

A NOTE ON THE DEVELOPMENTS IN SIPASARUBALI MOUZA , PURI DISTRICT

SOME DETAILS OF THE AREA :

Sipasarubali is a Mouza of 20 and more Villages in the Coast of Bay of Bengal with a population of nearly 15000 (Mostly Dalits) under Brahmagiri Tahasil, Puri District ,. Odisha . It is 8 Kms. away from Puri Town spread over 10 Kms. long Sea Coast . The land is full of Sand dunes , Cashew , Mango , Akashia , Casuarinas , Palm and other valuable trees and not fit for Agriculture . The people are mostly landless poor . They go for work in Puri Town and sell firewood . The trees and sand dunes provide environmental protection in the Coast .

HISTORY OF LAND :

1. 214 Acres of land and another 33 Acres was decided as surplus , i.e. above Ceiling . In 1994 , the Hon'ble Odisha High Court had directed the State Government to immediately distribute it among the poor and give them Pattas . But this was not done . Later , some were given Pattas , but not the land . The Government included this land in its Land Acquisition Programme .

Our demand is : Give the Land and Pattas to 247 landless poor .

2. 3418.62 Acres of land in Sipasarubali Mouza (the land presently in our people's possession is a part of it) was Anabadi Land as per 1928 Settlement . This land was again declared as Anabadi when the Orissa Estate Abolition Act , 1951 came into force in 1956 . But in 1957 an Exc-Jagirdar (Sk. Mahammad Asgar) through his person Md. Dildar Hussain filed a Compensation Case on 09.11.1957. He sought to manipulate records in his favour . In 1977 R O R , 2823. 53 Acres of this Anabadi Land has been settled in favour of Private Persons in an illegal and fraudulent manner and in collusion with the Government Officials . Through a Consolidation Process and by illegal means 2822 Acres of Government

Land has gone to the private hands . Strangely , the Land Acquisition Proceedings were launched . However , after a thorough going examination of the entire episode , the Orissa High Court through its Order O J C No. 11406 of 1996 has declared that the land belongs to the Government .

PEOPLE'S STRUGGLE FOR LAND :

1. In Nov. 2011 , the Consolidation Court (Chakabandi Court) , Puri gave a verdict that 1307 Acres of land (in Brahmagiri – Chilika Coastal Belt) – a Part of aforesaid land – which was under the illegal occupation of Land Mafia , belongs to the Odisha Government .

The landless poor of the Villages in Sipasarubali Mouza (under Gorual and Ambada Panchayats and near by Villages) were appealing for quite a long time to distribute these lands among the landless . A People's delegation submitted an appeal signed by the people from 20 Villages to the Puri District Collector .

2. But the Govt.did not respond. Instead, it moved with a plan to erect a fence around the 1307 acres of land with a view to develop it into a “ Special Tourism Area”; called “Shamuka Beach Project”. It proposed to first build up the necessary infrastructure in this area through the IDCO (Industrial Development Corporation) , invite the MNCs and the Indian Corporate Houses through Global tenders to set up Hotels, Resorts, Spa, Golf courses, Exhibition Complex, Conference Halls and Economic Parks, etc., in the area

3 The people of this coastal belt, who are starved of land and proper means of livelihood, were totally disturbed by the move of the Govt.. So, on the initiative of Chasi Mulia Sangha, Puri district, the people of more than 20 villages, united under the banner of Upakuliya Jami O” Jangal Suraksha Samithi (UJJSS), moved into the 1307 acres of land on March 11, 2012, evicted the land mafia, which was occupying the said land illegally and forcibly and for decades. By this just and democratic act,

the people not only brought the land to the best utilization of widest and fully deserving masses of rural poor, but also ensured a best and most dependable protection of land, forest, sand dunes, natural life and environment by the people.

The people appealed to the Govt. to accord them the legal right over the land.

4. The evicted land mafia was not happy. On 3rd May 2012, its goondas attacked the people with lethal weapons . Again on 23rd May 2012 , they came to attack . The Government did not act against them .

5. From 07^t - 10th July 2012 , almost the ;entire District level Civil , Revenue and Police and Armed Police Force made every attempt to push ;through their plan to erect the fence in the land . But the people , enmasse , had put up a peaceful protest . Finally , the Police made a retreat .

6. On 17th Jul 2012, on the initiative of Puri District Sub-Collector , a delegation of U J J S S had talked with the Officials . The Government's side maintained that the fencing was meant only to protect the land . The people's representatives maintained that the people , whose lives , livelihood and safety are linked and dependent on the Coastal area , can alone best protect the land , forest , sand dunes and environment . They also proved with documentary evidence that the real intention of the Government's plan to erect the fence was to hand over the land to private profit earning corners and appealed to abandon this disastrous course .

