



“How long will mainstream society dismiss and ignore the voices and values of Adivasis? As Gladson says, this is a society that takes from nature for need rather than greed. Greed is prevented through formalised restraint and taboo. Adivasi communities have remained rooted to the earth, and retain a culture based on sharing and wasting nothing, that mainstream society has a lot to learn from.”

Dr. Felix Padel

*Anthropologist & Author, UK
Great-great grandson of Charles Darwin*

“Gladson’s book analyses in great detail the decimation of the Adivasis by both government forces and Maoists in the former’s quest to let Corporate India loose on the huge mineral resources that lie under Adivasis lands and forests. The Mahabharata was written about three thousand years ago. Dungdung’s book is written a few months ago. Yet the tale has remained the same, that of the destruction of Indigenous Peoples and culture for the further enriching of the powerful and the rulers.”

Mallika Sarabhai

Indian Classical Dancer & Activist

“This is a vitally important book that addresses the contemporary issues of mining and communities in Eastern India in meticulous detail. As the battle for land and resources in India’s last frontiers rages, Gladson Dungdung brilliantly documents the struggles and the human rights violations in Saranda Forest which is one of the most extensive surviving Sal forest in Asia, a centre of bio-diversity and a repository of India’s rich Adivasi cultural heritage. Its destruction by mining companies aided by the government is testimony to the short term thinking of a modernising state blinded by its rhetoric of development. As the world hurtles towards an uncertain environmental future plagued by floods, famines and droughts in the Anthropogenic, the protection of such a rich natural and cultural heritage should be paramount for the nation. The destruction of Saranda forest portends the death of nature in India bringing impoverishment for local communities and continuing conflict between Maoists, the state, mining companies and the people. This deeply moving account is a must read for all scholars of contemporary India.”

Dr. Vinita Damodaran, Director

*Centre for World Environmental History
University of Sussex, UK.*



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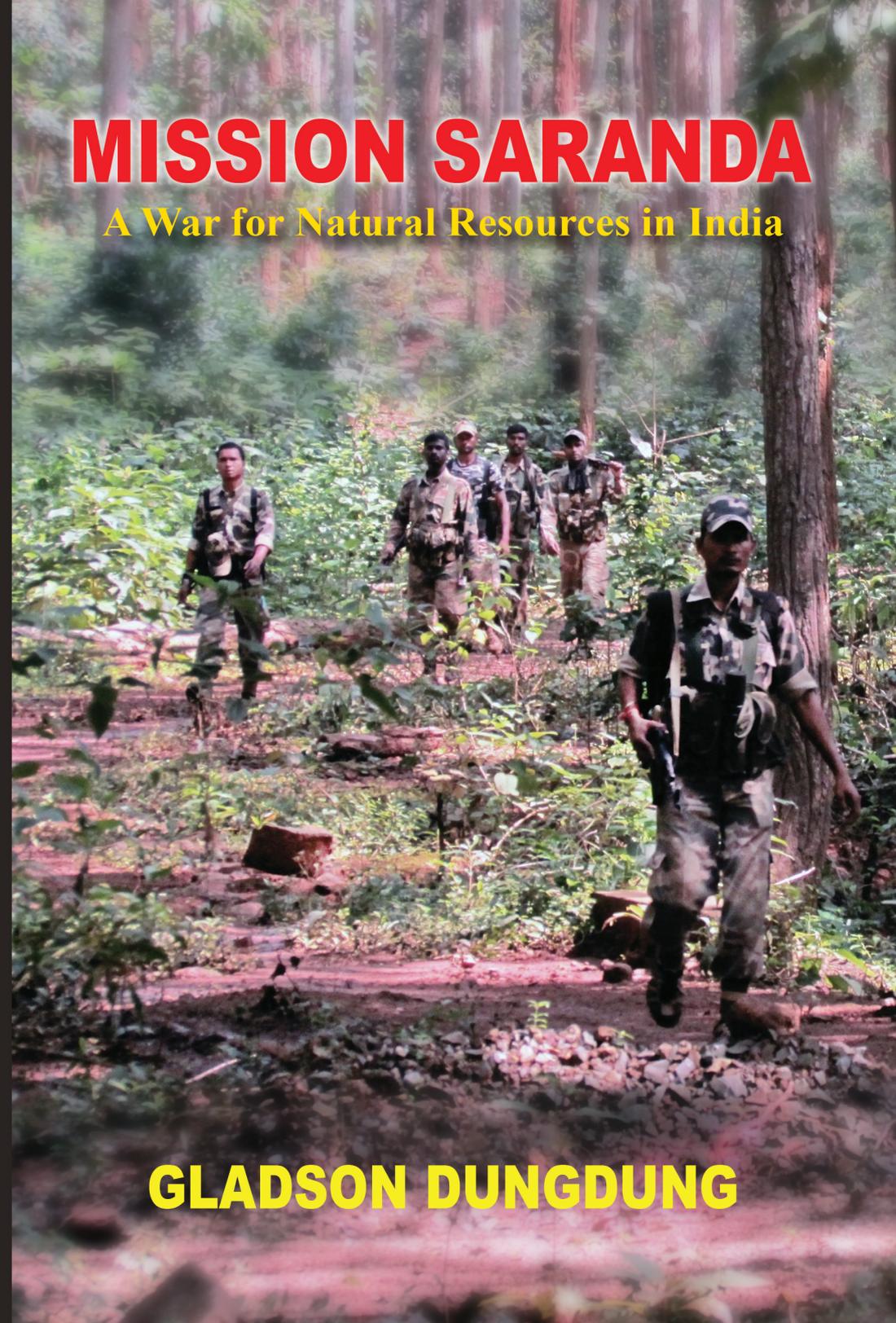


MISSION SARANDA

GLADSON DUNGDUNG

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A War for Natural Resources in India



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with a foreword by
FELIX PADEL



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*Dedicated to the martyrs of Saranda Forest,
who have sacrificed their lives to protect their
ancestral land, territory and resources.*

CONTENTS

Glossary	ix
Acknowledgements	xi
Foreword	xvii
Introduction	01
1. A Mission to Saranda Forest	23
2. Saranda Forest and Adivasi People	35
3. Mining in Saranda Forest	45
4. Is Mining a Curse for Adivasis?	59
5. Forest Movement and State Suppression	65
6. The Infamous Gua Incident	85
7. Naxal Movement in Saranda	91
8. Is Naxalism Taking Its Last Breath in Saranda Forest?	101
9. Caught Among Three Sets of Guns	109
10. Corporate and Maoist Nexus in Saranda Forest	117
11. Crossfire in Saranda Forest	125
12. A War and Human Rights Violation	135
13. Where is the Right to Education?	143
14. Where to Heal?	149
15. Toothless Tiger Roars in Saranda Forest	153
16. Saranda Action Plan Development Model or Roadmap for Mining?	163

17. What Do You Mean by Development?	185
18. Manufacturing the Consent	191
19. Don't They Rule Anymore?	197
20. It's Called a Public Hearing	203
21. Saranda Politics	213
22. Are We Indian Too?	219
23. Mining against Life	225
24. Is Mittal More Powerful Than our God?	231
25. Concluding Remarks	237
About the Author	245

Glossary

ADGP – Additional Director General of Police

ANM – Auxiliary Nurse Midwife

Anganbari – A centre run in the village under Integrated Child Development Scheme

ARS – Additional Rojgar Sevak

BJP – Bhartiya Janta Party

BMP – Bihar Military Police

CRPF – Central Reserve Police Force

CPI-Maoist – Communist Party of India (Maoist)

CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility

CBCID – Central Bureau of Crime Investigation Department

CBI – Central Bureau of Investigation

Chabutra – Public sitting place in the middle of a village

CLA Act – Criminal Law (Amendment) Act

DIG – Deputy Inspector General

DID – Detailed information dossier

DC – Deputy Commissioner

FIR – First Information Report

FRA – Forest Rights Act

FDC – Forest Development Corporation

FDI – Foreign Direct Investment

Gram Sabha – Village Council

IDC – Integrated Development Centre

IG – Inspector General

IISCO – Indian Iron and Steel Company

Jawan – Commonly used name for the security force in India

IAP – Integrated Action Plan

IAY – Indira Awas Yojna, a housing scheme for the families living below poverty line.

JMM – Jharkhand Mukti Morcha

JFM – Joint Forest Management

JHRM – Jharkhand Human Rights Movement

MoU – Memorandum of Understanding

Mission Saranda

MLA – Member of Legislative Assembly
MCCI – Maoist Communist Centre of India
MGNREGA – Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NAC – National Commission on Agriculture
NCST – National Commission for Scheduled Tribes
NRLM – National Rural Livelihood Mission
NHRC – National Human Rights Commission
NDA – National Democratic Alliance
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
Panchayat – Governance unite of a set of villages
Panchayat Samity – Village Council
PDS – Public Distribution System
PIL – Public Interest Litigation
PRI – Panchayat Raj Institution
PESA Act – Provisions of Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Area) Act
PMGSY – Prime Minister Gram Sadak Yojna (Rural Road Scheme)
PWG – People's War Group
PLGA – People's Liberation Guerrilla Army
PLFI – People's Liberation Front of India
RAW – Research and Analysis Wing
Salwa Judum - A private army of Chhattisgarh
SPO – Special Police Officer
SEZ – Special Economic Zone
SP – Superintendent of Police
SDPO – Sub-divisional Police Officer
SAP – Saranda Action Plan
SDP – Saranda Development Plan
SAIL – Steel Authority of India Limited
TAC – Tribes Advisory Council
TISCO – Tata Iron and Steel Company
TRTC – Tribal Research and Training Centre
UAPA – Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act
UPA – United Progressive Alliance
USA – United States of America

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The former President of the United States of America, George W. Bush taught us that 'war is peace' by bombing Afghanistan in 2001.¹ Of course, we (Indians) always run for everything behind the USA and Europe, seeing these as the most developed places on earth. When we talk of development, we forget that India is a union of villages; this is what the father of our nation Mahatma Gandhi reminded us. Do we really want to convert our villages, towns and cities to resemble Washington D.C., New York, London, Paris or Singapore? India has been in a rat race to become a powerful nation; it is converting its beautiful villages into polluted cities, rural markets into shopping malls and small cities into the concrete forests called smart cities. When the USA President Barak Obama, during his visit to India, announced in the Indian parliament that 'India is not simply emerging but it has already emerged', how our politicians applauded him! They forgot that more than 70% of our people live on less than Rs.20 (US\$0.33) per day.² What kind of emerging super power are we?

1. 'War is Peace,' by Arundhati Roy, in her book *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*, published by Penguin. 2001.

2. 'Earn Rs. 15 a day and feel rich, says Planning Commission'. *The Sunday Guardian*, available at <http://www.sunday-guardian.com/analysis/earn-rs-15-a-day-and-feel-rich-says-planning-commission>

The Indian State is attempting to go to any extent to make itself a superpower. However, India's own people who live in the villages do not even know about this superpower theory. They have been struggling for survival over many years and generations. They are still struggling to ensure adequate food, clothing and shelter for their families, which had been promised as fundamental rights during India's freedom struggle. Instead of ensuring basic needs, the Indian State has been alienating them from their livelihood resources. Is India set to become a superpower by grabbing its own people's resources? The government, since independence, has already grabbed 2.5 million acres of lands of the Adivasis (Indigenous Peoples) in the state of Jharkhand alone. What would be the actual figure if we count it across the country? These citizens were alienated without any proper compensation in the name of development, national security and the national interest.

After Jharkhand State was created in the year 2000, the new government soon started signing one memorandum of understanding (MoU) after another, with national and multinational companies for mining projects, steel factories and power plants. Jharkhand government signed 104 MoUs with the corporate houses³ in a decade.

When villagers realised what was happening, they started protest against unjust development projects, in which the landowners are always betrayed. Similarly, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and West Bengal signed a long series of MoUs with the corporate houses for such projects. These MoUs had multiple ripple effects in these states, and when the State failed to hand over promised lands to the corporate houses, the issue of Maoism/Naxalism came to the surface, with increasing force from 2008.

3. 'World listens to 'Iron lady of Jharkhand', *The Hindu*, 25 May 2013.

The argument of the government was that development activities cannot be carried out in Naxal infested areas without cleansing the Maoists. Finally, a joint operation was chalked out, codified as 'Operation Green Hunt', which was launched in October 2009 in various parts of the country that were declared as the 'Red Corridor'. In the beginning, there was protest from the states of West Bengal, Jharkhand and Bihar, but later on, all the ruling elites joined hands in what was in effect a war against the people in the name of cleansing the CPI-Maoist.

Therefore, I started travelling to the Red Corridor of India for collection of evidence to prove that it is not a war against the CPI-Maoist but a war against the Adivasis to snatch their resources i.e. lands, forests, water, hills and minerals from them. The centre of the war is mineral resources, which I am able to establish through my mission to Saranda Forest. The 'Mission Saranda' reveals that the war against the CPI-Maoist is actually, fundamentally, a war for mineral resources, waged against the security of the common people in the Red Corridor, their peace, good governance, development and prosperity.

This book would not have been possible to publish without the courage, commitment and dedication of Ms. Christina Nilsson. I am indebted to Ms. Christina, who supported my mission to Saranda Forest and also helped me in conceptualising, designing and tirelessly editing the book.

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Mission Saranda

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Mission Saranda

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Last but not the least, to my late parents, who not only inspired me during my childhood to fight for justice, but they also paved the way for my own work by laying down their lives for others, ensuring that I must continue the fight for justice.

Gladson Dungdung

15 June 2015, Ranchi

Foreword

This book and the Saranda issue it highlights are of greatest national significance. Gladson Dungdung has performed a profound service by writing courageously about this, bringing out the voices of Adivasis faced with displacement and atrocities from multiple directions.

Like Raoghat mountain range in Chhattisgarh, Khandadhara range in northwest Odisha, the Niyamgiri range in south-central Odisha and neighbouring-bauxite capped mountains near Karlapat presently under threat from Vedanta, and surviving forest and Adivasi villages in Singrauli, Madhya Pradesh – among many similar areas - Saranda right now poses a set of key questions of national importance. What is the relative value of money to be made by mining the minerals in the ground, and of the Adivasi communities and the rich biodiversity forests where they live? Should the minerals under these forests and communities be extracted fast and sold for maximum profit, regardless of costs to communities and ecosystems? Given that the mining industry has rarely, if ever, benefitted the majority of local people displaced, could these projects be organised differently? Or is the mining industry inherently ruthless

and corrupt? Could it be that these Adivasi communities, and extensive forest areas such as Saranda where they live, are actually of much greater intrinsic value than all the money the minerals could be sold for?

Saranda Forest, like Raoghat, Khandadhara, Niyamgiri and similar biological hotspots, has safeguarded generations of Adivasis, while Adivasis have safeguarded these forests, in a living symbiosis. In the words of a Dongria Kond woman, speaking of Niyamgiri, “We need the Mountain, and the Mountain needs us.”⁴ Or as Australian Aborigines – including those presently resisting Adani’s vast planned coal mine in Queensland⁵ – formulate this, it’s not that they own the land: “this land owns us”. To be parted from it and see it ripped open for its minerals kills the soul – something many city-based people find hard to understand or dismiss as romanticised nonsense.

How long will mainstream society dismiss and ignore the voices and values of Adivasis? As Gladson says, this is a society that takes from nature for need rather than greed. Greed is prevented through formalised restraint and taboo. Adivasi communities have remained rooted to the earth, and retain a culture based on sharing and wasting nothing, that mainstream society has a lot to learn from.

The idea that Adivasis live in symbiosis with the forest and nature is not some ‘ecological romanticism’. It’s a central fact about a set of societies with ancient roots that developed long ago an economic system based in ecological values⁶ of

4. Amarendra and Samarendra Das, *Wira Pdika / Matiro Poko, Company Loko* (Earth Worm, Company Man), documentary on mining in Odisha, 2005.

5. ‘Aboriginal group fights to stop US\$16bn Carmichael coalmine, Australia’s largest: Indian firm Adani has appealed to the native title tribunal to bypass the traditional owners’ rejection of the Queensland mine’, *The Guardian*, 25 March 2015.

6. ‘Adivasi Economics’, Chapter 2 in Padel, Felix, Ajay Dandekar and Jeemol Unni, 2013. *Ecology, Economy: Quest for a Socially Informed Connection*. Delhi: Orient BlackSwan.

not taking too much from nature, honouring the earth and an intrinsic sacredness in nature, in streams, mountains, the sun, trees and sacred groves.

Not long ago I heard a similar view from a Muslim fisherman on the coast of Gujarat: why can't the big people running mining and power companies realise that they are raping our Mother the Earth, putting everyone's future in danger by pulling out her entrails? I felt moved to hear a Muslim speaking of Mother Earth. Hindus pay lip service to her, but does this ever stop Hindu businessmen mining a mountain? Communities who live close to the earth and the natural elements know these things in a way that city people often don't. Life in a city makes one forget where we and our sustenance really come from.

These are things we should learn in school. And what are Adivasi children learning? As Gladson's chapter on the transgression of Adivasis' Right to Education highlights, many are learning mostly about guns and bombs, and power based on the gun. They show this when they draw these weapons on the walls of their trashed schools, that security forces have turned into operation centres.

