: Time Line of Events**

*1993* : UAIL started as a joint venture of TATA, Alcan, and Norsk Hydro begins survey work in Kashipur Block.

*11.11.1993*: A team of 18 members from Kashipur meet the Chief Minister, demanding to know what are the implications of the mining for the local community.

*1994*: Not getting any response, Kucheipadar village restricts entry of UAIL vehicles into the area.

*23.04.1995* : Police arrest leaders Maharaj Majhi and Gurunatha Majhi of Kucheipadar.

21.01.1996: UAIL organises a meeting near Kucheipadar for mobilisation and motivation of the local people;

14.02.1996: A gathering of more than 10000 people in Kucheipadar launches the "PRAKRUTIK SAMPADA SURAKSHYA PARISAD".

*June 1996:* Land acquisition for the UAIL begins. Force, coercion and threats are used by the local administration to get people's signatures on the necessary documents and accept compensation.

09.09.1996: A public meeting and demonstration by ten thousand tribals in Tikiri in front of the UAIL office, protesting against the mining project;

13.03.1997: UAIL organise a free Eye camp at Kucheipadar to influence people in favour of company.

*July 1997:* UAIL start construction work for the Resettlement Colony near Damakarala village.

10.08.199: Protests and demonstrations are taken up by tribals, and construction work for the

resettlement colony is discontinued. False cases are filed against 16 people from Kucheipadar.

*22.11.1997:* People of Kashipur submit a memorandum to Chief Minister through Collector, Rayagada.

*23.11.1997:* A demonstration and protest march is organised in Tikiri by the Prakrutik Sampada Suraksha Parisad , where more than 5000 tribal people demand that the UAIL withdraw from Kashipur.

*05.01.1998:* Mining vehicles try to push through the blockade put up by PSSP, with the help of the police. As people gather in protest, the police lathicharge and tear gas the crowd, injuring 12 women and 34 men.

*20.4.1998:* The local dailies 'Prajatantra' and others carry reports of a review meeting for the UAIL, organised by the district Administration. The reports highlight that the people who would be affected by the UAIL boycotted the meeting.

16.06.98: Police raid Agramee Campuses in Mallijharan and Kashipur, and arrest their workers, booking them under false cases.

23.10.1998: Local dailies report on the boycott of the public hearing organised by the Pollution Control Board on the UAIL project.

31.12.98: Government of Orissa issues a notice against 4 Voluntary Organisations (Agramee, Ankuran, Lakhan Nayak Society for Rural Development, and WIDA) in Koraput and Rayagada districts for preventing industrial development in the districts, and instructs all government departments and offices not to have any dealings with them.

24.12.1998: A notice is issued against Agramee and Lakhan Nayak Society for Rural Development, to Show Cause why they should not be deregistered as they are carry preventing the development of the region by taking up anti-industrial activities.

11-18 Janury 1999: A high level team of retired bureaucrats of Government of India visit Kashipur to study the socio-economic impact of the mining

projects on the local community, and assess the ground situation. They advise the Government to withdraw the cases against the leaders of the movement, and begin a constructive dialogue with the tribal community.

*11.6.2000:* An all party committee is formed for the promotion of mining in Kashipur, under the leadership of the BJD MLA, Bibhishan Majhi;

*21.6.2000:* Members of the All Party Committee meet the Chief Minister and ask him to take stern measures against the voluntary organisations which are preventing the setting up of the mining projects;

*15.12. 2000:* Members of the All Party Committee, including the District BJD President, Bhaskar Rao go to Maikanch, a village at the foothills of UAIL mining site for a public meeting;

*16.12.2000:* Three platoons of police sent to Maikanch village by the district Administration, resulting in the death of three tribals in police firing;

*20.12.2000:* Show of solidarity and peaceful protest by 20000 tribals in Rupkana junction, which marks the entrance to Kashipur Block.;

*January 2001:* Protests and demonstrations by NGOs and activists against the Maikanch killings continue. The State Government is forced to take action.

*20.01.2001:* A Judicial Commission of Inquiry headed by Justice P.K. Mishra is appointed by the state Government to Inquire into the killings.