7. The people continued to hold on to the land in the last 4 years . They protected the land and forest . They tried their level best to prevent the sand and timber smuggling ,They protected themselves from occasional attack or threats from the land-mafia . The activists and the leadership of the struggle were implicated in several cooked up cases by the police . The people planted 10000 trees when the cyclone caused a serious devastation . The people held several rallies , protest meetings and representations to the Government in defence of their democratic

and just demands. The people, presently, are in the possession of 2500 Acres of land including the above mentioned 1307 Acres and the 247 Acres of surplus land .

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS :

1. On June 5, 2015, the Sipasarubali people were busy in a " Save Environment Day Programme " Nua Pattana Village . As part a sudden and undeclared "destroy the forest" operation , the Government Officials with police and JCB Machine reached the area some distance away to the place of the programme and began cutting the trees . The people present there sought to oppose and stop it . But the police has pushed them aside and carried on the work . They have cut 1000 live trees .

On 06th June ,2015 , 5 Magistrates , 2 Addl. S.Ps, 3 D.S.Ps. , 6 Inspectors and the Government Officials together with 14 Platoons of Armed Police Force came to the area . The people, in a peaceful protest, sat before the JCB Machine requesting not to destroy the forest and to stop the cutting of trees . But the police has brutally beaten the people and pulled them aside . The police have beaten Com. Bata Krishna Swain , the leader of U J J S S . The people sought to protect him by covering his body . But the police continued the beating . In the course , 3 women and 15 men were seriously wounded . The police dragged Com. Bata Krishna Swain along the soil while beating upto the Jeep 50 metres away and threw him in to the Jeep .

Later , same night , the police arrested 31 (23 of them were women) . Later, at mid-night they left 4 girls at an isolated place near Sandapur and took 27 people with them . On 07th June , 2015 , the police went to Kapileshwarpur Village and arrested Com. Basudev Dash , the leader of people from his house at mid-

night . The police has foisted cases on the arrested people on cooked up ;charges under Arms Act , Explosives Act and other such Criminal Acts.

The police continue to camp in the area . They are going around the houses of activists threatening with dire consequences and creating an atmosphere of terror . The peoples' normal and peaceful life is seriously disturbed , The Government is seen determined to destroy the forest exposing the entire Coast to dangerous environmental and ecological imbalance , construct the 8 Kms. long wall around 927 Acres of land , for the present, and create necessary conditions to invite and hand over the land to the MNCs and the Indian Corporate Houses .

2. On 10th June 2015 a 15 Member Team of leaders belonging to “ Bhoomi Adhigrahan Birodhi Abhiyan ” , Odisha led by a Veteran Environmentalist Prafulla Samantaray has visited the Sipasarubali Area .

The State Level Team included : -

Sri Rabi Das , Sri Abhaya Sahu , Secretary , Anti-POSCO Movement , Prasanta Paikaray , Kishan Pattanaik , adhul Alli ,Jayaram Jena , Jagannath Deo , Tapan Upadhyaya , Ashok Pradhan , Brahmananda Mallik , Laxmidhar Mahapatra . They met the affected people as well as the families of the arrested people. In a meeting held in the area, the leaders expressed their support and solidarity to the people's struggle. Later, on the same day, the Team held a Press Conference in Puri town where they demanded the immediate withdrawal of police from the area , the immediate and unconditional release of arrested people and their leaders , accepting the just and democratic demand of people for land and the immediate stoppage of tree cutting in the area which destroys the environment.

On 11th June 2015 , the affected people together with the people from the neighboring villages held a Protest Rally in Puri Town under the Banner of U J J S S and the leadership of “ Bhoomi Adhigrahan Birodhi Abhiyan ” .

The Rally began from Near Gundicha Temple , Puri and reached the Collector's Office . Here the leaders addressed the people and submitted a Memorandum to the District Collector , Puri . The leaders pledged to take the demands of the people to State Level and mobilize support and solidarity of wide masses of Odisha People .

Presently , the people in the area and District are focusing on the demands :

- Release all the arrested people and their leaders immediately and unconditionally
- Withdraw all the police from the Villages immediately and restore normal and peaceful life for the people .
- Stop cutting of trees and the destruction of environmental protection in the Coastal Area immediately .
- Stop the moves to construct the wall in the Coastal Area
- Give Lands and Pattas to the landless poor for 247 Acres of above Ceiling surplus land .
- Accept the long standing democratic and just demand of Sipasarubali Mouza for land .

Date : 12.06.2015

**UPAKULIYA JAMI O JANGAL
SURAKSHA SAMITHI , PURI .**