Similar things are reported from Palestine and other war zones, where children grow up in the shadow of the gun. This book makes clear that the fault for the violence that has spread in the Red Corridor lies not only with the armed police, but also with Maoists, and their splinter groups, whose offer of justice and rights went stale long ago, since it intensified the repression; and since it divided and polarised Adivasi communities in a way that precisely echoes the worst colonial legacy: 'divide and rule'. The formula for dividing communities so as to take over their land has been applied by Maoist factions and mining companies alike.

In fact, the aspect of Maoist history their cadres are probably least taught about is the 'Great Leap Forward' policy that Mao implemented in 1958-9, forcing people off the land so as to boost China's steel output – precisely the policy of India's steel barons, who raise the country's annual steel output, giving a short-term boost to economic growth, with no consciousness of the costs both to India's rural communities and to the ecosystems that life depends on – especially water, since producing one tonne of steel consumes over 40 tonnes of water, and water is running short and becoming polluted everywhere, putting the country's future in serious jeopardy. Though they question MoUs with mining companies strategically, one will never get a real critique of the mining industry from Maoists, so long as they call themselves after Mao, and fail to question their own history.

This book makes abundantly clear why the mining industry does not represent real development. Apart from turning beautiful areas, where people have a long tradition of self-rule and managing their environment responsibly, into wastelands and a hell on earth, what is wrong with the mining industry is essentially the corruption that forms an intrinsic element in how it operates: the industry is corrupt from top to bottom and bottom to top. In the chapter 'It's called a Public Hearing?' we witness the strategy that every mining company seems to use: divide communities by co-opting selected influential people with bribes and job offers.

This corruption is systemic. As a Minister famously commented, recorded on secret camera while receiving a large bribe from a foreign mining company, "*paise khuda to nahi, par khuda ki kasam, khuda se kam bhi nahi hai*" (Money isn't God, but by God, it's no less than God)⁷ – an idea also implicit in the marble-rich temples that mining companies often construct near their

7. Felix Padel and Samarendra Das. *Out of This Earth: East India Adivasis and the Aluminium Cartel*, p.203. Delhi: Orient BlackSwan. 2010.

operations, along with nice lawns to show how green they are. The nexus of corrupt interests shows in many ways. On 16th December 2009, Chief Minister of Odisha, Navin Patnaik came to Kalinganagar for the first time since the terrible police firing of 2nd January 2006 that killed 14 Adivasis who were resisting the takeover of their land by Tata Steel. He didn't come to pay his respects to the martyred and wounded families, but to thank the steel companies for paying for a new police station at Kalinganagar. This made transparent what is usually hidden. The fact that mining companies actually fund the police rarely comes to public attention. The duty of police is supposedly to serve the people, and there are still many police who believe this. So how has it happened that massed police are repeatedly used against citizens protesting against the dispossession of their lands and communities to make way for mines and factories? Too often, police forces behave as if they were there to facilitate this dispossession, instead of remaining neutral and supporting the poor, as guarantors of an impartial justice.

This has parallels with many other countries. In Nigeria, the oil companies, including Shell and Chevron, are known to have made large payments to the police at a time when they were running a reign of terror against people protesting against the mass takeover and pollution of their lands by oil drilling.⁸ In the USA and Canada, indigenous people have long seen the police as agents of the big companies who steal and pollute indigenous lands.

Some of the last tribal peoples living in forest areas in Ethiopia and Kenya are getting displaced by police and forest officials right now, burning their homes and calling them 'squatters' on land where they have always lived, which is now wanted for

8. *Ibid.* pp.343-6.

food plantations to feed other countries, or for wildlife parks, in schemes the World Bank funds.⁹

The corruption intrinsic to mining companies relates to the world's biggest scale corruption in companies that bring mining companies some of their biggest profits - arms companies, whose corruption has tainted successive governments in Britain and post-apartheid South Africa, among many others.¹⁰ Most wars are basically resource wars now, and the conflict in Saranda forms part of a vicious cycle: conflicts over metals, sold to arms companies as hardware to fuel the world's biggest wars.

Over 20 million Adivasis - at least a quarter of India's Scheduled Tribe population - have been dispossessed in the name of development since India's independence, and tens of thousands are resisting displacement right now, knowing from seeing the injustice and destitution experienced by those already displaced, that whatever promises people make them for a better life are invariably betrayed. Displacement is the shadow side of 'development', that planners and politicians systematically avoid examining.¹¹ Calling this process 'development-induced displacement' adds insult to injury, since for those displaced, these projects represent the opposite of real development: 'investment-induced displacement' is the proper term.

And does huge investment for mining/metal projects really benefit the country, or is this an illusion sold by financial/corporate institutions and the politicians they work through? Is economic growth compatible with shrinking resources? Should our leaders be working out now how to curtail growth, conserve

9. 'Aid donors announce investigation into tribal evictions in Ethiopia', *Survival International*, UK, 23 June 2014; and 'Burned Out: World Bank Projects leave trail of misery around the globe', *Huffington Post*, USA, 16 April 2015.

10. Andrew Feinstein, *The Shadow World: Inside the Global Arms Trade*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2011.

11. Jaideep Hardikar, *A village awaits doomsday*, India: Penguin, 2013.

our natural resources, and share what we take from nature as fairly as possible?¹²

If so, do indigenous peoples represent humanity's last hope for the future, based on how they continue to safeguard many of the earth's last ecosystems that still remain intact? Should we all be learning from, and supporting democratic Adivasi movements against unsustainable mining and forced displacement?

Adivasi movements in Central India have much in common with movements in north America such as the 'Idle No More' movement of indigenous Canadians against the insane extraction of tar sands mining for oil extraction;¹³ and tribes such as the Navajo and Hopi in the USA resisting the expansion of coal mines through 'mountain top removals';¹⁴ also with indigenous peoples of the Amazon regions of Peru, Ecuador, Columbia and Brazil, resisting oil extraction on their traditional territories and other monster-projects. The forced removal of the iconic Lakota (Sioux) tribes from the Black Hills, against heroic resistance of Crazy Horse and other leaders during the 19th century is symbolic of the genocide of indigenous peoples that US history is based on, and analogous to heroic resistance in the Santal *Hul* and Birsa Munda's rebellion around the same time;¹⁵ while the 'Highland Clearances' that cleared Scottish clans off the land, established the model that is being implemented over indigenous peoples

12. Michael Rowbotham, *The Grip of Death: A study of modern money, debt slavery and destructive economics*, UK: Jon Carpenter 1998; Amit Bhaduri, *The face you were afraid to see: Essays on the Indian economy*, India: Penguin, 2009; Richard Heinberg, *The End of Growth: Adapting to Our New Economic Reality*, Canada: Clairview, 2011; and 'Development in a Financial System based on Debt', Chapter 7 in Padel, Dandekar and Unni, *Ecology, Economy*, 2013.

13. 'Idle No More: Indigenous-Led Protests Sweep Canada for Native Sovereignty and Environmental Justice', Democracy Now, 12 December 2012, available at http://www.democracynow.org/2012/12/26/idle_no_more_indigenous_led_protests; 'First Nations Leader Calls on Politicians to Experience Tar Sands First Hand at 2013 Healing Walk', Idles No More website 18 June 2013, at http://www.idlenomore.ca/first_nations_leader_calls_on_politicians_to_experience_tar_sands_firstrand_at_2013_healing_walk

14. 'Cursed by Coal: Mining the Navajo Nation', 20 March 2015, available at <http://www.filmsforaction.org/watch/cursed-by-coal-mining-the-navajo-nation/#.VRU5aQU4xvk.facebook>

15. E.g. Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. London: Pan, 1970.

from Jharkhand to Australia, deforesting the land, turning it to maximum profit, while denigrating indigenous peoples and their subsistence economy, which had been carefully moulded to local conditions over centuries, insulting its sustainable use of the land by calling it 'uneconomic'.¹⁶

Can Adivasis ever negotiate with mining companies on a level playing field? A recent Tribunal that has studied negotiations between PANEM coal and an Adivasi group that resisted it, yet signed an MoU with it, in another part of Jharkhand, suggests otherwise.¹⁷ Tata Steel promotes what it claims as the best CSR and resettlement for Adivasis, but it is still dividing communities, at Kalinganagar in Odisha, at Lohandiguda and Raoghat in Chhattisgarh, and at Ganeshpur and other places in Jharkhand.¹⁸

Justifying these takeovers in the name of 'development', and calling people protesting against these projects 'anti-development', is a misuse of language. 'Develop' describes an intrinsically natural process of change, as when a child or sapling develops into an adult or a tree, or when a society follows its own, indigenous line of progress. Anyone visiting mined areas in Jharkhand, will find they have not 'developed': areas of rich natural biodiversity and cultural vitality have been destroyed and turned into waste lands. This becomes clear in Gladson's comparison between large sums of money supposed to develop a selected 56 Adivasi villages under the 'Saranda Action Plan', recently poured into areas of Saranda wanted for 'greenfield' mines, compared with the gross neglect of other areas, around Noamundi for instance, that have been devastated and impoverished by decades of mining.

16. John Prebble, *The Highland Clearances*, London: Penguin, 1965.

17. Independent People's Tribunal, April 2015. *Collateral: Report on the MoU between Rajmahal Pahad Bachao Andolan and PANEM Coal Mines*, Delhi.

18. 'Mining project divides Jharkhand village along caste lines', *Indian Express*, 28 June 2013.

When Adivasis are displaced they often experience cultural genocide – the death of everything that made life worth living, and of a complex symbiosis with nature, expressed through traditions and skills developed over centuries. In truth, this displacement is ‘anti-development’. Rigidly imposed industrialisation cuts off a process of indigenous development that evolved over centuries, that the imposers have next to no awareness of.

The word ‘development’ in official usage is often narrowed to a process of technological change, and all that it really denotes is money – financial investment and short term profits. The long-term evolution of cultural traditions and developing a higher standard of living are cast aside as of no consequence when large sums of money are involved, even though (in the mining industry for certain) profits are never shared equitably.

The belief system underlying this process of ruthlessly imposed change is ‘social evolutionism’: the idea that all societies develop through set stages, and the sooner ‘primitive’ forms are swept aside the better.

What this belief boils down to is cultural racism. The racism we talk about – the theory that one ‘Aryan’ race or skin colour is inherently superior – is discredited everywhere, on the surface anyway. Cultural racism is the idea that one kind of culture is superior, as the most ‘developed’, and this form of racism is still rampant, and goes largely unquestioned.

Development is not a monolithic process. Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution did not posit that all species are moving towards a single goal. We humans may see ourselves as the pinnacle, but other animals are more developed in other aspects, including different forms of intelligence. Certainly no animal uses its intelligence as harmfully and degenerately as humans.

In fact what was so radical about *The Origin of Species* was that Darwin showed how humans evolved out of fellow animals – that we are not separate from nature.

This seemed to contradict the fundamentalist Christian orthodoxy of his time, which took the bible as literally true, without considering the political decisions at the Council of Nicaea that included certain texts in the Bible and left others out. Darwin wasn't against religion or Christianity. His wife took their children to church, and most of his friends were firm believers; nor did he question their belief. What his theory of evolution did was that it returned man to nature.

'Social Darwinism', that sees all-out competition based on 'survival of the fittest' (not Darwin's phrase) as the natural order of social change, is actually a travesty of Darwin's theory, returning us to the human-centric model of natural species as inferior and separate from us that he challenged. Darwin drew attention to co-operation as well as competition between species.

There is a similarity to Adivasi values and beliefs here. The idea of animals as our relatives is intrinsic to Adivasi myths, and to the living value systems of most indigenous peoples, worldwide, that still see other species of animals, birds, plants and even insects as our relatives, not as inferior beings created for us to dominate and exploit.

Yet when Darwin's evolutionary model was applied to society, most of the great thinkers of the time applied it simplistically, by producing a monolithic model of stages they believed were 'natural', from 'primitive communism' through feudalism to capitalism and its industrial revolution.

And beyond? Those who believe that capitalism represents

the ultimate stage fail to see that our prevalent model of economic growth is based on an appalling fallacy, and that we have reached the tipping point beyond which there can be no sustained economic growth without destroying the resource base and ecosystems that sustain us. While those who believe in communism have to accept that the only real communist society there has ever been is essentially tribal or indigenous society, which has existed in a multitude of forms, based, as Marx and Engels correctly understood, in an emphasis on common rather than private property.

This was confirmed in a way when the twelve Gram Sabhas held in Niyamgiri during July-August 2013 voted unanimously not only against mining, but also against being granted individual patta (title deed) of forest plots under the Forest Rights Act. Niyamgiri's Dongria Konds still consider the whole area, including the mountain-tops, as their traditional territory that they hold in common. It was also noteworthy that Dalits voted alongside Adivasis.¹⁹

When Vedanta got itself listed on London's stock exchange, the bauxite deposits it had acquired rights to featured in a special report prepared by J.P.Morgan, and were mentioned in the *Financial Times*. But clearance had not actually been given, and none of these financial institutions had reckoned with a 'non-economic factor' in the form of the Dongria, who live in Niyamgiri, whose successful movement against mining their mountain lay in the future. Dongria clear patches of cultivation on the hill slopes, but on the summits they have maintained a taboo on cutting trees, understanding how the forest and the minerals beneath it play a vital role in ensuring the perennial streams that Niyamgiri is

19. Felix Padel, 'The Niyamgiri Movement as a Landmark of Democratic Process', *Vikalp Sangam*, 24 July 2014, available at <http://vikalpsangam.org/article/the-niyamgiri-movement-as-a-landmark-of-democratic-process/#.U9HMfLEruO5>

famous for. Their deity Niyam Raja is an embodiment of rules (*nigam*) or laws inherent in nature and society.

The word 'taboo' came into English from the Maori/Polynesian language, where it also means 'sacred'. The Maori are reckoned to have achieved a better status than any other country's indigenous peoples – though they insist they still have a lot more to achieve. But at least white New Zealanders today understand the basics of Maori culture. In fact, they learn many Maori words at school, and in many schools each child is encouraged to compose a *mihi* – a declamation in the Maori language saying who they are, who their ancestors were, and what mountain and river they come from. Every New Zealander knows it is *tapu* to approach a marai (sacred meeting hall) without invitation, or to approach mountains, streams and other places in nature that Maori clans consider *tapu*.

This suggests a model of development for Jharkhand, where more and more Adivasis are enthusiastic to see their children educated in their own languages now; but where there seems an even greater need to educate non-tribals in Adivasi culture and concepts. The concept of 'taboo' in particular goes to the essence of what the mainstream needs to learn from indigenous culture – return to a respect for sacredness in nature, and restraint in what is taken from nature.

This kind of educational initiative is also needed because the issue of cultural racism lies behind all the atrocities described in this book, and stands in dire need of redressing in India. India's immense cultural wealth is expressed both in a long written history of texts and artefacts produced by mainstream culture, and also in dozens of distinct indigenous cultures, each with their own language, oral traditions, and material artefacts of daily use and great beauty. These cultures also developed over centuries,

alongside the mainstream. When mining companies say ‘there was nothing here before we came – only mud huts’, they display an extraordinary ignorance, compounded by cultural racism. No-one disputes the greatness of the mainstream traditions. But why must the mainstream continue to marginalise and remain ignorant of Adivasi and tribal traditions, especially when they embody an ecological awareness we all need reminding about? Simultaneous with the development process, there has also often been a process of cultural degeneration, through which the mainstream has largely lost sight of previously powerful community values, multi-culturalism and respect for nature. These could be revitalised through interest and respect for the tribal cultures that this book shows are still being brutally marginalised.

One book by a Maori scholar encapsulates this: *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, by Linda Tuhiwai Smith – a book that questions fundamentally the denigrating way that colonial-era anthropology analysed indigenous or tribal societies, and often still does, objectifying them – turning them into ‘objects of study’, in a way that ignores the overall power structure, and adds insult, in the form of a seriously distorted version of tribal culture, to a long history of atrocious injury.²⁰

In other words, there are certain ways in which tribal societies are much more highly developed than mainstream society. This remains hard to see, or to say, since we are all educated to focus on the obvious ways that mainstream society is more ‘developed’, and to think of development as an inevitable progression along a single path, when the reality is that there are many paths. Even Darwin saw the extinction of indigenous peoples

20. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed, 2012 (1999).

in America and New Zealand as inevitable. He witnessed the terrible genocide being promoted as state policy in Argentina, and understood too well how his friends among the indigenous Tierra del Fuegians faced an imminent danger of total genocide from Argentinian settlers who were about to invade, and who did indeed commit total genocide among these people within a few years. But Darwin could not have imagined with what persistence many indigenous peoples survived the onslaught; he did not foresee today's indigenous revival movements, in North and Latin America, Australia and New Zealand; nor how indigenous peoples everywhere would come to be widely seen as guardians of nature, with their movements and values a beacon of hope and sanity in a world degenerating into vicious resource wars.

Part of the reason was that anthropology was still at a very primitive stage, promoting this view of tribal societies as 'backward', representing a primitive level of development. Anthropologists had not yet immersed themselves in indigenous languages and cultures enough to begin discovering the ways these cultures are far more civilised than the mainstream entities assaulting them.