*17.12.2001:* Lead investor Norsk Hydro decides to divest its share from the project. Alcan eventually takes over a portion of Norsk's investment in 2003, giving Alcan a total 45% share and Indal (Alcan's former Indian subsidiary) holding the remaining 55%.

*17.10.2003:* The Justice P.K. Mishra Commission submits its reports, and only a synopsis of the report is released by the Government.

*05.11.2003:* Hindu Business Line: Indal CEO Dr. S.K Tamotia "hopeful that its ongoing... alumina project in Orissa will be completed without further delay."

*16.12.2004:* First solidarity demonstration in Montreal, commemorating shooting deaths of three

villagers. Alcan fails to state any clear position on its investment.

*19.03.2004:* The Hindu Business Line carries reports of Birlas Rs.8500 crore investment for aluminium smelting in Orissa, for which The Orissa Government has allotted a bauxite mine at Raygada district, with a proven reserve of about 85 billion tonnes of bauxite.

*14.04.2004:* In a Economic Times article, " Officials in the Orissa government confirmed that Utkal Alumina International (UAIL) has started rehabilitation and resettlement work at the plant and mining sites. "

*June 2004:* The Report of Justice P.K. Mishra Commission is tabled in the Assembly, and the findings of the report are made public.

*09.09.2004 :* District Collector, along with a 500 strong police force, and several officers holds 'Pali Sabha' Meetings in three villages in Kucheipadar Panchayat, to have people's consent for the Utkal Alumina Mining project;

*01.12.2004:* Police lathicharge a group of people, as they protest the construction of a police outpost in

Damakara village. Several people are injured. 8 of the injured, including two women are arrested and taken to jail in Rayagada.

16.12.2004: Solidarity day observed to commemorate the martyrdom of Abhilash, Raghunath and Jamdhar, as in the previous three years. Left Party MLAs prevented from joining the event, by pro-mining group in Tikiri township, where the UAIL had set up its office.

**Notes:**

1. Summary Feasibility report Utkal Alumina Project, 1994; Utkal Alumina (Private) Limited, Pg.1
2. Extract from the PUDR Report; DNRN Network, May 3, 2005
3. Summary Feasibility report Utkal Alumina Project, 1994; Utkal Alumina (Private) Limited, Pg.3
4. Kumar's big Bets Business world, 27.9.2004
5. Orissa Flooded With Iron and Steel Plant Proposal, August 2004, Research Paper, SteelWorld.com
6. India Infoline News, August 5, 2005.
7. Felix Padel, Independent Media, May 27, 2005.

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## **Globalisation And Genocide**

The Kalinganagar event of 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2006, is indicative of a deep malaise within society. Twelve tribal people were shot dead, but, the issue does not end there, nor is it just the beginning. The event, and the subsequent posturing of the different political parties symbolises the utter disregard our political leaders have for the lives and dignities of our indigenous communities. Quite apart from the murder, we need to understand, that it was a desperate attempt of a state to accede to the demands of the corporations, who are like a Godzilla let loose, with an endless thirst for earths most primary resources. It is not just globalisation, but the globalisation of the most degenerate values that leads to such action. The market forces have always capitalised on man's most mean and base desires.

These forces over history have not stopped at using human beings like and even much worse than animals, and getting rid of human communities if they came in the way of their desires.

Tribal communities, by the very way they live have celebrated diversity and nature's bounty, they have developed a nurturing system, and the most noble of human values. Thus, they have egalitarian systems of resource sharing, their decision making processes are democratic, and inclusive, their world view is premised on co-existence with other creations of nature. There have been perhaps warrior tribes, but, by and large the tribal communities in our country have preserved and sustained their resources and their non-human fellows on this planet.