For example, no-one disputes that India is the world's largest democracy. But what model of democracy are we talking about, and how democratic is it really, these days? In India, as in the so called 'developed' countries the model was taken from, big corporations pay huge sums to political parties and candidates – frequently to opposing parties at the same time - who are then in effect obligated to further these entities' interests when they come to office. The model locks us into a political party system where opposing parties spend the best part of their energy competing over electoral advantage, and rarely reach consensus on any vital issue.

India's tribal societies are intrinsically democratic, and offer indigenous models of democracy that are in many ways much more democratic than models taken from the West, based on everyone having a say without fear, always aiming at reaching a consensus, rather than a model of democracy defined by ceaseless competition.

Competition is a core value in capitalism, applied to politics, education, sport, economic activities – even though ‘the market’ is very rarely the ‘level playing field’ pretended - and law, where the mainstream system, inherited basically from the ancient Romans, guarantees an adversarial process that too often depends on lawyers’ fees, and makes one party right, the other wrong. By contrast, the basic aim of traditional law in Adivasi society is to reconcile contestants, and fines go to pay for a feast of reconciliation. What could be more civilised than this?

Behind this emphasis on consensus and reconciliation is a core value emphasizing equal sharing. This is not to idealise Adivasi society or say everything is perfect in the traditional system, but it's hard these days to emphasize its positive features without being accused of romanticisation: this is the extent to which cultural racism still dictates popular thought, on the Left as well as Right.

If Adivasi value systems emphasize equality and sharing, another way these societies are far ahead of the mainstream is in promoting a relationship with nature that is sustainable in the long term. These values show in customs such as ‘first fruit’ ceremonies, with a taboo on taking produce before this collective celebration, that allows some mangoes and other fruit to go to seed and generate more plants; also co-operative labour, and emphasis on fair exchange in transactions rather than one side trying to make a profit by fooling the other; and

also dancing. Adivasi/tribal dances are a radical expression of democracy, in which neighbouring villages meet, not in war or competitive sport, but in all-night, passionate dances, learnt from a seamless tradition going back centuries, in which there are no winners or losers, yet constant fun and skill. This is very different from the way tribal dancing is represented on the stage for visiting dignitaries – including for members of mining companies and government officials who pay dancers and musicians, as Gladson describes – and on TV, where dancers' morose movements show they have been told to perform in a set way by media personnel talking down to them and ordering them about.

Indigenous movements everywhere will become stronger the more they express solidarity for each others' struggles, including solidarity between Adivasis and tribes in Northeast India, who face a very similar history of atrocities and marginalisation, and whose occasional hostility, such as between Bodo extremists and Adivasis, has colonial roots in the way British plantation owners took thousands of tribal people from Central India and settled them in Assam as a labour force, under harsh conditions, on plantations that were often carved out of forest lands that local tribes considered their territory. Several tribes in the Northeast face dispossession and cultural genocide right now from large dams, against harsh repression and corrupt vested interests, very similar to the mining company promoted takeovers in Saranda.

These movements deserve much wider recognition and support from people in the mainstream too, who are waking up to the dangers inherent in present growth trajectories. In this sense, Adivasis really are playing a role as guardians of our resource base and ecosystems. This was made clear in the Cochabamba Declaration, made in Bolivia in April 2010, when indigenous

peoples came together to assert the Rights of Nature or Mother Earth, complementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.²¹ In North East India, indigenous peoples have made similar declarations asserting their intrinsic rights over the natural resources where they live, and their opposition to vested interests undermining these by grabbing and destroying these resources for short-term gain. These include the Agartala Declaration (15 February 2013)²² and the Dimapur Declaration (18 May 2013). 'The main objectives of the Dimapur Declaration are: to protect the inherent rights of local people over their water, land, forest and other resources based on customary and international laws as guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007 etc., and their self-determined development of their water bodies in the region.'²³

Through these words, I have tried to give an international and historical context to show why this book, and the issue of Saranda Forest, is of utmost importance for the people of Jharkhand, for India as a whole, and for the future of our human species. I consider it a great honour to write a Foreword for this book.

Felix Padel

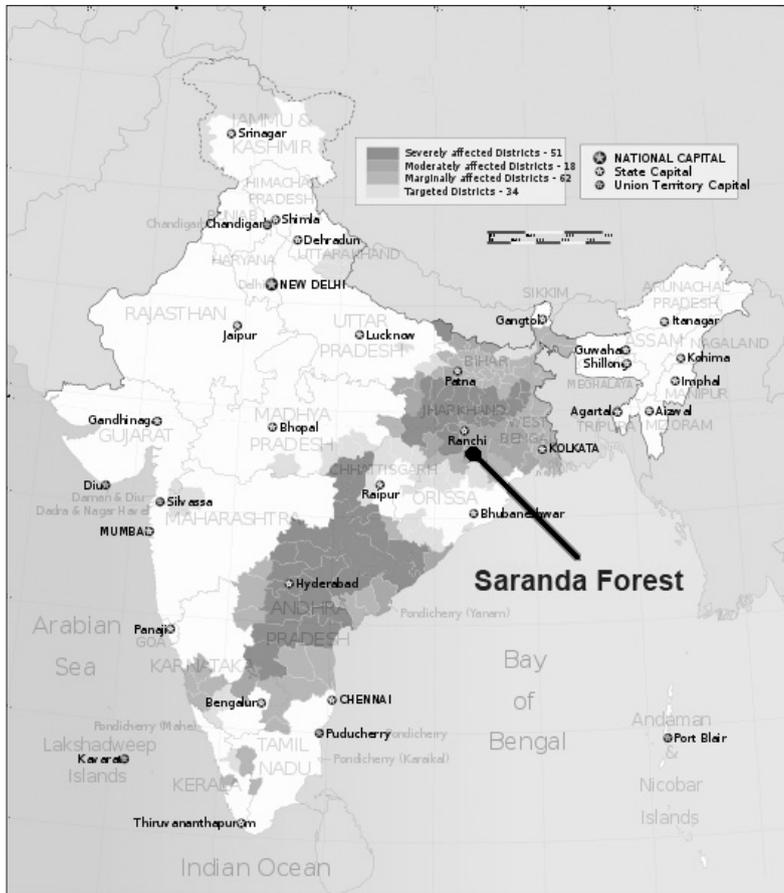
30 April 2015, London

21. *Cochabamba: Documents of the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth*, Bolivia, April 2010, available at <http://www.readingfromtheleft.com/PDF/CochabambaDocuments.pdf>

22. Agartala Declaration of Indigenous People on Dams and Natural Resource Protection in India's North East, 15 February 2013, Tripura, available at http://indigenoupeoplesissues.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17252:india-agartala-declaration-of-indigenous-peoples-consultation-on-dams-and-natural-resources-protection-in-india-s-north-east&catid=33:central-asia-indigenous-peoples&Itemid=66

23. Richard Kamei, 'Hydro Power Projects and Northeast India: Ecology and Equity at Stake', *Kafila*, 30 June 2013, available at <http://kafila.org/2013/06/30/hydro-power-projects-and-northeast-india-ecology-and-equity-at-stake/>

Naxal Affected Districts of India



Introduction

“If left-wing extremism continues to flourish in parts which have natural resources of minerals, the climate for investment would certainly be affected.”²⁴

Dr. Manmohan Singh, 18 June 2009
Prime Minister of India

What has the western world taught us? That a war can be waged for creating peace, that nuclear missiles are made for ensuring peace-talks with neighboring countries, and that natural resources (lands, forests, water, hills and minerals) must be exploited for so-called economic growth and development of any nation. We are repeatedly told that the biggest war of the 21st century is the ‘War on Terror’. Of course, that is not true. The biggest war of the 21st century is the war for natural resources, and the war for minerals is at the centre of all the wars. The powerful nations are waging war against the powerless with the clear intension of grabbing their natural resources in the name of progress, growth and development.

24. The Trickle-down Revolution’, *Outlook*, 20 September 2010.

Perhaps, many people, especially middle class people in cities who are the core beneficiaries of these wars, may not perceive this, but it is the naked truth. War is war, and wherever most wars take place, the poor people of the Earth are bound to pay its price.

In 2010, the United States of America discovered untapped mineral deposits in Afghanistan estimated to be worth \$1 trillion.²⁵ According to a Pentagon report, iron, copper, cobalt, gold and other highly sought after minerals lie in the ground throughout Afghanistan, so that “Afghanistan could eventually be transformed into one of the most important mining centers in the world”.²⁶

Indeed, such a discovery will completely transform Afghanistan's US\$12 billion annual economy.²⁷ Luckily for the Afghans, in a fantastic coincidence, there just happen to be highly industrialised invaders hanging around, ready and willing to ‘help’ this ravaged nation. The Pentagon Task Force has already started trying to help the Afghans set up a system to deal with mineral development.

The ‘War on Terror’ has already continued far too long, often waged over precious resources such as oil in Iraq, and now precious metals in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's Minister of Mines was accused by American officials of accepting a US\$30 million bribe to award China the rights to develop its copper mine.²⁸ Of course, it's a war. The war for minerals, however, is usually a silent war, that most people know little about. Perhaps, a few powerful people want us to know about it, precisely because they depend on it for their prime profit.

25. U.S. Identifies Vast Mineral Riches in Afghanistan', *The New York Times*, 13 June 2010.

26. 'The War for Minerals in Afghanistan' *Daily Reckoning*, 14 June 2010.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

The newly emerging so-called superpower – India is also waging its own war over minerals. While the USA is mostly waging wars against other countries, India's war is against its own people, the Adivasis whose status as Indigenous Peoples was denied by the Indian State in front of the United Nations several times. Yet the Supreme Court of India recognises them as the Indigenous Peoples of India,²⁹ who are neglected, denied and exploited in their own country. Their lands, territories and resources are being grabbed every day. Every week, they are being killed, raped, tortured, falsely implicated as Naxals³⁰ and thrown behind bars.

This war is being waged in the name of cleansing the Communist Party of India (Maoist) (CPI-Maoist), acknowledged as the biggest internal security threat to the nation by our former economist-Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, who often used this phrase in the Parliament, public and security meetings. This war, aimed at eradicating the CPI-Maoist, is going on in the name of national security, and claims to be aimed at providing citizens with peace, good governance and development. But are these the real aims of India's war?

According to an estimation in 2007, the Naxals were active across 170 districts of nine states, where they control 92,000 square kilometres, which comes to around 40% of India's total geographical area. Hence, these areas are named as the 'Red Corridor'. In 2009, the CPI-Maoist had presence in 180 districts in ten states. In August 2010, the state of Karnataka was removed from the list and in July 2011, the numbers of Naxal affected district was reduced to 83 districts of nine states.

29. The Supreme Court's judgment on the SLP (Cr) No. 10367 of 2010 *Kailas & others Vs State of Maharashtra*.

30. A Naxal is a member of any of the Communist guerrilla groups in India, mostly associated with the CPI-Maoist. The term Naxal derives from the name of the village Naxalbari in West Bengal, where the movement had its origin.

However, the CPI-Maoist claims its presence in 220 districts of 20 states in the country. In 2006, India's intelligence agency RAW (Research and Analysis Wing), estimated that the CPI-Maoist has 70,000 fighters, including a core of 20,000 guerillas³¹ and 50,000 permanent cadres, who are waging war against the Indian State.³²

Against them, the Indian government had deployed 200,000 paramilitary forces in the forest areas in October, 2009 and recruited another 90,000 additional paramilitary forces. Let's also not forget that the state police, whatever may be the numbers, are all more or less engaged in the so-called anti-Naxal operations. And what about 10,000 Special Police Officers (SPO), recruited from Adivasis as foot soldiers in this war against the CPI-Maoist, and another 12,000 due to be recruited shortly?³³ What about the recently formed 'Koya Commandos' in Chhattisgarh and 'Paharia Batalian' in Jharkhand? This adds up to a force of approximately 500,000 employed in our paramilitary forces, who are deployed in forest areas for waging this war against at most 70,000 Maoist fighters.

Yet they are not able to win the war against the CPI-Maoist. What a surprise! How is this possible? Is the Indian State waging a war to bring peace and good governance in the Red Corridor or is something else the real target of these anti-Naxal operations? Interestingly, on 27 November 2014, the outgoing director-general of the Central Reserved Police Force (CRPF), Dilip Trivedi made serious allegations against the state governments claiming that "certain states had vested interest in letting Maoist violence continue as it helped them get massive central funds."³⁴

31. 20,000 guerrillas are the fighters of People's Liberation Guerrillas Army and 50,000 permanent cadres are civilians who are engaged in supply of arms, food and other requirement.

32. Gladson Dungdung & Sanjay Krison, *Crossfire*, Kolkata: Adivaani, 2014.

33. *Ibid.*

34. 'Some States want Maoism to continue: CRPF Chief', *The Times of India*, 28 November 2014.

Indeed, it is very clear that the Indian State wants to clear the land as soon as possible and is therefore spending huge amount of money, which has become a major source of earning for the Naxal affected states. The worst Naxal affected 88 districts (see table 1) get 'Rs. 30 crore (US\$5 million) per district per annum under the 'Integrated Action Plan' for infrastructure development.

Besides, a huge amount of money is sanctioned for the Security Related Expenditure (SRE) and police modernisation of the states, which leads to rampant corruption. For instance, in 2006, the Director General of Police and the ADGP of Jharkhand were alleged of misusing the fund allocated under the Secret Service Fund (SSF). In the financial year 2004-05, the budgetary allocation of SSF was Rs.50 lakh (US\$83,333) only and it was raised to Rs.8.30 crore (US\$1.3 million) in 2005-06. On 10 March 2006, then the ADGP, Special branch withdrew Rs.5.6 crore (US\$933,333) by assuming the role of 'Withdrawal & Disbursement Officer' without any authorisation.³⁵

Obviously, this is not so much a war to cleanse the CPI-Maoist as the Indian State is battling hard on behalf of the corporate houses with the prime objective of grabbing Adivasis lands, territory and resources, and handing these over to them. Of course, this cannot be done only by waging a war. There is an English proverb that says, 'Give a dog a bad name and hang him'. The Indian State is applying this proverb to Adivasis. Is it not a war for minerals, which is centered in three mineral rich states - Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Odisha?

The 'Red Corridor', focused around these three states, is also an 'Adivasi Corridor' where Adivasis live in areas rich in natural resources – lands, forests, water, hills and minerals.

35. 'SC to hear plea on misuse of secret funds by Jharkhand Cops' *DNA* 11 January 2015.

One can even name these regions as the 'Mineral Corridor', since most of India's precious minerals, in quality and quantity, lie in these regions (see Table 1) therefore, the Indian State envisages converting these areas into an 'Industrial Corridor'. For that purpose they need to clear the land. These regions had been completely neglected in terms of real, people-focused development for decades. But after India's new economic liberalisation in 1991, these areas found space in the eyes of the ruling elite. Not because they wanted to develop these regions in real, human terms, but to exploit its natural resources.

Table 1 : The availability of minerals in the Red Corridor

Sl. No.	Name of the State	The Naxal affected districts ³⁶ and mineral corridors	Major minerals
1.	Jharkhand	Bokaro, Chatra, Dhanbad, East Singhbhum, Garhwa, Giridih, Gumla, Hazaribagh, Koderma, Latehar, Lohardagga, Palamu, Ranchi, Simdega, Saraikela-Kharaswan, West Singhbhum, Khunti and Ramgarh.	Iron ore (hematite), Coal, Copper ore, Mica, Bauxite, Fire clay, Graphite, Kyanite, Sillimanite, Lime stone, Uranium, rock phosphate, apatite, alusite and silver ore.
2.	Chhattisgarh	Bastar, Bijapur, Dantewada, Jashpur, Kanker, Korea (Baikunthpur), Narayanpur, Rajnandgaon and Sarguja.	Coal, iron ore (hematite), limestone, bauxite, dolomite, tin ore, diamond and dolomite.
3.	Orissa	Gajapati, Ganjam, Keonjhar, Koraput, Malkangiri, Mayurbhanj, Navrangpur, Rayagada, Sambhalpur, Sundargarh, Nayagarh, Kondhamal, Deogarh, Jajpur and Dhenkanal.	Chromite, nickel ore, cobalt ore, bauxite, titaniferous magnetite, manganese ore, limestone, pyrophyllite, iron ore (hematite), each mica, sillimanite, fireclay, garnet, coal, zircon and vanadium ore.
4.	Madhya Pradesh	Balaghat	Diaspore, molybdenum ore, pyrophyllite, diamond, copper ore, rock phosphate, manganese ore fireclay and ochre.

36. In 2009 the Ministry of Home Affairs (government of India) identified these districts as Naxal affected districts. The districts written in bold are the worst Naxal affected districts.

Gladson Dungdung

5.	Uttar Pradesh	Chandauli, Mirzapur and Sonebhadra .	Bauxite, china clay, coal, diaspore, pyrophyllite, feldspar, granite, dolomite, limestone, rock phosphate and sillimanite.
6.	West Bengal	Bankura, Midnapore and Purulia.	Coal, rock phosphate, granite, manganese, silica, fire clay, road metal, quartz, apatite, dolomite, feldspar and limestone.
7.	Bihar	Arwal, Aurangabad, Bhojpur, East Champaran, Gaya, Jamui, Jehanabad, Kaimur, Munger, Nalanda, Nawada, Patna, Rohtas, Sitamarhi and West Champaran.	Pyrite, Limestone, Bauxite, Quartz, Mica, Magnetite and Galena.
8.	Maharashtra	Chandrapur, Gadchiroli and Gondia .	Corundum, manganese, Bauxite, china clay, chromite, coal, dolomite, fireclay, fluorite and iron ore, kyanite, laterite, manganese ore, pyrophyllite and sillimanite Gondia and Nagpur districts.
9.	Andhra Pradesh (including Telengana)	Anantapur, Adilabad, East Godavari, Guntur, Karimnagar, Khammam, Kurnool, Medak, Mehboobnagar, Nalgonda, Prakasam, Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram, Warangal and Nizamabad	Barytes, kyanite, ball clay, corundum, diamond, calcite, mica, garnet, limonite, limestone and dolomite.

Source: Mineral Scenario in India 2013 (Ministry of Mines, Govt. of India)

There is ample reason for believing that two of these states, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, were clearly oriented from the start towards mineral extraction. Both these states were formed in 2000, and are known for containing huge mineral deposits and a large Adivasi population with 26.2% and 30.6% respectively. Both the states are deliberately defamed as ‘poor people of rich states’ and struggle to overcome this stigma. Interestingly, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh were not formed through the people’s movements for achieving statehood – although both the states had a long history of resistance for this in previous decades – but at a time when the market was ready to exploit the natural resources.

What clearly reveals the underlying motives for the creation of Jharkhand was the Industrial Policy 2001, and the Chhattisgarh government brought out its Mineral Policy the same year. The Chhattisgarh government claims that its Mineral Policy has created a conducive business environment to attract private investments in the state, both domestic and international.³⁷ Odisha is also known as an emerging state where the Korean Company POSCO and the British Company Vedanta are attempting to acquire the land and hills for mining projects.

In the era of globalisation, the development measurement of a state is considered on the basis of investment, where Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) plays a key role, rather than indicators of health, education and standard of living. Chief Ministers who can secure the most FDI set models for development, and India's states compete in a constant 'rat race' for attracting investors to boost their so-called economic growth.

The state governments are therefore busy signing Memorandum of Understandings (MoU). The state governments of Jharkhand and Odisha have signed 104 MoUs and 49 MoUs respectively for setting up steel, power and cement plants with the Arcelor Mittal India Ltd, Tata Steel Ltd, Jindal Steel & Power Ltd, JSW Steel Ltd, Essar Steel Ltd, Bhushan Steel & Power Ltd, Lafarge Cement Ltd, etc.

The most striking fact is that the government of Chhattisgarh has signed 345 MoUs for setting up steel, power and cement plants in the state. Out of these, 160 industries have already started the work on the projects.³⁸ At the same time, the State has also intensified its war against the Adivasis in the name of cleansing the CPI-Maoist.

37. http://www.cmdc.co.in/wel_cmdc.php

38. 185 industries yet to start operations in Chhattisgarh', *Business Standard*, 11 March 2013.

Beginning of the War

India's war for minerals was first launched in the state of Chhattisgarh in 2005, in the form of 'Salwa Judum'. A Congress MLA and then the leader of the opposition in the Legislative Assembly, Mahendra Karma, who had also been long-involved in anti-Naxal Movements, became the father of Salwa Judum. Therefore, he was a prime target of the CPI-Maoist, the outfit finally killed him on 25 May 2013.

The words 'Salwa Judum' derive from the Gondi language, literally meaning 'peace march'.³⁹ In practice, Salwa Judum was anything but a peace march. In essence it was a State sponsored 'private militia' of Adivasis, recruited to wage a war against their own people who were opposing the State's unjust development policies, killing innocent Adivasis, burning their villages and committing extreme atrocities against them to inspire terror. Salwa Judum was launched with the prime objective of clearing away all obstacles to the comfortable entry of corporate houses into the mineral rich region of Chhattisgarh, since this region had witnessed a long history of Adivasi-led mass protests against land acquisitions for so-called development projects.

The Chhattisgarh government's top priority was clearly to promote business interests. This is why it signed a MoU with Tata Steel Ltd for a massive new steel plant at Lohandiguda in Bastar district, on 4 June 2005, just two days after the formal launch of the Salwa Judum in Bastar and Dantewada districts.⁴⁰ The government also signed a MoU with the Essar group on the same day, for another huge steel plant with a capacity of 3.2 million tonnes per annum, with an estimated investment of Rs.6,000 crore (approx. US\$1 billion), to be established in Dantewara district.⁴¹

39. Salwa Judum - menace or messiah?', *Times of India*, 20 March 2010.

40. 'New battle zones', *Frontline*, 9-21 September 2007.

41. 'Chhattisgarh the new steel capital state of India', *Steel World*, February 2009.

The government did everything secretly. Soon after the deal was signed, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led state government refused to share the details, claiming that disclosure was specifically prohibited by a clause in the MoU. The issue was raised in the Chhattisgarh Legislative Assembly but the state government completely refused to share the copies of the MoU with the members of the opposition parties in the House.⁴² A classic example of how democracy works in practice in the world's largest democratic republic.

Later on, a copy of the Tata Steel Ltd's MoU was leaked, which exposed the government's intention behind hiding it. According to the MoU, the proposed steel plant would require approximately 2,161 hectares of land, close to 90% of which (1,861 hectares) is Adivasi-owned agricultural land and would directly affect about 225 Adivasi families.⁴³

The government had directly violated the provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act 1996 and the Constitutional provisions for the Fifth Schedule Areas, which ensure the right and entitlement to the Adivasis' inalienable rights over their land, territory and resources that cannot be taken away without their consent. However, the MoU contains no reference to rehabilitation, and residents of the area say that they had to invoke the Right to Information Act 2005 to receive a copy of Tata's rehabilitation package.⁴⁴

The Adivasis of ten villages started a protest against the proposed steel plant under the banner of the "Tata Steel Punarvasi Samity" (Tata Steel Rehabilitation Committee). They presented a thirteen charter demand, which includes compensation at Rs.5 lakh

42. 'New battle zones', *Frontline*, 9-21 September 2007.

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Ibid.*

(approx. US\$8,333) per acre for un-irrigated land and Rs.10 lakh (approx. US\$16,666) for irrigated lands. They also demanded a permanent job for at least one member of each nuclear family. The administration responded after two months and imposed ban orders under section 144 of the Indian Penal Code and convened a Gram Sabha (village council) meeting. The district collector and officials from Tata Steel participated in the Gram Sabha and asked the villagers to give their consent for the project.

Finally, the villagers decided not to give their land for the proposed project at any cost. Consequently, severe State repression started and many protestors were sent to jail. Similarly, when the villagers carried a series of protests against the proposed Essar steel plants at Dhurli and Bhansi, they faced extreme State repression. Today, the real meaning of development in India is that the government takes over the land, territory and resources of the people mostly the Adivasis with the power of the gun and hands these over to the corporate houses.

Meanwhile, the state government of Chhattisgarh played a trick when it armed 5,600 Adivasi youth in the Salwa Judum, and later as Special Police Officers (SPOs) in the name of cleansing the CPI-Maoist, who unleashed atrocities against their own people. An estimated 300,000 Adivasis of 644 villages were forced to vacate their homes in south Chhattisgarh, and became refugees to escape atrocities by the police and Salwa Judum. Approximately 50,000 of them were living in Salwa Judum-run 'relief camps', another 50,000 or more fled to Andhra Pradesh⁴⁵ and the rest migrated wherever they could.

Ever since these people fled their villages, the representatives of the corporate houses – Tata Steel Ltd, Jindal Steel Ltd, JSW Steel Ltd, Essar Steel Ltd, Adhunik and Bhushan Steel & Power

45. 'Caught between the Maoist and the Salwa Judum', Inforchange.org, April 2009.

Ltd among others, are roaming in the vicinity with full security provided by the state government, trying hard to establish their projects in Bastar and Dantewada districts.

However, while hearing the Writ Petition (civil) No.(s) 250 OF 2007, Nandini Sundar & Ors versus State of Chhattisgarh, on 5 July 2011, the Supreme Court of India declared the Salwa Judum to be illegal and unconstitutional, and ordered its disbanding. The Court directed the Chhattisgarh government to recover all the firearms, ammunition and accessories. The use of Salwa Judum by the government for anti-Naxal operations was heavily criticised for its violations of human rights and the recruitment of poorly trained youth for counter-insurgency roles.

The court ordered the government to investigate all instances of alleged criminal activities of Salwa Judum.⁴⁶ Later the Apex Court also ordered the central and state governments to re-establish all 300,000 Adivasis in their (644) villages, as they were in previous days, but both the governments failed to uphold the Court's order. Indeed, these democratic governments seem to be more interested in establishing a corporate empire over these lands than in protecting Adivasi villagers, whom the Indian State tends to see as a burden, and obstacle to 'economic growth and development'.

The interesting questions arise: how come so many corporate houses are peacefully running their projects/plants in the heart of India's so-called Red Corridor, where the government(s) claims to be unable to carry out any development activity? Has this whole drama of cleansing the CPI-Maoist been created to secure the region's huge natural – especially mineral resources, lying beneath Adivasi lands?

46. 'Salwa Judum is illegal, says Supreme Court', *The Hindu*, 6 July 2011.

The Biggest War of India

India has a history of many wars, and several post-Independence wars with its neighbours – Pakistan, Bangladesh and China. Of course, since these wars are still glorious, prestigious and bring moments of pride for many of us, it does not matter whatever price we have had to pay for these wars. Perhaps, many Indians love the idea of waging a war against these neighbouring countries, especially against Pakistan.

This is how history repeats itself. The Indian State is creating a new chapter for the Indian history books here, in the Adivasi areas of India. But I am not sure how this war will read in Indian history books in the future, but it will certainly be part of the people's history. The State has been waging a war in nine states of the country since October 2009 and no one knows its culmination.

This war is new, strategic and very unique. Does any country have a glorious history of war against its own people? Did the USA set a model when it waged a genocidal war against its indigenous inhabitants? What is certain is that, in all but name, India is waging war against its own people, the Adivasis, the indigenous people of the land. The government merely describes them as the poorest, illiterate, malnourished, underdeveloped and marginalised peoples of the land. One may raise some questions here: Why is the Indian State waging a war against these poorest people of the country? Why are the most marginalised people being targeted? What does the Indian State hope to achieve from this war?

Of course, our former Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, who has worked with the world's top financial institutions, has a permanent answer. He already described it in the Indian Parliament on 18 June 2009 before the question could have

been raised. He explained everything to the nation before launching the war, convincing most Parliamentarians about the need for it, saying, "If left-wing extremism continues to flourish in parts which have natural resources of minerals, the climate for investment would certainly be affected".⁴⁷ This one sentence is more than enough to understand why India's biggest war, waged against its own people, is so necessary. The majority of parliamentarians, who claim to be representatives of the people - though most of them buy votes during elections - have supported this war. Didn't they even think for a minute about those most marginalised citizens whom they are supposed to represent in the Indian Parliament?

It would be interesting to note that the PM's anxiety was not that the nation or people will suffer because of extremism in resource rich states but rather that 'investment will be adversely affected'.⁴⁸ Why was he so concerned about the investment climate rather than his constitutional responsibility for the country's citizens? Precisely because he is the only person who remembers what pains and sufferings he underwent in 1991 to open those closed doors for foreign investors. He knows what a big burden he carried to pass the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Act in 2005, and he took so much trouble ensuring 100 percent FDI in the mining sector.

In 2009, he had one more job to do, which is why he was in such a hurry. He wanted to make sure that all his foreign investors get settled down in the mineral corridor of India before he would leave his office as Prime Minister. If he could have accomplished this final job, would he be at peace for the rest of his life? Let's not forget that he is an economist, who perhaps believes in his nation's economic growth as if this is his God. In his belief

47. 'The Trickle-down Revolution', *Outlook*, 20 September 2010.

48. *Ibid.*

system, this trumps any other kind of growth and development for the people, especially the impoverished, destitute and marginalised Adivasis.

Indeed, all three top elite rulers of India of this era – Manmohan Singh, P. Chidambaram and Montek Singh Ahluwalia were well placed to convert the country's minerals into dollars. They were mad for economic growth, prepared to go to any length to boost it. Presently, it has been accelerated by another set of trio elite rulers - Narendra Modi, Arun Jately and Amit Shah. They all seem to be dying to see India attain 'superpower' status. But can India really become a superpower when a majority of its citizens are struggling to secure two meals per day?

Our history books teach us about how a British Company, 'East India', colonized India for years, and took away our golden bird. They sold our resources and of course, they exploited our people too. In 2008, another British company, 'Execution Noble Limited', had told the Indian government to vacate the Maoists from the resource rich areas, who have blocked \$80 billion worth of business.

The issue of Naxalism emerged in the 1970s, but remained peripheral. However, when villagers attacked West Bengal's Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee and the Union Steel and Mines Minister Ram Vilas Paswan while they were returning from the inauguration of Jindal's steel project at Salboni in West Midnapore district of West Bengal, in November 2008, the issue of Naxalism took centre stage in public debates. Soon after this, Operation Green Hunt took off as a joint centre-state operation, aimed at eradicating Maoist resistance.

Since they were not in a position to wage an open war for minerals in the country, they started coining the four-decades-

old issue of Naxalism/Maoism as the Nation's biggest internal security threat, bringing this to centre stage. How clever they were in using people's sentiments.

Perhaps, it is the tendency of the Indian masses to extend their blind support when the government or major political parties put a national flavour into any issue, outlining threats of an attack on the integrity and sovereignty of the nation. The Indian government got huge support from the middle classes for this war against the CPI-Maoist. Of course, these people are constant harvesters of war. Who will get jobs in the so-called development projects? Whose vehicles would run on four lane roads? Whose children will go to corporate run schools? Who will enjoy the air-conditioned houses? And who will live in the smart cities?

On 24 October 2009, the then Union Home Minister of India, P. Chidambaram, reiterated, "Naxalism remains the biggest internal security threat to India".⁴⁹ On 8 November 2010, the USA President Barak Obama, while addressing the Indian Parliament, said, "In Asia and around the world, India is not simply emerging, India has already emerged".⁵⁰ These two statements were enough to intensify the war for resources in India.

Similarly, the Chief Ministers of the so-called Red Corridor were attending a series of meetings in Delhi, both with P. Chidambaram on the issues of Operation Green Hunt, and also with corporate houses, on facilitating investment for the region's minerals. Competition over investment among the Chief Ministers of several states, was brought out clearly in the media. And what could be more natural, when the present era of development is measured on the basis of investment? Bringing a decline in poverty, hunger, illiteracy, malnutrition and disparity are clearly

49. 'Maoists getting arms from Bangladesh, Myanmar: Chidambaram', *The Times of India*, 24 October 2009.

50. 'And conquered hearts in Parliament', *Business Line*, 8 November 2010.

no longer a high priority for today's Chief Ministers. All this gives one every reason to believe that the Operation Green Hunt was not so much the anti-Naxal operation it was sold as; its main purpose seemed to be to get Adivasi lands clear of obstructive inhabitants, so that the corporate houses could extract maximum profit from them.

India has faced a series of massive terrorist attacks, including on Parliament, Akshardham temple, in Hyderabad, Ahmadabad and Mumbai. Nevertheless, then our corporate Home Minister had a different view about Jehadi terrorists: he had found that the "Maoists are more dangerous than the Jehadi terrorists for the country",⁵¹ which is why the UPA government made serious efforts to eliminate the CPI-Maoist before completion of its term. One can understand this easily in the sense that Jehadi terrorists have nothing to do with minerals, while both the Maoists and Adivasis do, since they operate and dwell in the mineral-rich areas.

National and multi-national companies keep their eyes glued to this mineral wealth, without being able to establish their projects in the so-called Red Corridor due to people's protests, while the CPI-Maoist never hesitate to take credit for this. That is the main reason why the Indian government is always ready to go for unconditional talks with Pakistan, whereas it would rather eliminate the CPI-Maoist than go for peace talks with them. It merely proposes pre-conditions for peace talks with the CPI-Maoist to mislead the people of India.

On 29 January 2011, P. Chidambaram made a strong case for turning small farmers into a workforce for industry, in the name of making growth inclusive. This was in a discussion

51. Swadesh M Rana, *The gravest threat to India's national security*, The Academic Council on the United Nations Systems, Information Memorandum No.82, 2010.

on inclusive growth at the World Economic Forum, where he said, “We should move more and more workforce to services and industry as the agriculture sector cannot grow beyond four percent. It is necessary to move people to industry and services which have the potential of expanding at twelve percent”.⁵² On 1 January 2011, the Ministry of Forest and Environment cleared the POSCO project in Orissa – even though the same ministry ordered the newly constructed Adarsh Building⁵³ to be brought down. Both the projects are violating the environmental laws. This is how we run a selective democracy to ensure the maximum profit to the corporate houses.

The Mineral War in Jharkhand

After a long preparation, debate and politics, finally the Indian government launched ‘Operation Green Hunt’ in Jharkhand on 10 March 2011, with the objective of cleansing the CPI-Maoist from the state. Though P. Chidambaram, as architect and CEO of Operation Green Hunt, soon stopped calling it Operation Green Hunt, his officers used the term shamelessly. Nearly 10,000 security forces, consisting of CRPF, COBRA, Jaguar, Special Task Force (STF) and other groups, were deployed in the forests, choppers went roaming over the forests, schools were converted into security camps, forests were sealed, and combing operations were started in the forests with the support of local Adivasi youth who were also named as SPOs⁵⁴ – a system that developed out of the Salwa Judum model in Chhattisgarh.