Modern day development is premised on a sharp divide between the self and the other. This sharp divide begins with the cutting off, physically and mentally of creatures other than human beings. One is only master of what one can fully and if need be violently control. This is a world view based on fear exclusion, and mistrust, and a false illusion of immortality; if one can protect oneself enough, then

one can live endlessly. Gradually the fear and mistrust extends to other human beings. Thus, the lesser beings are not just animals, but also human beings who are not like us. One must protect whatever one can for myself, and others like me, be they however small in number. This is a casteist and racial divide, engraved in the minds of the elite that does not stop at inhuman violence against the other, to secure their own interests. Meghnath, an activist and director from Jharkhand made the film *Development flows from the barrel of a gun*. In this he shows in graphic detail, how police have been used to repress the other, which is the poor, in the rural and tribal hinterlands. Their resistance has been very often met with merciless killing. In this film, there are five episodes, the first being the Miakanch firing, in which tribal people have struggled against mining and industrialisation. Three tribals were shot dead in this struggle by the police. The second is the Koel Karo project, in which tribal communities have expressed their dissent for several years. The police fired on a sitting group of people in this case, and murdered 8 of them. In Madhyapradesh, in Dewas, tribal communities took steps to protect their forests. The government

perhaps did not like that people should take on a role their own forces could not perform. The police went on a rampage in several villages. 7 people were killed. In Chhattisgarh, tribal people questioned the Nagarnar steel project. The police opened fire on a protesting group of people, and injured 45 of them. In Gujarat, Colonel Save died in police custody, when he lead a protest against the construction of a port in the coastal zone.

The divide in these cases has been brought out in sharp focus, as one realises that on one side we have a people who are fighting to celebrate life, stay with nature and preserve her riches, on the other side are forces concerned with their petty megalomaniac selves, and the systems that help to preserve these.

In Orissa, apart from Maikanch, and now Kalinganagar, the police have turned their guns on innocent people several times, taking many lives. In 1999, in Mandrabaju, in Gajapati, the police fired on tribal people who were demanding their land. Along with one woman, eleven people died. Everybody, would know about the Maikanch firing. In Nawrangpur, police fired on two occasions on

tribal people. Eight people died as a result. In Chilika, the traditional fishermen raised their voices against leasing out of the Chilika lagoon to commercial interests. The police quelled the protest by killing 5 fishermen. All over Orissa, such events continue to take place. Other states are not far behind, in Muthanga, in Kerala, tribal people demanded that they be given land, promised to them for long. Their demand was met with guns, and one person died. In the Northeast regions, people being killed by police or army bullets is a frequent occurrence.

But, the repression does not end with bullets. It is known that crores of tribals and dalits have been displaced by large dams, industries, and mines. These communities have been obliterated by History, and have lost their identities, and their cultural moorings. After independence, more than two and a half crore people have been displaced in India. Nobody knows where they have gone and how they survive. This is more than a genocide, as these people are forced to live without any memories. Our governments policies of walking roughshod over lives of indigenous communities and

annihilation of peoples' livelihoods and living systems is the face of globalisation which does not even blink at ethnic cleansing, and genocide. Few people would disagree with this. Millions of rupees, or rather dollars have been poured into research, and studies on the cultural and heritage consequences of industries, and volumes have been written on how displacement and 'involuntary resettlement' has not just affected local communities but, destroyed them. There is little that a person like me can say on this, which has not been said before, and with money behind, it is packaged in much more beautiful and moving language. But, these are writings by Elliot's hollow men, stuffed men, propped up by the global corporations to gloss over their inhuman destruction. There is little concern after these writings to reduce the genocide, in fact these writings are taken as sufficient attention to the concerns of the 'lesser' other and the march of corporatised destruction goes on.

Global capital symbolises genocide, as is apparent from histories of the slave trade on which the industrialisation process is premised, the annihilation of the Red-Indians of North America,

or the indigenous communities of South America, or the aborigines of Australia. This has spread to almost complete destruction of local communities in several instances. Today's neo-capitalism has been described by Naom Chomsky with detailed inputs on the perceptions and values that guide the process, and the way it has changed the geo-politics of the world. In 1988, Chico Mendes fought to save the rain forests of South America and the local communities. But, the rain forests were destroyed, even as Mendes was killed by the capitalist forces for the establishment of ranches, and cattle farms. This not only affected the local communities, but also caused huge environmental imbalances. Marco Polo, a Canadian Multinational giant got the lease for mining tin in the island of Miranduki in Philippines. The toxic effluents of Marco Polo quite destroyed the local flora and fauna of the island, and also disrupted the lives of the local people. The beautiful Mangroves of the island were lost, and fisherman were forced to give up fishing, till now, thousands of people are undergoing treatment, affected by the toxic effluents. Much nearer, in Bhopal, the Union Carbide Genocide, left the multi-nationals untouched, while affected people, who did

manage to live still suffer more than twenty years after the event.