52. ‘Need to move agri workers to industry, services: Chidambaram’, OneIndia News, 30 January 2011.

53. The Adarsh Housing Society is a posh 31 storey building constructed on prime real estate in Colaba, Mumbai for the welfare of war widows and personnel of India’s Ministry of Defence. This is considered a sensitive coastal area by the Indian Defence Forces and is the location of various Indian defence establishments. The society is also alleged to have violated Indian environment ministry rules.

54. Special Police Officer.

Since there was huge media hype about Operation Green Hunt, guerillas of the CPI-Maoist fled from many areas long before arrival of the security forces. As a result, the security forces often found themselves targeting innocent villagers. The anti-Naxal operations created uncertainty, brought threat to life and subdued the freedom of thousands of Adivasi villagers in different parts of the state.

Adivasis who live in or around the forest and depend on it for their survival, were not allowed to enter or roam in it, their water sources were captured, villagers were unnecessarily harassed, children were denied their right to education and women were often badly mistreated by the security forces. The big question is, was this really an operation for hunting the Maoists?

The government has been telling us for several years that the Palamau region of Jharkhand is the most Naxal-infested area. Presently, Simdega district comes under the same category. But why, then, was the anti-Naxal operation first launched in the Kolhan region? Interestingly, the Jharkhand government has signed most MoUs with corporate houses for establishing mining industries, power projects and steel plants in this region.

It is obvious that the anti-Naxal operations are being carried out in those districts (East Singhbhum, West Singhbhum, Khunti, Gumla, Bokaro, Giridih, Chatra, Latehar, Ramgarh and Hazaribagh) where either large numbers of villagers are opposing proposed development projects, or the government foresees future investment corridors.

The government of India launched another operation on 17 March 2011 in the Chotanagpur region of Jharkhand, where anti-Naxal operations soon assumed the character of an 'Operation Mineral Hunt'. According to reports, choppers were

engaged to conduct aerial surveys aimed at locating minerals in this region, simultaneously with security operations.⁵⁵

Surprisingly, just a week after flagging off the Operation Green Hunt, the world's second largest steel company, POSCO announced plans to shift its proposed twelve million tonnes steel project from Odisha to Jharkhand, where it would invest Rs.54,000 crore (approx. US\$9 billion) in a joint venture with SAIL in Bokaro. POSCO would have a 60% share, and would get the Chiria Mines (2,000 million tonnes reserve) in Saranda Forest, for which the Arcelor Mittal Company was also bargaining hard.

This is how the State is essentially battling for the corporate houses in the name of fighting the CPI-Maoist, creating insecurity instead of creating peace in the region. This puts Adivasis into a state of unceasing uncertainty. Despite being the country's indigenous peoples, who have always tried to live in peace, and despite paying the heaviest price for the nation's development, they are hounded again and again. It is wrong to say that Adivasis are against development. But what kind of development? For whom? And whose cost? If the foundation of development demands laying Adivasis down into their graves how can they accept? In present circumstances, Adivasis are being targeted from each and every corner – from Maoists, corporate houses and the State.

The Land Acquisition Ordinance promulgated in 2015 by the BJP led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) shows that India's present leaders are in a hurry to grab Adivasi's land, territory and resources, and hand them over to the corporate houses who run the show we know as 'Indian democracy'. Of course, they have invested huge amounts of money in the last general

55. Gladson Dungdung, *Is it the Operation Maoist hunt?* Countercurrents.org, 21 March 2010.

election campaigns, so why shouldn't policies favour them? On 9 May 2015 during his visit to Chhattisgarh, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi clearly said that development is the answer to Naxalism. Indeed, the meaning of his development is converting the Adivasi corridor into an industrial corridor. He also inaugurated projects worth Rs. 24,000 crore (approx. US\$4 billion) for the Maoist hotbed of Bastar region, which include setting up mega steel plant, a railway line, slurry pipeline and pellet plant.⁵⁶ The most important question is will the Adivasis benefit from the unjust development projects?

The case of Saranda Forest in Jharkhand is one of the best examples of how India's civil war is not about cleansing away the CPI-Maoist so that peace and good governance can be restored in the conflict zones. It is the State's well planned war against the Adivasis for mineral resources. Although the State, the Corporate Houses, the CPI-Maoist and the Adivasis are the major stakeholders in the war, the losers are the Adivasis.

In this book I have documented, reviewed and analyzed the issues of Saranda Forest from a holistic approach, which begins with the challenges of travelling in the Red Corridor. It goes further with the discussion about the relationship between forest and Adivasis and the iron ore mining and its impact in the lives of the Adivasis. It analyses the forest movement and state suppression, the Naxal Movement, its nexus with the corporate houses and impact on the Adivasis.

Further, it analyses the war and human right violations including brutal killing of innocent Adivasis and the role of the National Human Rights Commission. The book reviews the status of health, education and basic needs like drinking water

56. 'PM Modi inaugurates projects worth Rs24000 cr in Naxal-affected Dantewada', *Livemint*, 9 May 2015.

Mission Saranda

in the Saranda Forest. It analyses the role of media, politicians and local self governance. It also unearths the corporate houses' foul play during the public hearings by bribing the community, traditional heads and local politicians. The book analyses the biodiversity and forest rights of the Adivasis. But most importantly, it exposes the failure of the much hyped 'Saranda Development Plan', which was propagated as a model for the development of the Naxal affected areas of India.

The book 'Mission Saranda' intends to tell the world about the pain, suffering and agony of the Adivasis of Saranda Forest, who are residing over the mineral wealth. It exposes the State sponsored gross human rights violations committed in the name of economic growth, development and establishment of peace and good governance. And of course, it exposes how the Indian State has been waging a war against its own people with clear intention to grab their natural resources and hand those over to the corporate houses.

The book aims to bring the Adivasis' issues at centre stage of the public debate so that the Adivasis are no longer treated merely either as victims or beneficiaries but they are included as the opinion and decision makers in the corridor of power, which may pave the way for solution to there unfinished agendas.

A Mission to Saranda Forest

“Saranda is now a frequent visiting place of development officials, which once used to be a land of terror. Saranda red zone is now a liberated green zone.”⁵⁷

Mithilesh Kumar, Assistant Commandant
209, COBRA Battalion (CRPF)

The Saranda Forest located in the hilly region of West Singhbhum district in the Indian state of Jharkhand is a dense forest famous for its Sal trees, sometimes known as ‘green steel’⁵⁸ in the Asian subcontinent. The forest is very rich in biodiversity with an extraordinary variety of wildlife and it has large iron and manganese ore deposits. It is home to ‘Ho’ and ‘Munda’ Adivasis.⁵⁹ Saranda Forest was a tourist hot spot during the

57. ‘Saranda Myth Pictured’, *CRPF Newsletter*, Vol.7, April 2012.

58. The Saranda Forest has very good quality of Sal trees, which is used to build houses. Perhaps, that is why it’s called the green steel.

59. ‘Saranda Myth Pictured’, *CRPF Newsletter*, Vol.7, April 2012.

British rule.⁶⁰ Thalkobad is a scenic village situated at a height of 550 meters in the heart of the forest, where the Britishers had built a rest house in 1905, which guerillas of the CPI-Maoist blew up in 2003. Similarly, Ligrada Swamp is a botanical paradise spread over 7-8 acres. Kiriburu is another lovely place in Saranda Forest, a picturesque hill station where the view of sunrise and sunset is famously beautiful.

However, this beautiful Saranda Forest had turned into a 'War Zone' in the few years since Jharkhand was formed as the 28th state of the Indian nation in 2000. In fact, it had become one of the 'liberated zones' of the most powerful Naxal outfit – the CPI-Maoist stronghold in India's Red Corridor. It is widely known that Saranda Forest was where the two powerful Naxal organisations – Andhra Pradesh based Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist) People's War Group and Bihar based Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI) merged to form a new party – Communist Party of India (Maoist) on 21 September 2004.⁶¹ *Tehelka Magazine* calls Saranda the 'Dantewada'⁶² of Jharkhand.

The Indian State had launched a 'Mission Saranda' in 2010 to get back its control over the Saranda Forest through military action, which was followed by so-called development initiatives known as the 'Saranda Action Plan' (SAP) in December, 2011. The question are why does the Saranda Forest get much more focus than other liberated zones of the CPI-Maoist in the Red Corridor of India? Why was the Indian government interested to spend Rs.250.48 crore (approx. US\$41.7 million) for the development of the Adivasis of Saranda Forest, though it hadn't shown any interest for their development in the past?

60. 'Jairam wants his last rites on ex-red turf', *The Times of India*, 28 January 2013.

61. Satya Prakash Das. *Naxal Movement and State Power: With Special reference of Orissa*. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2006.

62. Dantewara is a district located in the state of Chhattisgarh, which is the liberated zone of the CPI-Maoist.

One of the answers lies in Saranda Forest's subsoil. The region is full of iron and manganese ore, and mining activities are being carried out in the region for decades and pose a grave threat to the existence of the forest, its Adivasis and wildlife. In the last few years, the Jharkhand government has sanctioned 22 new mining leases for private mining companies but hardly anybody knows about it. According to the government's report, we need "minimum 33% forest to maintain the environmental level in the state, and at the moment merely 29% forest is left in Jharkhand".⁶³ Yet the trees are being cut in the name of economic growth and development. The government does not bother about this, and is instead promoting more and more mining in Saranda Forest.

To understand the other side of this story, Ho and Munda Adivasis have been fighting to get their ownership rights over Saranda Forest for decades, claiming that this forest belongs to their ancestors. It is essentially their forest – an area where they have lived since recorded history began, and they want to secure proper ownership rights over it.

The CPI-Maoist, who is reportedly working to build a base of popular support tackling socio-economic problems such as the failure of governance, getting involved in anti-mining agitation, and fighting land acquisition and discrimination, claim to have taken up the Adivasis cause.⁶⁴ The CPI-Maoist believes that Adivasis will prosper only if they are able to get their ownership rights over the forest, and that the armed struggle is the only means left for them, because the State is against giving them their due rights and privileges. Establishing bases in remote forested areas, among poor and impoverished communities the CPI-Maoist has a strong grip over the Saranda Forest. Whenever

63. Gladson, Dungdung. *Ulgulan Ka Sauda*. Ranchi: JIPF, 2009.

64. 'Analysis: India's Maoist challenge', *Al Jazeera*, 24 August 2013.

massive anti-Naxal operations are carried out by the State, its cadres disappear from the region; once the operation stops, they return again to this safe heaven. This game of 'hide and seek' is played out many times, and the CPI-Maoist is not willing to desert the forest at any cost.

After the massive anti-Naxal operations in June-August, 2011, the security forces declared that they had regained control over the liberated zone. Jairam Ramesh, then the Indian Union Minister (Rural Development), landed in the Saranda Forest with a development plan worth Rs.250.48 crore (approx. US\$41.7 million). Surprisingly, it was the first time in Indian history that the State was ready to invest such a huge amount of money for development of merely 56 Adivasis villages. Evidently, it was a mission to control Saranda Forest.

Right from the beginning of the anti-Naxal operations, termed 'Operation Green Hunt', which the Indian government has launched across the Red Corridor of India, I have been arguing that the anti-Naxal operation has a clear business interest that it is essentially a 'War for the Natural Resources'. The Indian State intends to capture the natural resources, especially the minerals, lying beneath the Adivasis' land and forests, in order to realise its 'Vision 2020', and becoming a world superpower. This is why it is striving to clear the land of Adivasis before handing it over to the corporate houses.

To collect evidence to substantiate my arguments, I therefore decided to travel across the Red Corridor of Jharkhand. In fact, I used to call it the 'Adivasi Corridor' – scientifically correct, since this territory belongs to the Adivasis historically. They are the first settlers and indigenous to this land. Indeed, they are the owners of the land, territory and resources, which has also been acknowledged by the Supreme Court of India through several

judgments.⁶⁵ However, successive governments are battling hard to convert this ‘Adivasi Corridor’ into an ‘Industrial Corridor’. For instance, the Jharkhand Industrial Policy of 2012 clearly states that the ‘state government will initiate necessary steps to develop two industrial corridors, namely Koderma–Bahragora and Ranchi-Patratu-Ramgarh. 25 kilometres on each side of a four lane road between Koderma–Bahragora and Ranchi-Patratu-Ramgarh will be developed with an array of infrastructural support such as power facilities, rail connectivity, industrial estates, Special Economic Zones and top-of-the line infrastructure.’⁶⁶

After deciding to go to the Saranda Forest, I contacted my regular travel agent and asked him to arrange a vehicle for me. But I was stunned by his unexpected response. He said, “No driver is ready to go to the Saranda Forest. Everyone is afraid of going to Saranda, knowing that the guerrillas of the CPI-Maoist live there.” Other vehicle owners and drivers, whose services, I had taken in the past, gave a similar response. Indeed, everyone was afraid of the Maoists because the Saranda Forest is seen as their territory.

Finally one of my relatives agreed to lend me his vehicle and accompany me on my journey. Hence, we started our journey from Ranchi, the capital city of Jharkhand, an early morning in the mid-monsoon in 2011 with little fear in our minds.

As soon as we reached Bandgaon, the boarder of Khunti and West Singhbhum districts, the atmosphere was silent and scary. It looked like some major incident had occurred in the vicinity. A police vehicle was parked on the roadside and the CRPF

65. The Supreme Court judgements on the special leave petition (Cr) No. 10367 of 2010 Kailas & others Vs State of Maharashtra and “Orissa Mining Corporation Ltd Vs Ministry of Environment and Forest (government of India).

66. Government of Jharkhand, Department of Industries, *Jharkhand Industrial Policy 2012*

Jawans⁶⁷ were uploading some goods into their vehicle. Perhaps, they were preparing for an anti-Naxal operation in the region. We were stopped near the check-post and after checking our vehicle, they told us that no vehicle is allowed to cross towards Chaibasa after 6pm for security reasons. And if anyone dares to go, they must go at their own risk, as the security forces would not provide them with security. Public buses are not allowed after 6pm. This was the first hint showing how afraid the security forces are of the CPI-Maoist guerrillas in this region.

One has to cross the valley for 35 kilometers through Porahat forest. Hardly any vehicle is willing to enter after 6pm. For an hour, terror rules the minds of anyone who dares to enter the valley at this time. To cross the valley, I therefore prepared my mind and heart to enter it after 6pm enroute to Saranda Forest. I thought this would be a good start to overcoming the fear of the CPI-Maoist.

When we entered into the valley it was completely silent. The mobile network did not work in the valley. If a vehicle breaks down, there is no chance of getting out of the vicinity easily. I saw a few villagers, who were selling mangoes on the road side, but I did not see any buyer. However these villagers remain on the road throughout the day, so many passers-by look on them with suspicion, assuming they may be informers of the CPI-Maoist, or even party members, who blow-up police vehicles with landmines.

We stopped for a while and bought some mangoes from them. Actually, my intention was to get some inside information, and buying mangoes was a way to start interacting with the local people. They told me about the landmines, planted by the CPI-Maoist throughout the valley for welcoming the police vehicles.

67. The word 'Jawan' is commonly used for the security force in India.

However, there is no case of any innocent passer-by or villager being injured by a landmine. We crossed the valley safely within an hour.

We reached Chakradharpur in the noon. To my surprise everyone I spoke to was comfortable talking on the Maoist issue. Often I have found that whenever I start talking on this issue, many people just walk away, but here the situation was just opposite. People were keen to have a serious discussion. They informed me that the train route which crosses Chakradharpur was closed for a year. The Indian government was afraid of running passenger trains at night, though goods trains could run at any time. It was a clear sign that in the Red Corridor life begins at 6am and ends at 6pm, and hardly a few dare to break this rule.

We proceeded towards Sonua development block, which is an area with a large CPI-Maoist presence so intensive anti-Naxal operations were being carried out by the security forces. There were numbers of paramilitary camps in schools, resulting in an obvious denial of right to education and right to food for the children. The cases of gross human rights violation were also rampant in the region. When we crossed Sonua police station, a police vehicle was parked at its gate. There were six policemen, including an officer, in the vehicle. They checked each and every vehicle passing this road. It was market day at Sonua, so people had come from very remote villages.

In March 2010, when the Operation Green Hunt was carried out in the region, villagers had stopped going to the market for at least three months, since they were not allowed to collect minor forest produce and fire wood, and therefore had nothing to sell and no money to buy things there. In 2010, life was very tough for them. Now they are used to the police repression and

simply do not bother about their presence and keep on doing their everyday work so as to survive.

While crossing the market, everyone saw us as strangers. Of course, we were strangers for them, but here this means something else. Since they do not know us, they assume we may be either police personnel in civil dress or Maoist supporters. Interestingly, the police wear plain clothes and the Maoist guerillas wear uniforms in the Red Corridor.

Often, the police go to the market in civil dress to catch innocent villagers on the pretext that they are Naxals. Police personnel were watching us closely, so we were a bit scared of them, knowing that if they take us into custody, they could go to any extent in framing us as Naxals. There are 6,000 Adivasis languishing⁶⁸ in different prisons of Jharkhand in allegation of being either Naxals or their aides.

We crossed Sonua and reached Goilkera. This area is known as the Elephant Corridor. However, mining activities have created unrest in the elephant's world. Consequently, they rush to the villages at any hour and attack the villagers, demolishing houses and destroying the crops. There are many cases of killing and destruction by elephants.

The government policy in addressing this issue is a scheme of mass awareness and compensation packages. One can find signboards in several places, which read "Save Elephants". Obviously, the mining activities are the root cause of this problem, which will remain till the mining activities are stopped in the region. But who is going to bell the cat? Of course, neither the government nor the mining companies have any real concern for either elephants or Adivasis. Profit is their prime interest.

68. 'How long will the 6000 Jharkhandi Adivasis languish in jail?' *Newswing*, 13 March 2012.

Goilkera is one of the entry points of Saranda Forest. No bus seemed to be running on the road. We found only one jeep which was used as public transport, full of passengers inside and on the roof. We also found some villagers grazing their cattle in the forest. They were carrying bows, arrows and axes, which are the traditional weapons of the Adivasis.

In fact, no Adivasi would go to the forest without carrying a traditional weapon, which is not just the rule but tradition too. Everyone knows the importance of traditional weapons in the forest. One cannot even imagine surviving in the forest without it. Yet these days, police often use these weapons as proof for portraying innocent villagers as Naxals. For instance, the CRPF personnel shot dead Lucas Minj while he was grazing cattle in the forest.⁶⁹

It was 5pm when we reached Manoharpur, which is a small town near Saranda Forest. The major part of Saranda falls under the jurisdiction of Manoharpur development block, and the rest comes under Noamundi block of West Singhbhum district. We went to have tea near the railway station. If you travel to the rural areas, you will see how outsiders have settled down in the region and exploit the local Adivasis.

I saw two Adivasi women who were selling local berries near the railway station, and witnessed their exploitation. I saw a man who looked like an outsider attempting to snatch away their berries. He wanted to pay a meagre amount to the women, who were not ready to let their wares go for so little, so they were asking him not to touch their berry baskets; but instead,

69. Lucas Minj was a dumb person, resident of Nawarnagu village under Barwadih police station in Laterhar district of Jharkhand, who was brutally killed by the CRPF on 31 January 2012 while he was grazing cattle near the river carrying an axe with him. Carrying out an anti-Naxal operation, the CRPF personnel asked him some questions but he was unable to speak and therefore they assumed he was a Naxal.

the man started touching their bodies. They were shouting, but no-one came to help them, as the men sitting nearby were all outsiders. Finally, the man snatched away their berry baskets after paying them a very small amount of money. In this situation, if I had intervened, there would surely have been a clash. This is how Adivasi women are often exploited in the market places, economically and sexually as well. Later, I came to know that this man was the brother of a local journalist. This is one of the reasons why Adivasi issues do not get proper coverage in the media.

In Manoharpur, we met some journalists. They informed us about a shutdown, called for by the CPI-Maoist in protest about the Chilkari verdict. The Lower Court of Giridih had just pronounced the death penalty for four alleged members of the CPI-Maoist, including cultural activist Jitan Marandi, on the allegation of killing 17 people, including former Jharkhand Chief Minister Babulal Marandi's son Anup Marandi, at Chilkari of Giridih district. Later the Jharkhand High Court acquitted them.

The journalists told us that we must not move in Saranda Forest on the shutdown day. As we could not find a place to stay the night in Manoharpur, we decided to cross the border to Rourkela in Odisha, which was merely 40 km away. While moving towards Rourkela, the CRPF personnel stopped us at Jaraikela, on the Jharkhand-Orissa boarder. They interrogated us and searched our entire vehicle. This is everyday business in the Red Corridor.

The next day, despite the shutdown, we started moving in the Saranda region. We were advised to put a computer-printed paper saying 'Press' in the vehicle's front glass, as a ticket to travel in the Maoists' world. It turned out to be a good idea to travel in the Red Corridor during the shutdown to understand the

situation. Surprisingly, we found several public vehicles on the road, and saw many villagers going for the market at Jomkoda. It was the only market in the area, so everybody had to go. But how did people dare to open a market and drive vehicles on the road when the CPI-Maoist had called a shutdown?

Actually, villagers told me that there is an understanding between the villagers and the CPI-Maoist. If the CPI-Maoist announces a shutdown on a market day, the market is allowed to function. This is one of the 'Robin Hood' aspects of the CPI-Maoist. Here, no-one dares to open a shop or run a vehicle on the road without CPI-Maoist's permission.

The outfit decides the rules and regulations, and people in the villages is aware of this. It seems that everyone residing in the Red Corridor, follows the CPI-Maoist's rules, and largely disregards the Indian State. This is one of the strengths of the 'Naxal Movement' that everyone is kept informed and closely follows CPI-Maoist's orders. Landmines are planted everywhere and when roaming in the forest, one's life completely depends on intelligence and good wishes from the CPI-Maoist cadres. Once you enter the forest, the informers, both police and CPI-Maoist, send information to their headquarters.

The most interesting thing is that the mining companies have been operating their mines for decades without any obstacle in Saranda Forest, where the State did not do any development activity in the pretext of Naxalism. The road going to Gua Mines is in a terrible condition due to the regular running of trucks carrying heavy loads of iron ore.

The questions arise in one's mind are how can these companies continue to operate in the Adivasis' territory when one of the stated goals of the CPI-Maoist is to stop displacement of the

Mission Saranda

Adivasis? Why has Jairam Ramesh, Union Minister of Rural Development, put so much prestige into the development initiative called 'Saranda Action Plan' when the development needs of the Adivasis in the state are otherwise blatantly ignored? Why does everyone desire to have control over Saranda Forest? Why is there an endless fight among the government, corporate houses, CPI-Maoist and Adivasis? Of course, the Mission Saranda has answers to these questions.

Saranda Forest and Adivasi People

“There is a symbiotic relationship between the Adivasis and the forest, which is officially recognised by the Forest Policy 1988. Without forest, the Adivasis are similar like a fish without water.”

Dr. Sanjay Bosu Mullick, Leader
Save the Forest Movement in Jharkhand

‘Saranda’ literally means a ‘land of seven hundred hills’.⁷⁰ It is the largest Sal forest (*Shorea Robusta*) in Asia.⁷¹ The forests of Saranda Division embrace the south-western extremity of what was earlier the Kolhan Government Estate.⁷² The tract lies between latitude 22° and 22°–26′ north and longitude 85°–26′ and 85°–26′ east. To the north runs the Calcutta-Nagpur South

70. *The Forest Resource Survey*, Chaibasa, 2006 published by the government of Jharkhand.

71. ‘Between Maoists and Mines’, *Down To Earth*, 16-30 April 2012.

72. *The Forest Resource Survey*, Chaibasa, 2006 published by the government of Jharkhand.

Eastern Railway line, which forms a boundary with Porahat Division. To the east lie Kolhan and Chaibasa South Forest Division. To the south are the forest tracts of Keonjhar and Sundargarh districts of Odisha, and Sundargarh also extends to the west.

Saranda Forest is to eastern India what the Amazon rainforests are to the world.⁷³ If one climbs to the top of one of its hills, one surveys amazing greenery, filled with flora and fauna. Of these 86,044 hectares 'virgin forests', 1,100 hectares, with 40% canopy cover, are presently under iron ore mining leases. Several new aspirants for mining lease are on the waiting list too.

The perennial rivers Karo and Koina pass through these forested areas, supporting flora and fauna of immense biodiversity, but due to iron ore mining, both these rivers are polluted with red water streaming from the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL)'s mining plants. Adivasis, cattle and other animals have no choice but to consume the heavily iron contaminated water, causing huge health problems, and numbers of unreported deaths.

Saranda Forest was once counted as the private hunting reserve of the Singh Deo family, the former royal family of Saraikela. However, the forests in Saranda Division were reckoned as coming under the Raja of Porahat, also known as the Raja of Singhbhum. The first British settlement took place in 1855, and it came under formal control of the British-controlled Indian government in 1886. Subsequent settlements followed in 1897 and 1918.⁷⁴ These settlements in effect confiscated Adivasis' major livelihood resources and the autonomy of their nature-based lifestyle.

73. 'Maoist Insurgency spreads to over 40% of India'. Mass Poverty and Delhi's Embrace of Corporate Neoliberalism Fuels Social Uprising published by *Global Research* on 20 December 2013.

74. *Ibid.*

Saranda Forest Division consists of 202,676 acres (82,055 hectares) of Reserved Forest (see Table 2.1) and 9,855 acres (3,989 hectares) of Protected Forest (see Table 2.2). Thus, the total forest area is 86,044 hectares, which is approximately 860 square km. It is the most extensively forested division in Jharkhand.⁷⁵

Table 2.1: Area of Reserved Forest in Saranda Forest Division

Forest Block	No of compartments	Are of Block as in register of Reserved Forest	
		Acres	Hectares
Ankua	54	40,091	16,231.17
Ghatkuri	32	30,793	12,466.80
Karampada	36	30,119	12,193.927
Kodalibad	18	11,868	4,804.858
Tholkabad	48	26,225	10,617.408
Tirilposi	52	30,724	12,458.866
Samta	49	32,856	13,302.024
Total	289	202,676	82,055.06

Source: the Forest Resources Survey; Chaibasa South, 2006, published by Govt. of Jharkhand.

Table: 2.2. Area of Protected Forest in Saranda Forest Division

Name and no. of the Block	Area in acres	Area in hectares
Rabangda Sunsuna (P 1.11)	2191.80	887.36
Sagjor (P.1.12)	400.80	162.26
Narang Ponga (P.F. 19)	446.10	180.60
Bahada (P.F. 19)	61.60	24.93
Sonapi (P.F. 20)	1726.60	700.24
Chhotanagpur (P.F. 21)	257.50	104.25
Jojobutu (P.F. 22)	501.30	202.95
Dubil (P.F. 23)	756.40	306.23
Kesea Pecha (P.F. 26)	1596.60	646.39

75. Ibid.

Mission Saranda

Nuia (P.F. 26)	373.40	151.17
Baraiburu (B.F. 37B)	889.40	360.08
Gua (P.F. 38)	333.95	135.20
Tagoedaburu (P.F. 185)	140.375	56.83
Karujagda Buru (P.F. 186)	86.125	34.86
Sutri Buru (P.F. 187)	56.325	22.80
Kurkatapi (P.F. 188)	33.875	13.71
Total	9,855.15	3,989.86

Source: The Forest Resources Survey, Chaibasa South, 2006 published by Govt. of Jharkhand

The history of classification of forest as 'Reserved' and 'Protected' goes back to the colonial era. These forests were first reserved in 1882. Since then, large areas were cleared for iron and manganese ore mining, and the present expansion of mining constitutes a severe threat to the continued existence of Saranda Forest.

A recent list of proposed mining lease areas submitted by the District Mining Officer in Chaibasa to the state government of Jharkhand shows no less than 85 private companies have applied for mining in Saranda Forest, which amounts to 82,404 hectares,⁷⁶ which is more than the entire area of Saranda Reserved Forest. Obviously, if these mining leases are all sanctioned and cleared, Saranda Forest will become a matter of history. Indeed, the iron and manganese ore mining is the gravest threat to the existence of the Saranda Forest but the government hardly seems to bother about it.

Adivasis of Saranda Forest

As it has already been mentioned in the previous chapter, Saranda Forest is the abode of the 'Ho' and 'Munda' Adivasis

76. Saryu Roy, 2012, A PIL filed in the Jharkhand High Court.

with approximately 25,000 families or 125,000 people residing in the forest.⁷⁷ This region is also known as 'Kolhan Estate', with an established tradition of Adivasi self-rule. The term 'Adivasis' literally means 'Original' or 'Earliest Settlers'.⁷⁸

It is known that various groups of people migrated to Singhbhum at different periods, but it is impossible to establish definitively who came first. Some groups, including 'Ho' and 'Bhumij', are known to be the first settlers in the district.⁷⁹ According to Colonel Dalton and S. C. Roy, the Ho, Munda and Bhumij originally belonged to a single tribe living in the Chotanagpur plateau, who later became differentiated through migration to different areas.⁸⁰

It is said that many parts of the old Singhbhum district were significant for copper smelting during the ninth to twelfth centuries, and that many immigrants entered Singhbhum from Manbhum in the 14th century or earlier. When the Hos arrived, they overcame the Bhuiyas, who were the older inhabitants of the forest country.

In the latter half of the 18th century, the Hos fought several wars against the Rajas of Chota Nagpur and Mayurbhanj to retain their independence.⁸¹ This is why Singhbhum is also known as the Hos' land. In fact, the Ho Adivasis consider Singhbhum as 'Holand' or 'Kolhan Estate' as a separate country. In the 1980s there was a 'Separatist Movement' lead by KC Hembrom and Narayan Jomko but they were declared anti-national and autonomous movement was suppressed by the State.

77. 'Saranda Myth Pictured,' *CRPF Newsletter*, Vol.7, April 2012.

78. The Forest Resources Survey, Chaibasa South, 2006 published by the government of Jharkhand.

79. *Ibid.*

80. *Ibid.*

81. Sir John Houlton, Bihar, *The Heart of India*, Orient Longmans: Kolkata, 1949.

Saranda Forest Division comprises Noamundi and Manoharpur development blocks, as an administrative division of West Singhbhum district. According to the Census of 2011, there are 42,101 households with a total population of 203,475 (102,717 males and 100,758 females, see Table 2.3) in Saranda region.

Table 2.3: Households and population in Saranda Forest Division

Blocks	No. of Households	Population		
		Total	Male	Female
Noamundi	23,841	113,333	57,246	56,087
Manoharpur	18,260	90,142	45,471	44,671
Total	42,101	203,475	102,717	100,758

Source: Census of India, 2001-2011

The Adivasi population is more than 62% in Noamundi and Manoharpur development blocks with a total Adivasi Population of 126,616 along (63,279 males and 63,337 females), (see Table 2.4). However, there are more than 100 forest villages in the Saranda Forest which are not yet included in any record of the government.

Table 2.4: Adivasi (Scheduled Tribe⁸²) Population

Blocks	Total Population	Adivasi Population			
		Total	Male	Female	%
Noamundi	113,333	65,891	32,854	33,037	58.1
Manoharpur	90,142	60,725	30,425	30,300	67.3
Total	203,475	126,616	63,279	63,337	62.2

Source: Census of India, 2001-2011

The Adivasis of Saranda Forest have a very unique culture, like other Adivasi communities of India. The cultures of the two ethnic groups 'Ho' and 'Munda' are similar. Their life cycle

82. Scheduled Tribe is used in the Indian Constitution for the Adivasis.

moves around nature. The basic characters of their culture are collectivism, community living, equality, autonomy and non-profit ethos. Their close relation with nature, unique culture and ethos are manifested in wall paintings, life style, relationships, attitudes and behaviours.

The folk songs, dance, music, paintings and male and female dancing together in social or religious events are among the most significant expressions of their culture. It clearly shows the collective living, unity, equality, autonomy and freedom of expression they practice. For them dance is the very breath of life rather than a means of entertainment. Their songs are generally accompanied by dances, which change with the change of seasons. Most villages have an *akhra*⁸³ or dancing floor. They have their distinctive choreography expressive of their culture and art traditions.

Religion plays an important part in the life of Adivasis too. The majority of them follow the 'Sarna' religion, which is a kind of worshipping the super natural God. All religious rituals are performed by the village priest, *deuri*. They celebrate several festivals like *Maghe*, which is celebrated for the newly harvested crop stored at home and *Baa* festival, which is celebrated when the first flowers of the *Sal* tree blooms. The cattle in the household are worshipped in *Goma* festival and *Jomnama* festival is celebrated after harvesting the ripened crop.

Besides, Christmas, New Year and *Durgapuja* are also celebrated as a small number of them follow the Christian and Hindu religions respectively. The rice-beer commonly known as *handiya*, or *diyeng* in the Ho or Munda language, has great importance in religious festivals, and is also used as medicine.

83. It is usually a cleared space of hard ground under a spreading tree.

The Adivasi economy is agro-forest-based, which means that agriculture, forest and animal husbandry are the basis of people's sustenance. Adivasi society is based on a subsistence economy. Since the economic system is based on need, there is no tradition for profit making, which is the core value of the market economy.

Most Adivasis in Saranda Forest, as in other regions, rely on practicing agriculture, collecting minor forest produces and rearing livestock to sustain their livelihood. Among these activities, agriculture is the most important source of livelihood among the majority of communities in this area.⁸⁴

Paddy is the principal crop, followed by maize, various types of millet (*gundli, mama, sawan* etc.), barley (*tilegangai*) and pulses (mainly *rahar*). Winter crops include oil-seeds like mustard, *sarguja* etc. Prior to reservation of the Saranda Forest, there was extensive *jhum* (shifting) cultivation, while on the lower slopes and level lands, *gora* (dry) cultivation was practiced as the major source of livelihood.⁸⁵

Minor forest produces also play a major role in the Adivasi economy. These include Mahua flowers and fruits, Sal flowers, fruits, leaves and gum, firewood, herbal medicines and bamboo. Adivasis also cultivate lac on kul, kuaum and palas trees, and silk-worm cocoons on asan leaves. Their livestock and poultry include cattle, buffaloes, sheep, goats, chickens, pigeons and sometimes ducks. Fishing and hunting also make a major contribution. Minor forest produces and poultry are used for daily consumption and the surplus is sold in the markets to meet other needs.