In Nigeria, Shell spread its pipe-lines all over the land of the Ogonies to extract oil and natural gas. The resistance of the people had little impact, as the profits were monopolised by Shell, and Nigerian government. Ken Saro Wiwa, the Ogoni leader who questioned this was imprisoned, and finally executed. The world watched in mute silence. The number of Ogoni families affected by Shell cannot even be guessed. In Canada, the indigenous communities living around Wollaston Lake were affected by the Uranium mines. They undertook a massive movement against this mining, which affected their lives, food, and future generations, as they ingested radiated food, and had to breathe in radiation emanating from the effluents. In India, our Wollaston is still happening, as tribal communities around the Jaduguda Uranium mines suffer untold hardships and congenital malformations become the norm of children born in this generation.

As Indonesian continue to butcher the West Papuans, the tribal and indigenous communities working in the mines and industries of Indonesia

lead a miserable life, suffering from different diseases and malnutrition. The aboriginals tribal communities of Papua New Guinea who have nowhere to go because of their poverty, and are forced to lead a life worse than death in the mines of Indonesia are the victims of genocidal tendencies of the educated elite from Java Sumatra and Bali, who are bent on marginalising them more and more.

The ethnic cleansing that took place in Nazi Germany only symbolises the violence inherent in processes which create and enhance difference between different communities. It symbolises the distrust and hatred of one group of people against another, where the victims are regarded as sub-human, and the perpetrators subsume the logic and rationale of a Demonic God. Again, nearer home, the massacre of a people in Gujarat was almost predicted by writers in various journals premised on the situations and circumstances that developed after the closure of the textile and spinning mills in Ahmedabad, to make way for global capitalism.

Godzilla and Frankenstein are creations of fiction, which are still very far off from the real face of terror that local communities face from Globalisation, and

the unlimited spread of corporate tentacles. This is not rhetoric, just picture yourself in the place of tribal family. If one day, you are given a notice to move wily nily, with little options but to accept stupid paper notes, in the place of your secured job, and easy access facilities, and lovely house..... you might move, as else, guns would move you down, but, well a lot of things inside you would be shattered. Today, corporates have trapped country governments in their web, and are now ready to take down the last frontiers of sanity, and human endeavour. Is there no option but to watch in helpless terror ?

**Achyut Das**

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## **Kalinganagar : A First Impression Report**

She is my sister, and these are my nieces he says, as we stand by the dead of the Kalinganagar massacre. The trauma is still etched on his face. My companion takes out her camera and clicks several shots. The people standing by helpfully draw back the cloth from the faces of the dead. The first woman looks like she is sleeping, not, so the second woman. The bullet has shattered her nose and upper jaw. The cloth on her face is stained black. How long did she struggle for her life, I wonder. The other two dead are men. "We do not know how many bodies the police dragged into their jeep, and disposed off on the way they say, but, we know for sure 13 people are dead." Reports from the medical hospital, we visited indicate that two more people have died, one

person on the way, and another person in the hospital.

We are on the road taking us into Kalinganagar industrial area, the people have barricaded the road, and let us pass on to this spot, only after verifying our bonafides. We cannot talk to the people manning the barricades. 'only the committee can speak to you, they tell us pointing further down the road. Can we go there we ask. Yes, since you are press it is alright they say. Ravi who is with us is an activist, and has been to the area several times, people recognise him, and so, our identity is not questioned, though we do not carry press cards. Several vehicles of various opposition parties pass us by as we go on. On the way, we pass several young men carrying sticks. Tell Naveen Patnaik, if he kills the police who shot our people we will give him one lakh they shout as we pass by. We eventually come on a large gathering of people. A lot of speech making is going on. Further on, on four beds, the dead have been laid out. How were the women killed I ask; they opened fire suddenly, and shot into the crowd they say, these women were in front. It does seem as if people had not really begun to organise into a march or rally. Hearing reports of work starting, they had begun