84. Sir John Houlton, Bihar, *The Heart of India*, Orient Longmans: Kolkata, 1949.

85. *Ibid.*

The forest provides people with some other important articles too, including wooden poles for building and agricultural implements, leaves for making leaf cups and plates, and various types of roots and tubers used both as food as well as for medicine. Adivasis mostly do not buy, but make their baskets, earthen pots, iron implements and handloom cloths themselves.

In so many ways, then, forests play a vital role in the life of Adivasis. Reciprocally, Adivasis play a vital role in the protection and conservation of forests. Adivasis do not merely see the forest as a source of livelihood, but also treat it as their life support system. The forest defines their identity, autonomy and social security. Adivasis maintain a unique relationship with the forest, which involves worship of specially designated sacred groves. They have a symbiotic relationship with the forest. A renowned intellectual and leader of the 'Save the Forest Movement in Jharkhand', Dr. Sanjay Bosu Mullick describes it saying, "There is a symbiotic relationship between the Adivasis and the forest, which is officially recognised by the Forest Policy 1988. Without forest, the Adivasis are similar like a fish without water".

However, the presence of iron and manganese ore under the soil of Saranda Forest has turned the region from heaven to hell for the Adivasis. Obviously, the massive mining of iron ore has not only affected Adivasis but the forest too. It presents a severe threat to the very existence of both. There is now a high content of iron ore residues in the water of many stream; Karo and Koina rivers are becoming highly polluted; and there is also a high level of air pollution from mining dust. At the same time, mining causes the felling of countless trees. Consequently, life has become tough, with unprecedented pressures. The symbiotic relationship between Adivasis and their forest is being torn apart by various vested interest groups.

Map of West Singhbhum District in Jharkhand



Mining in Saranda Forest

"I am against any mining activities by private companies in Saranda. I will recommend to the Union government not to allow private companies for any mining activities in the region."⁸⁶

Jairam Ramesh, 2 July 2012
Union Minister, Government of India

The state of Jharkhand has one of the richest and oldest heritages of mining and industrial growth in India, started through the pioneering work of a number of eminent geoscientists, who contributed significantly in exploring the region's minerals.⁸⁷ The state has a total iron ore (Hematite) reserve of 4,036 million tonnes, which accounts for about 29% of the national reserve.⁸⁸ Presently, the state is producing about 160 million tonnes of

86. 'Ramesh for Saranda mining curb', *The Telegraph*, 3 July 2012, available at http://www.telegraphindia.com/1120703/jsp/frontpage/story_15684154.jsp#.VIXcznqUe50

87. Government of Jharkhand (Department of Mines and Geology), *Jharkhand the Land of Mines and Minerals*, 2011-12.

88. *Ibid.*

various minerals annually, worth Rs.15,000 crore (approx. US\$2.5 billion). Saranda Forest is estimated to contain 25% of the total iron ore of the country. The average iron content in iron ore from Saranda Forest varies from 58-67%, and its low sulphur and phosphorus content makes it a prime resource for steel manufacture.⁸⁹

The discovery of Gorumahisani iron ore deposit in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha, served India's first iron ore company, the Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO), from its birth in 1904.⁹⁰ TISCO established its first steel factory at Kalimati in Singhbhum district in 1907, presently known as the 'Tata Steel Ltd' Jamshedpur, and acquired the land of 24 Adivasi villages around the vicinity the same year. Reportedly, the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act was delayed until 1908 to allow this major forced land acquisition to go through for Tata's biggest steel plant, leaving a large Adivasi population and their descendents bereft. Many other industrial concerns followed suit over the years, until the intensive exploitation of the mineral resources had led to a rapid industrialisation of the district.⁹¹ Obviously, this intensive exploitation of minerals has impacted negatively on the lives of countless Adivasis as well as wildlife.

TISCO's main factory at Jamshedpur/Tatanagar saw enormous expansion during the more than 100 years it has existed, resulting in a huge influx of incomers to the region. According to the Census reports from 1871 to 1951, the area's population increased almost 365%. This increase started from 1901-11, but from 1931 the population shot up, increasing on average by almost 25% in each successive decade. This increase was largely due to emigration from other districts within Bihar and from

89. Ibid.

90. Ibid.

91. *Forest Resource Survey*, Chaibasa South, 2006, published by the government of Jharkhand.

other states, to meet the labour demands of rapid industrial development. A number of towns, namely Chakradharpur, Noamundi, Musabani, Seraikela, Manoharpur, Gua, Maubhandar and Kharsawan developed as centres focused on exploiting the area's mineral resources.⁹²

Besides, TISCO's exploitation of Saranda's iron ore beginning in 1925 with its principal mines at Noamundi, the erstwhile privately-owned Indian Iron and Steel Company (IISCO) took control of the Chiria iron ore mines complex in the Saranda Forest in 1936. The IISCO became a fully-owned subsidiary of the Steel Authority of Indian Ltd (SAIL) in 1978 and final merger took place in 2006 on the premise that the six mines in Saranda Forest operated by IISCO would be made available to SAIL since it had been forced to absorb substantial losses on IISCO's account.⁹³

Production of Iron Ore

In Jharkhand, the most important iron ore is Hematite (Fe_2O_3), which is confined to the iron ore series of West Singhbhum district, and among the richest deposits in Asia.⁹⁴ The production of iron ore has been booming in Jharkhand since the inception of the state in 2000. It stood at 12.56 mtpy (million tonnes per year) in 2001-02, but jumped to 16.42 mtpy in 2004-05 (see Table 3.1), boosted by a 70% growth in iron ore prices in the international market. Presently, the state produces nearly 23 million tonnes of iron ore annually, which is 10.5% of the total annual production (218 million tonnes) of the country.⁹⁵ There are still vast un-mined iron ore deposits in Ghatkuri, Bokana,

92. Ibid.

93. *The Forest Clearance for SAIL's Chiria Iron ore mines given by the Ministry of Environment and Forest* (government of India) in 2011.

94. *Jharkhand the Land of Mines and Minerals* published by the government of Jharkhand.

95. Ibid.

Diruburu, Kasiapicha, Hatnaburu, Kodlibad, Parambaljori, Barabaljori, Raika, Ankua, Ledaburu, Matkamburu, Rurangburu and Jantaiburu of Saranda Forest, whose potential attracts numerous investors, in the state.

Table: 3.1. Production of iron ore in Jharkhand

Sl.No.	Year	Production (in million tonne)	Value (in thousand Rs.)
1.	2001-02	12.56 mtpy	N.A.
2.	2002-03	13.90 mtpy	N.A.
3.	2003-04	13.61 mtpy	N.A.
4.	2004-05	16.42 mtpy	N.A.
5.	2005-06	17.98 mtpy	N.A.
6.	2006-07	18.60 mtpy	N.A.
7.	2007-08	21.00 mtpy	N.A.
8.	2008-09	21.20 mtpy	9,246,556
9.	2009-10	22.54 mtpy	11,242,048
10.	2010-11	22.28 mtpy	16,907,241
11.	2011-12	19.25 mtpy	20,968,621
12.	2012-13	18.01 mtpy	21,186,995

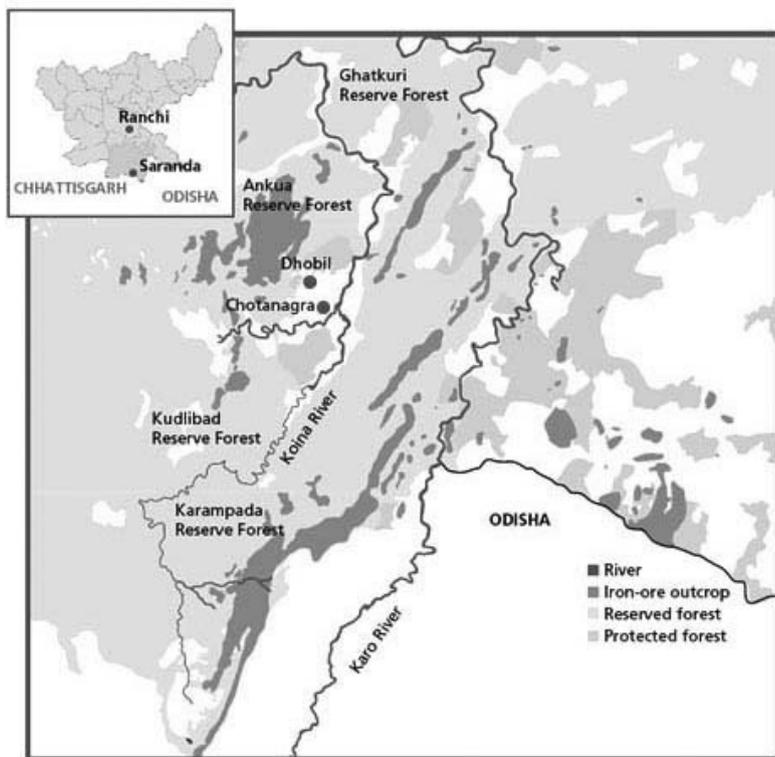
Source: Annual Reports Ministry of Mines and Indian Minerals Year Book.⁹⁶

These important hematite deposits occur in a number of prominent hill ranges in Saranda Forest, among others: Noamundi, Gua, Barajamda, Kiriburu, Meghahatuburu, Monoharpur and Chiria. The Chiria deposit is reported to be the single largest iron ore deposit in the country. The area comprises the northern part of the so called 'horse shoe' of the iron ore bearing belt of Singhbhum.⁹⁷

96. Annual Reports Ministry of Mines (government of India) 2001-02 to 2009-10 and Indian Minerals Year Book 2012 and 2013 published by the Indian Bureau of Mines.

97. Detailed information dossier (DID) on Iron Ores in India, prepared by the Geological Survey of India, 2006. The hills consisting of iron ore deposits start from southwestern part of Singhbhum district, extending into Keonjhar and Sundergarh districts of Odisha, sometimes referred to as the Singhbhum-Keonjhar-Bonai group of deposits.

Saranda Forest and its Mineral Deposits



Mining Leases in Saranda Forest

The number of iron ore mining leases in Saranda Forest has increased exponentially in recent years. According to the Indian Bureau of Mines, West Singhbhum is the most intensely mined district in Jharkhand and accounts for almost the entire share of iron ore mined in the state. Already, 50 mining iron ore leases are operational, covering an area of 14,410 hectares (see Table 3.2). At present, most of the mining activities in West Singhbhum district are concentrated on the periphery of Saranda Forest.

Table: 3.2. Leased out area for mining in Saranda Forest

Sl. No.	Name of Company	Village/Mauza ⁹⁸	Area in Hectares
1.	Steel Authority of India Ltd.	Sukriluthurburu, Chiria	609.83
2.	Steel Authority of India Ltd.	Dhobil, Chiria	513.03
3.	Steel Authority of India Ltd.	Budhaburu, Chiria	823.97
4.	Steel Authority of India Ltd.	Ajitaburu, Chiria	323.88
5.	Steel Authority of India Ltd.	Tatiburu, Chiria	38.40
6.	Steel Authority of India Ltd.	Chiria	67.18
7.	Steel Authority of India Ltd.	Kiriburu	1,936.14
8.	Steel Authority of India Ltd.	Megahatuburu	879.44
9.	Steel Authority of India Ltd.	Kiriburu	97.76
10.	Steel Authority of India Ltd.	Duarguiburu, Gua	1,443.77
11.	Steel Authority of India Ltd.	Jilingburi I, Gua	210.44
12.	Steel Authority of India Ltd.	Jilingburi II, Gua	30.44
13.	Steel Authority of India Ltd.	Tapailore, Gua	14.17
14.	SAIL (IISCO)	Budhaburu	823.83
15.	SAIL (IISCO)	Budhaburu	512.95
16.	SAIL (IISCO)	Ajitaburu	323.83
17.	SAIL (IISCO)	Ankua	609.57
18.	SAIL (IISCO)	Ankua	67.18
19.	SAIL (IISCO)	Ankua	38.85

98. The entire area of a village is called mauza.

Gladson Dungdung

20.	M/s Shriram Minerals	Khasjamda	265.80
21.	M/s R. Mcdill & Company	New Karampada	110.08
22.	M/s M. L. Jain & Sons	Karampada	202.35
23.	M/s Saha Brothers	Karampada	233.89
24.	SM/s Singhbhum Mineral Company	Karampada	141.65
25.	M/s General Produce Co.	Karampada	70.68
26.	M/s General Produce Co.	Ghatkuri	163.90
27.	M/s T.P. Saw	Ghatkuri	202.35
28.	M/s Orissa Manganese & Minerals Pvt. Ltd.	Ghatkuri	275.19
29.	M/s Rungta Mines Pvt. Ltd.	Ghatkuri	138.85
30.	M/s Rungta Mines Pvt. Ltd.	Ghatkuri	227.54
31.	M/s Rungta Mines Pvt. Ltd.	Meralgara	122.88
32.	M/s Nirmal Kumar-Pradeep Kumar	Ghatkuri	149.74
33.	M/s Nirmal Kumar-Pradeep Kumar	Noamundi	66.78
34.	M/s Usha Martin Ltd. (Vijay-II)	Ghatkuri	155.08
35.	M/s Padam Kumar Jain	Rajabera	41.63
36.	M/s Padam Kumar Jain	Thakurani	84.68
37.	M/s Tata Iron & Steel Co.	Noamundi	1,160.36
38.	M/s Smt. Mitra Ghosh & Samir Ghosh	Noamundi	20.07
39.	M/s Kaushal Arjun Rathore	Noamundi	31.99
40.	M/s AnandBardhan	Noamundi	62.42
41.	M/s AnandBardhan	Itarbaljori	33.70
42.	M/s Singhbhum Mineral Company	Jamda	265.88
43.	M/s GourishankerSharda	Itarbaljori	57.46
44.	M/s Shri Vijay Kumar Ojha	Bara-Balijori	21.24
45.	M/s Rameshwar Jute Mills	Baraiburu	259
46.	M/s Kamaljeet Singh Ahluwalliah	Baraiburu	129.49
47.	M/s Kamaljeet Singh Ahluwalliah	Baraiburu	250.76
48.	M/s Anil Kherwal	Bandburu	22.53
49.	M/s KhatauLiladhar Thakkar	Kumirta	30.84
50.	M/s Shree DeokabhaiBheljee	Ajitaburu	46.62
		Total	14,410.09

Source: Reports of Indian bureau of Mines & Mining Map published by Govt. of Jharkhand in 2011.

Clearly, the largest lease-holder in Saranda Forest is SAIL, with 13 iron ore mining leases (six leases in Chiria mines, four leases in Gua mines and three leases in Kiriburu-Meghahatuburu mines).⁹⁹ SAIL's Chiria Mines cover the largest area, totaling about 2,376 hectares, which is about 3% of the entire Saranda Forest area and out of this, around 194 hectares (8%) has already been broken up.¹⁰⁰

The government of India's decision to privatise mines for captive use by private companies in 1993 intensified the exploitation of iron ore in Saranda Forest. For example, the private mining company Usha Martin Ltd got its mining lease from the government in 2005, and started operations there in 2006. Similarly, more than 20 private companies got mining leases and clearances too. A recent list of proposed mining leases submitted by the District Mining Officer, Chaibasa to the state government, shows that 85 private companies have applied for iron ore mining leases in the Saranda Forest covering more than the total area of the Reserved Forest.¹⁰¹

Out of the 85 applications, the state government has already sanctioned 22 mining leases to several national and multinational companies, including Arcelor Mittal India Ltd, Tata Steel Ltd, Jindal Steel & Power Ltd, JSW Steel Ltd, Bhushan Steel & Power Ltd, Essar Steel Ltd, Rungta Mines Ltd and Electro Steel Casting Ltd (see Table 3.3). Once these 22 mining projects, which are in different stages of approval, are given the go ahead, an additional 9,337.54 hectares, or more than one-seventh of Saranda Forest, will be opened up for mining,¹⁰² which is indeed a severe threat to the continued existence of Adivasis and Saranda Forest itself, with all its outstanding biodiversity.

99. Answer given by the Steel Minister on Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No.436 on 15 March 2012.

100. Forest Clearance for SAIL's Chiria Iron ore mines given by the Ministry of Environment and Forest in 2011.

101. Saryu Roy, 2012. A PIL filed in the Jharkhand High Court.

102. 'Between Maoists and Mines', *Down to Earth*, 16-30 April 2012.