to gather at the spot, with an intention of stopping the dozers. 'There must have been six or seven hundred police men, we were only about 200' they say. Indeed, this is a fair approximation. Fourteen platoons, according to the police themselves, 27 according to the local reports, had been brought into the construction area on the morning of January second. They had been stationed in the nearby police headquarters in Duburi for about a week. They surrounded the worksite. The firing appears to have been quite indiscriminate. People have been shot on the abdomen, on the face. Even little children have bullet wounds they tell us.

It is difficult to get a coherent story, the trauma is still too fresh in people's minds. But, the purpose and intent is clear, we shall not leave till the Tata Company withdraws and the Government lets us live in peace in our villages they say. People in other villages, 600 families, have been driven out of their land we are told. They eke their living from stone crushing. Stone crusher units are every where. The hills have been carved up for quarrying. These are being taken for the construction work. Leaves of the few trees left standing on the road side have turned grey with quarrying and traffic dust.

The Visthapan Virodhi Manch is well organised. There is a group at the first barricade. They check ones credentials, and then let them pass. We shall not let anybody from the Government come here they tell us. Further on, women and men listen to the speech making. Lunch is being cooked a half kilometre down the road, in a hut, with the help of Manch funds, and food is brought to the spot by volunteers. Young women and men move up and down with lathis, there is tension in the air, but, there is no sense of confusion and chaos. Volunteers have also accompanied the injured in Cuttack medical hospital, and they take turns to sit by the patients. Food has also been organised here. We did not have any problem of paying for the vehicle, that is being looked into by the Manch, we are told by the relatives of the sick in Cuttack medical hospital. *If there is a law and order problem, it has been created by the government the previous day.*

There are many young people carrying bows and arrows. We never used them, they tell us, we carry it for self defence. However, this carrying of traditional weapons only seems to be some kind of a moral booster. All of them agree that they cannot really defend themselves with these in case of a police

attack, although they explain very proudly the ballistics of this ancient missile, with feathers twisted around the rear end. The actual site of the killings is completely deserted. The police have also gone, and the people along with the dead have moved onto the road. How long will they campaign on this spot, will the government which one must remember was elected by them, ever listen to them.

In Cuttack medical college, all the injured police, they are from the Gurkha Battallion, and some of the more critically injured patients are in the same ward. The police are in four beds, adjacent to each other, the injured people are scattered in different places, and we have to hunt around for them. The police are subdued, quiet, the villagers, are ready to talk, but, we can make little inroad, as TV cameras capture their attention. The injuries are quiet serious, and I wonder if some of them will be able to survive. One frail young man, has an oxygen mask, and is clearly in much discomfort. Medical care has been provided, the serious patients have been attended to at the earliest possible and there is a fair amount of after-care as interns, and nurses come in and enquire after them, and slippers are provided for those injured who require blood. But, ones the media and

public attention dies down, one wonders will this be sustained.

As we look on, TV cameras, followed by politicians of different hues come in, bend over various injured for photographs, and video clips, and move on. The injured and their relatives are left looking quite bewildered.

Kalinganagar Complex is a massive industrial park with an area of over 12000 acres set up by IDCO in Jajpur District where industries are being allocated land. IDCOL has already acquired the land in the area through the Land acquisition act. The land acquisition by IDCO has only provisions of providing compensation for patta land and 10 decimal of land for homesteads for the landless. However, the local tribal people have been mostly cultivating non-patta land due to faulty survey and settlements and non-regularization of land. Even though they are absolutely dependent on these lands for their livelihoods, they are neither being offered compensation or land in return for the land cultivated for them. Several other industrial units have come up there, including Neelachal Ispat Nigam, MESCO, Jindal, etc.

The threat of forced displacement without any alternative livelihoods and loss of ancestral lands has led to a strong resistance. As long back as in 1996, the local people has successfully stopped the establishment of a plant by Bhushan Steel at the same site. Another major protest was held on 15th May, 2005, where the tribals foiled the proposed Bhumi Pooja of Maharashtra Seamless Steel limited.

There are several issues that need to be addressed here. The entire episode is being given various colours by different interest groups. Some say the protests are because of the poor compensation package given to earlier oustees, with the present demand being for improved compensation, on the basis that IDCO would sell the land acquired from the tribals communities at something like seven times the price; other news reports point fingers at Maoists as instigating the trouble. Some people proclaim that the very fact that women were in the forefront of the rally indicates that they have been used! Needless to say the loyalists, and the opportunists will make hay when they can. This whole affair is an effort to de-fame Naveen Patnaik claimed one more-loyal-than-the-king 'Human Rights Activist' on OTV. The Indian Express, in its 4<sup>th</sup> Jan Editorial states: 'This

incident Tragic should not de-rail the process of industrialisation. Nor should the opposition ..... call the Naveen Patnaik Government Trigger happy. Rather a solution should be sought through an all-party consensus for which the Chief Minister, must take the initiative.' In the hospital people tell us, we voted BJD, but, now, since last year, we have disassociated ourselves from all political parties, and all of us together formed the Visthapan Virodhi Manch.

On the ground, there is little evidence of instigation by outside agencies, or any doubt about what the people want. Everywhere, people were very clear, specially the women that this was a fight for their land. On the highway, it was local people who spoke to us, pointed out their leaders, and described their experiences. These leaders were from the area, lived with the people, struggled and toiled with them, some tribals, others non-tribals. The organised and orderly conditions that prevailed when we went there, the determination, grim and firm on people's faces, in people's statements, indicated that they were the people in command. This was no instigation. This was a people fighting to live.

It is inevitable, that the government would be on the defensive now. But, I would also point out that now is the time for like minded groups to come together and really really raise the issue of rights of local people: be they tribal, be they dalits, or any ethnic, caste, religious group, a community of local people have a right to decide what they want to do with their land and other natural resources. A government cannot just sell away these to industrialists without a proper process of consultation. And if the consultation results in people saying no, then the Government must honour this decision.

*A consultation and consent cannot be manufactured with guns and police force;*

A police force cannot be used for protecting and promoting the interests of the Private Sector;

Well, there is no point just a few people articulating this, then it becomes rhetoric. And I am glad there are so many suggestions for having an open letter on the Kalinganagar case. But, even as the Kalinganagar killings are a continuum from Kashipur in Dec. 2000, from Mandrangbaju, Gajapati, 1999, from Raighar, Nawrangpur, 2001,

we also need to realise that there has to be strong move from civil society to bring such errant (and I have consciously used a mild word here) governments to book, and much much more: there has to be a counter move to ensure basic right to live and right to livelihood to the people of this country.

First, we need several people who will volunteer to come to Kalinganagar to report on the issues, not just on the killings.

Then, there has to be concerted, and sustained questioning of the rational and overdrive for industrialisation;

Legal support is required, and there is an acute need for good lawyers, who will volunteer help and sound legal advice to the people, who will also come forward to fight people's cases without monetary compensation!

**Vidhya Das**

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## **Republic Day Gift!**

Republic day, 2006, Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik inaugurated the Tribal Fair in Bhubaneswar, and announced that the state government will withdraw minor cases pending against tribals. It is ironic that a Chief Minister, whose administration murders tribal people at the drop of a hat should inaugurate a 'tribal fair' less than one month after the most heinous of such acts. But, what really bothers me is, why is Naveen Patnaik interested in withdrawing minor cases against tribals, is this not an admission, that innocent tribal people are being persecuted with false legal cases? Is this a sop to make the public in general, who are still aghast after the Kalinganagar massacre think that here is a Chief Minister whose heart bleeds for the oppressed and suppressed tribal people ?

But, the sop is not going to make the tribal community think differently, because they have suffered too much and for too long, in the hands of the present government, and in the hands of past governments as well. Kalinganagar is but a symptom of the large scale injustice perpetrated against the tribal people for long. In fact, ever since they can remember. In Kashipur, the tribals questioned the Larsen and Toubro mining project coming up on Siji Mali, and Kutru Mali on the Kalahandi border, 47 people were booked in cases and imprisoned in Rayagada district for three weeks, then, on their release, they were booked in cases in Kalahandi, and had to spend another seven days in Jail. They were finally released on conditional bail. The case remained, some years later, when some irregularity was found on their obeying the conditions, non-bailable warrants were issued against them. They had to spend more than ten thousand on just transportation and the lawyer to get a bail this time. In the instance of UAIL, over the last decade and more, cases have been booked against nearly hundred tribal people including women. Some have spent several months in prison, and are now out on bail, others have non-bailable warrants against them which makes free movement

for them within their own locality almost impossible, there are two people now in jail.

If the state slaps a case against innocent people, and harasses them, the public does not even have the freedom to call it injustice, as the 'case becomes sub-judice'.

But, perhaps, we can listen to Shivaram Nayak, who has been in jail since September. In his letter to me he writes: "I have been in jail for nearly four months now. I was warned by the police, as well as by others not to take part in anti-mining activities, but, I went around from village to village talking to people, in March, I organised a large meeting, and then in May, I took people from my village, Maikanch to attend a large gathering in Tikiri. The meeting was reported in Sambad, and I was also mentioned in the report. From that day on, the police started hounding me. They came to my village in the night to arrest me, I tried to hide, but, eventually, they caught me.

There is a warrant against my father and mother as well, and the police is out to arrest them. They are not even able to do wage labour for fear of arrest. They have not been able to come and see me, as they do not have the money to travel to Rayagada.

I am happy in prison, as I have not committed any crime, or any misdeed. I am confident that either today or tomorrow, I will get justice, and be a free man. I am only upset that my family is suffering because I am not able to look after them.”

Shivaram’s bail plea has been rejected in the high court. In Kalinganagar, leader Ravi Jarika was in jail for almost a year. It took the Kalinganagar firing and killing of 13 innocent tribal people to get him out on bail.

The charges against Ravi and Shivaram invite imprisonment for life, ten years, etc. But, then, there are several tribal people in prison women and men who do not even know what are the charges against them. In Kashipur, there are several tribal people like Shivaram’s parents who have warrants against them. The police decides when and who they will pick up. They decide what charges will be framed against them. Mukta, is a frail, tiny person, who spoke up against the Maikanch firing. There is a non-bailable warrant against her. These are the tribal criminals. Obviously, Naveen Patnaik does not include these people in his R Day promises. Whom *does* he mean, and why only tribals ?

But, then, this is nothing new. The British also criminalized the tribals to control their forests, today a democratic government criminalizes them to usurp the very land they live on. The parallels between the colonial era and the present situation are quite disturbing, as memories of that violent rule of the British are ever revoked, with armed police men with police vans and barrack, suited and booted bureaucrats, sleek gleaming vehicles, stationed in the tribal hinterlands to ensure law and order.

Naveen Patnaik might think he can get away with making empty promises, and making criminals out of innocent tribal people, who were only demanding their basic rights, and then, when they still insist on voicing their rights sending special police to murder them. The question a begging here is who is the criminal? But, in these days, it is the criminal who even controls the answers, so our Chief Minister is probably right in thinking he can get away with anything.

But, he should also realise that this is the thinking of a despot, and in a democracy it strikes a very jarring note. In his eagerness to woo the investor he has begun an ethnic cleansing of the tribal communities. Many amongst the salaried classes also feel today that a few tribal lives need to be

sacrificed for the 'development' of the state. What is this development, and what is this 'few' has not been defined. So 3 was a few, five years back when Naveen Patnaik's police force sacrificed tribal lives in Maikanch five years back years back, then 8 was few when the same police force fired on tribal people in Nawrangpur, now, 13 is few, and so the cleansing goes on.

Naveen Patnaik probably feels that some dozen and odd tribals sacrificed to get the kickbacks that will help him hold his fort in today's monetary politics is no big deal. That is why he coolly offers to withdraw minor cases against tribal people, less than a month after his law keeping force decimated 13 of them, that is why he appeals for people to keep the peace, when his police force were the ones to destroy it in the first place, that is why he orders a judicial inquiry, when everybody knows that these are just exercises to gloss over the crimes of the state.

If the Chief Minister is really interested in justice for the tribals, he would have instituted criminal proceedings against the Collector and the SP responsible for the Kalinganar killings, but then this would prove his culpability as well.

**Vidhya Das**

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## **An Unfinished Song**

There are five thousand of us here  
in this small part of the city.  
We are five thousand.  
I wonder how many we are in all  
in the cities and in the whole country?

Here alone  
are ten thousand hands which plant seeds  
and make the factories run.

How much humanity  
exposed to hunger, cold, panic, pain,  
moral pressure, terror and insanity?

Six of us were lost as if into starry space.  
One dead, another beaten as I could never have  
believed  
a human being could be beaten.

The other four wanted to end their terror  
one jumping into nothingness,  
another beating his head against a wall,  
but all with the fixed stare of death.  
What horror the face of fascism creates!  
They carry out their plans with knife-like  
precision.

Nothing matters to them.  
To them, blood equals medals, slaughter is an act  
of heroism.

Oh God, is this the world that you created,  
for this your seven days of wonder and work?

Within these four walls only a number exists  
which does not progress,  
which slowly will wish more and more for death.  
But suddenly my conscience awakes  
and I see that this tide has no heartbeat, only the  
pulse of machines  
and the military showing their midwives' faces  
full of sweetness.

Let Mexico, Cuba and the world  
cry out against this atrocity!  
We are ten thousand hands  
which can produce nothing.

How many of us in the whole country?

The blood of our President, our compañero,  
will strike with more strength than bombs and  
machine guns!

So will our fist strike again!

How hard it is to sing when I must sing of horror.

Horror which I am living, horror which I am  
dying.

To see myself among so much  
and so many moments of infinity  
in which silence and screams  
are the end of my song.

What I see, I have never seen  
What I have felt and what I feel  
Will give birth to the moment ...

*Translation by Joan Jara, of the Song by Singer Poet, Victor Jara,  
written just before his brutal murder soon after the Chilean Coup.*

## What God Wants

What God wants God gets God help us all  
What God wants God gets  
The kid in the corner looked at the priest  
And fingered his pale blue Japanese guitar  
The priest said  
God wants goodness, God wants light  
God wants mayhem, God wants a clean fight  
What God wants God gets  
Don't look so surprised  
It's only dogma  
The alien prophet cried  
The beetle and the springbok  
Took the bible from its hook

The monkey in the corner  
Wrote the lesson in his book  
What God wants God gets God help us all  
God wants peace God wants war  
God wants famine God wants chain stores  
What God wants God gets  
God wants sedition God wants sex  
God wants freedom God wants semtex  
What God wants God gets  
Don't look so surprised  
I'm only joking  
The alien comic cried  
The jackass and hyena  
Took the feather from its book  
The monkey in the corner  
Wrote the joke down his book  
What God wants God gets  
God wants borders  
God wants crack God wants rainfall  
God wants wetbacks

What God wants God gets  
God wants voodoo, God wants shrines  
God wants law God wants organised crime  
God wants crusade God wants jihad  
God wants good God wants bad  
What God wants God gets

*(Part I of "What God Wants" By Roger Waters, sparked by the ideological hype that lead to 'Operation Desert Storm')*

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This small booklet is an effort to highlight the courage and endurance of the tribal people as they make desperate bids to survive against an inhuman paradigm of 'globalisation'. We hope that a time will come, in the near future, when ancient wisdoms will once again be valued and we will learn to live together, and not on the destroyed and forgotten histories and identities of our brethren, the tribal people of this country.

Achyut & Vidhya Das have been working with the tribal peoples of Orissa for the last 25 years in Kashipur in Rayagada district, as part of the Voluntary Organisation Agragamee. They have both written extensively about the different tribal issues and have been published variously in journals and newspapers. They have stood up for the human rights of tribal people and mainstreamed remote tribal regions like Kashipur for the appalling conditions of social justice therein. Their efforts have made the government re-look several unfair policies .

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