Table 3.3: New approved areas for mining in Saranda Forest

Sl. No.	Name of Company	Village/Mauza	Area in Hectares
1.	KYS	Kantoria	139.50
2.	Balmukund	Nuia	373.25
3.	Balajee Songe Iron Ltd.	Bokna	420.96
4.	AML Steel Ltd.	Bokna	383.54
5.	Rungta Mines Ltd.	Bokna	343.00
6.	Jindal Steel & Power Ltd.	Jeraldaburu	537.00
7.	Bhushan Steel & Power Ltd.	Chatuburu	422.75
8.	Sunflag Iron & Steel Ltd.	Kodalibad	120.00
9.	Electro Steel Casting Ltd.	Kodalibad	350.50
10.	Rungta Mines Ltd.	Kodalibad	192.50
11.	JSW Steel Ltd.	Ankua	999.90
12.	Sesa Gua Ltd	Dhobil	999.40
13.	Bihar Songe Iron Ltd.	Roam	543.00
14.	Ispat Industries Ltd.	Raika	520.00
15.	Horizon Loha Udyog Ltd.	Setaruian	215.00
16.	Essar Steel Ltd (PL)	Ankua	568.75
17.	Anindita Traders & Investment Ltd.	Parambaljori	47.14
18.	Tata Steel Ltd (PL)	Ankua	1,808.00
19.	Arcelor Mittal India Ltd (R.F.)	Karampada	202.35
20.	Adhunik Group	Bhangaon	45.00
21.	Jai Balaji Industrial Products Ltd.	Bhangaon	60.00
22.	Kohinoor Steel Pvt. Ltd.	Bhangaon	46.00
	Total		9,337.54

Source: Mining Map published by Govt. of Jharkhand in 2011.

However, the story does not end here. The Geological Survey of India has identified an obvious geological potential domain of 300 sq km for iron ore in Jharkhand, and has taken up iron ore prospecting in Silpunji-Kantoria area of West Singhbhum district. The prospecting work is in progress, and a tentative action plan has been formulated in the ensuing twelfth Five-Year Plan for

Jharkhand, for both the baseline data generation and regional resource assessment in the identified geological potential area. Baseline data generation for mineral prognostication is planned in Jamda-Koira belt of the iron ore group in West Singhbhum, with special emphasis on locating favourable new areas for taking up any future iron ore exploration programmes. Regional resource assessment and reassessment is planned to be taken up mostly in the Bonai area.¹⁰³ The Mineral Exploration Corporation Limited (MECL) has signed a MoU with SAIL for taking up exploration in their lease areas of Jharkhand.

Illegal Mining

To further confound this picture, there is indisputable evidence that illegal mining of iron ore has been rampant in Saranda Forest, especially from 2004 to 2009, due to the boom in iron ore prices in the international market. The Ministry of Mines (government of India) recorded 953 cases of illegal mining in Jharkhand during 2004-2009, most of these in Saranda Forest. In Jharkhand as a whole (clearly, mostly in Saranda), the Indian Bureau of Mines detected 15 cases of illegal mining in 2009-10, 199 cases in 2010-11 and 364 cases in 2011-12,¹⁰⁴ which means that illegal mining is undoubtedly still rampant in the state.

What is particularly interesting is that this iron ore, mined illegally in Saranda forest, is sold to legal lease holders – a transaction in which both parties evidently bag huge profits.¹⁰⁵ It has further been found that the major mining companies extract the iron ore beyond the approved limit.¹⁰⁶ For example,

103. Answer given by the Steel Minister in *Rajya Sabha Un-starred Question on 8 August 2011*.

104. Answer given by the Steel Minister in *Lok Sabha starred question (9) on 22 February 2013*.

105. The Circle Officer of Noamundi and the Officer-in-charge of Noamundi Police Station disclosed it during our discussion but their names cannot be exposed. They claimed to have caught many illegal miners in the night.

106. 'Saranda bleeds in illegal ore hunt', *The Telegraph*, 25 April 2012.

Usha Martin Limited, as lease holder of Bijaya-II iron ore mines, from 2008 to 2011 extracted three to four times more iron ore than its sanctioned limit. Usha Martin Ltd produced 1.833 mtpy against an approved limit 0.65 mtpy in 2008-09, 2.324 mtpy against 0.65 mtpy in 2009-10, and 2.572 mtpy against 2.4 mtpy in 2010-11. The level of illegal mining by Usha Martin Limited and other mining license holders is shown in Table 3.4.

In another example, the mining company 'Shah Brothers', as lease holder of Karampada iron ore and manganese mines, produced 0.715 mtpy against the permitted 0.612 mtpy in 2008-09, 0.679 mtpy against an approved limit of 0.09 mtpy in 2009-10 and 0.972 mtpy against a permissible capacity of 0.09 mtpy in 2010-11. Thus, the company produced six to seven times more iron ore than the sanctioned limit.

Similarly, in the same period, Thakurani iron ore mines which is leased out to the mining company 'Padam Kumar Jain', exceeded production up to twice its actual sanctioned limit. The company extracted 2 mtpy against its sanctioned limit of 1 mtpy in 2008-09, extracted 1.91 mtpy against 1.3 mtpy in 2009-10 and the figure was 1.68 mtpy against the sanctioned limit of 1.3 mtpy in 2010-11.

A fourth culprit is the Orissa Manganese & Mineral Limited, as lease holder of Ghatkuri iron ore and manganese mines, which exceeded overall production up to 1.6 times its sanctioned capacity. The company produced 0.18 mtpy iron ore without sanction in 2008-09, 1.2 mtpy against the sanctioned limit of 0.72 mtpy in 2009-10, and the Company bagged 0.943 mtpy against the approval of 0.72 mtpy in 2010-11.

These mining companies bagged huge profits illegally, causing huge revenue loss to the State. Most unfortunately, no action was taken against these mining companies.

Table: 3.4. Illegal mining by legal lease holders

Name of Company	Mines	2008-09 (in mtpy)		2009-10 (in mtpy)		2010-11 (in mtpy)	
		Approved	Produce	Approved	Produce	Approved	Produce
Usha Martin Ltd.	Vijay –II	0.65	1.833	0.65	2.324	2.4	2.572
Shah Brothers	Karampada	0.612	0.715	0.09	0.679	0.09	0.972
PK Jain	Thakurani	1	2	1.3	1.91	1.3	1.68
OM& M Ltd.	Ghatkuri	0	0.18	0.72	1.2	0.72	0.943
	Total	2.26	4.73	2.76	6.11	4.51	6.17

Source: Telegraph, 25 April 2012

Obviously, all the illegal mining is being done in the Saranda Forest with tacit involvement of the district police and administration, as it was proved in investigations carried out by the Crime Investigation Department. In 2009, the police of Chaibasa Mufassil police station captured 54 trucks on 21 September and 26 trucks on 22 September. These 80 trucks were seized in the act of carrying iron ore illegally. The case was lodged in the police station under case nos. 66/09 and 67/09 against the truck owners, drivers and assistant drivers. The truck owners were shown to have fake permits and other papers for carrying this iron ore.

However, just four hours after these seizures, all 80 trucks were released, evidently after a deal worth a huge amount took place between the truck owners and the then Superintendent of Police of Chaibasa. The Crime Investigation Department has investigated this case and confirmed it, recommending legal action against the Superintendent of Police, Deputy Superintendent of Police and the Officer-In-Charge of the Mufassil police station.¹⁰⁷

Since huge amounts of money are involved in iron ore mining, senior officials clearly go to any extent in sanctioning mining leases to private parties. For instance, the Mining Secretary

107. 'IPS hints for release of 80 trucks loaded with iron ore', *Hindustan (Hindi)*, 21 April 2013

(government of Jharkhand), Arun, opened his office on the holiday of 17 April 2014, during the general election, to sanction prospecting license for three mining companies – Adhunik Group (45 hectares), Jai Balaji Industrial Products Ltd (60 hectares) and Kohinoor Steel Pvt. Ltd (46 hectares). After hearing their requests, the Mining Secretary sanctioned the prospecting license of Bhangaon Mines located in Karampada Reserved Forest in Saranda, which is contrary to the election code of conduct and mining policy.¹⁰⁸

The former Indian Union Minister for Rural Development, Jairam Ramesh, kept visiting the Saranda Forest during his tenure. On many occasions, he said that he is against any mining activities being carried out by private companies in Saranda Forest, and he recommended to the Union government not to allow private companies for any mining activities in the region. However, the fact is just the opposite. When he was presiding over the Ministry of Environment and Forest as Union Minister, he gave clearances to a private company 'Usha Martin Ltd' for diversion of 117 hectare¹⁰⁹ of forest for Vijay Iron Ore project on 23 February 2011.

Therefore, his recommendation was negated by the power of corporate lobbyists. Many companies, including Jindal Steel & Power Ltd, Electro Steel Casting Ltd, JSW Steel Ltd, Rungta Mines Ltd, etc were given clearance by the Ministry of Forest and Environment (government of India) during the tenure of Jairam's successor as Environment and Forest Minister, Jayanti Natrajan. All the mining companies who have acquired the new mining leases from the Jharkhand government were batting hard to acquire forest and environment clearance from the Union Ministry of Environment and Forest.

108. 'Mining leases sanctioned on holiday', *Hindustan*. 18 April 2013.

109. Jharkhand lost Rs14,000 cr worth natural resources. *Deccan Herald*. 30 August 2014

Mission Saranda

This process has continued under successive administrations. Obviously, once these clearances are given, the existence of Saranda Forest, the Adivasis and the wildlife inhabiting the forest will be at stake. Will they be sacrificed once again for the 'greater common good' and the economic growth and development of the nation? Is it in the national interest to eliminate them forever to meet the greed of corporate houses and bigwigs? Of course, we'll not be given answer because the Indian State seems to be operating like a corporate house instead of being a democratic republic and welfare State that it pretends to be.

Is Mining a Curse For Adivasis?

“Unfortunately the track record of mining operations was neither environmentally sustainable nor socially beneficial be it in public sector or private sector. Mining is not essentially a boom but a curse.”¹¹⁰

Jairam Ramesh, 13 January 2013
Union Minister, Government of India

Dubil is one of the most visited villages in the Saranda Forest under jurisdiction of Manoharpur Development Block. India's former Union Minister of Rural Development, Jairam Ramesh, rushed to the village a couple of times while preparing the Saranda Action Plan.¹¹¹ This village is a prime destination for journalists, researchers and social activists too.

110, 'Tribals are not show pieces for museums: Ramesh', *IBN Live*, 14 January 2013.

111. The Indian government introduced the Saranda Action Plan as a model of development to address the development challenges of the Naxal-affected areas. Later on it was renamed as Saranda Development Plan after the intervention of Jharkhand Human Rights Movement. The Saranda Action/Development Plan is discussed in detail in chapter 25.

Dubil is a native place of Ho Adivasis, with five tolas (hamlets), namely Dubil, Hendediri, Mankisai, Dobilsai and Rorpasai. Approximately 500 people live here, with a livelihood completely based on agriculture, forest and minor animal husbandry. However, the excavation of iron ore mines near the village has made their lives a hell over the last couple of decades. While they have been paying the price, others are enjoying the fruits.

It was in middle of the monsoon in July 2011 when I first visited Dubil. Since this village is located in the heart of Saranda Forest, I was curious, as well as wary of the CPI-Maoist. But it is always tough to identify who is a Maoist and who is not, because only their uniform and guns can differentiate them from the ordinary villagers. And of course, when they are in a village, they tend to blend in by dressing like ordinary Adivasis. However, I had no reason to be scared of them.

The Adivasis' faces in this village seemed to express hopelessness. The children playing near the stream were malnourished. The village was full of red mud from iron ore mining. Water in the stream was red too. The agricultural land had turned into barren land, and the entire region looks untouched by development. So I had to ask the villagers: How is your life in this village? What are your sources of livelihood? Why is there no development, despite the extensive mining nearby? Did you get compensation for your lands that are now barren? Do you have to drink that red water from the stream? Are there health services available in this village?

A 60 year-old villager, Sukhram Champia, who had lived most of his life here, was quite angry. He said, "We have been telling the same stories every time to those people who come from Delhi and elsewhere. They also take our photographs, but nothing has changed in the village or in our lives." Indeed, he was right. What changes could journalists or activists bring when even

frequent visits by a Union Minister makes no much difference beyond the charity work of distributing solar lamps, bicycles and radios?

After a few minutes of talking with me, Sukhram decided to narrate the story of his village once again, in the hope that something would happen one day. He said that he always starts by talking about the past, simply because their past was prosperous. Before the iron ore mining began nearby, Adivasis in the area were leading a happy life close to nature. The main crops in the Saranda region are rice, wheat, maize, chana (chickpeas), masoor, khulthi, arhar and urad (lentils). They used to cultivate many of these cereals and pulses, but paddy was the main crop, which they used to harvest twice a year. This was unique for Dubil, since most villages in Jharkhand have only one harvest a year. This village was blessed with two natural streams, which ran with fresh water throughout the year.

However, the location of this village close to the famous Chiria Mines became a curse for its inhabitants, even if it profited those outsiders who ran Chiria's iron ore business. 'Chiria Mines' is the most extensive iron ore mines, covering about 2,376 hectares, or about 3% of the entire Saranda Forest.¹¹² This is why the Indian government sanctioned its mining lease to Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), a public sector company, even though private competitors like Arcelor Mittal Ltd and Jindal Steel & Power Ltd were in the bid. In 2009, the Jharkhand government decided to split Chiria Mines when Mittal threatened to withdraw from the state if it was not given mineral resources from Chiria Mines.¹¹³ The SAIL has been carrying out mining activities at Chiria since 1938.

112. The Ministry of Environment and Forest, Forest Clearance for SAIL's Chiria Iron ore mines, 2011.

113. 'Govt to split Chiria mines, SAIL gets half', *Business Standard*, 7 October 2009.

In 1990, the SAIL extended its mining activities and sub-leased the excavation work to an Odisha based private mining company, the ORS India Ltd, a unit of the Adhunik group, who was the ones carrying out the mining activities near Dubil village. Interestingly, this company did not acquire the land from the villagers, even though the Adivasis lost their agricultural land due to its activities. Since these mining activities are being carried out at the top of the hill above the village, the mining waste descends directly onto the paddy fields during the rainy season. This has been happening for the last two decades.

Consequently, nearly 100 acres of fertile agricultural land has turned barren in the last two decades, without the villagers receiving any compensation. The company claims that since it did not acquire the land from the villagers, it has no obligation to compensate the land owners. This is how the Ors India Ltd tries to disown responsibility. The villagers did not just lose 100 acres of fertile land; they also lost a stream, 'Dolbati Jharna', which was their life line. The mining dust, red mud and red water have had hugely detrimental impacts on the health and livelihood system of these villagers. A few of them also suffer from lung disease.

Since they had lost their major source of livelihood, inhabitants of Dubil and neighbouring communities organised a meeting, and decided to fight for their rights. In June 2011, they went to the company's office to demand jobs, and staged a protest there. As a result, the company's General Manager, Guchait Iqbal, filed a case against six key villagers – Ramlal Champia, Sukhram Champia, Mohan Hansada, Ramkishan Tudu, Budhram Bading and Ram Hansada, alleging that they were holding the company to ransom. The alleged accuseds claim that on the basis of this complaint, the police arrested them and locked them up in jail for 13 days. Indeed, the police stations

are seemingly always proactive in Saranda region whenever they are asked to take any legal or illegal action to protect the interest of mining companies.

50 villagers from Dubil have been working in Chiria Mines as casual mining labour since 1991, but none of them were regularised. The company's unfair rules allow regularisation only after someone has worked as a casual labour for three years in a row, yet these villagers were not regularised even after working as casual labourer for a decade. Thus, villagers who lost their agricultural livelihoods are forced to become daily wage labourers, and it is only outsiders, mostly non-Adivasis, who can prosper through mining.

A union of the local Adivasis' the 'Saranda Unemployed Union' alleges that the SAIL Management provides employment to the outsiders and neglects the affected families. The Union claims that 15 people mostly from West Bengal were employed secretly by the SAIL Management in May 2015. The Union protested against the SAIL Management, the local MLAs also raised the issue with the Chief Minister of Jharkhand, who assured them to look after the matter.

This is how mining is a curse for Adivasis and a blessing for other people. Jairam Ramesh, as Union Minister, publicly acknowledged this. He said, "Unfortunately the track record of mining operations was neither environmentally sustainable nor socially beneficial be it in public sector or private sector. Mining is not essentially a boom but a curse."¹¹⁴ But the fact is, he was also not able to soothe the pain of Dubil's Adivasis, except by implementing the usual symbolic-benefit programmes – Indira Awas,¹¹⁵ hand pumps, and of course, constructing a new road

114. 'Tribals are not show pieces for museums: Ramesh', *IBN Live*, 14 January 2015.

115. Indira Awas Yojna is a housing scheme run for families living below the poverty line.

Mission Saranda

for the mining companies, etc. The fact is anyway that these programme failed. Half of the houses built under the Indira housing scheme have either collapsed or are useless, the hand pumps do not work, solar lamps and radios have disappeared and bicycles have broken down. The mining boom benefits only corporations, contractors and outsiders.

There is always the argument before the starting of a mining project that it would bring development to the region, but why is here no development in the Saranda region where more than a dozen mining companies have been operating for decades? Is the corporate model of development a total myth for the Adivasis? The most important question is : why are the Adivasis always made the victims of development projects? Instead of withering away from its constitutional responsibility, the Indian State must answer them.

Forest Movement and State Suppression

“Saranda Forest belongs to our ancestors, which we have reoccupied after a long struggle in the 1980s; many innocent Adivasis were brutally killed in the police firings, hundreds of them were mercilessly tortured and thousands of them were imprisoned, therefore we’re not going to desert the forest at any cost.”

Mangar Honhaga, Village Leader,
Forest Movement, Saranda

Adivasis are known to be the first settlers of Singhbhum and hence the Saranda Forest region. They settled down in the forest after clearing trees and bushes. The region is also known as ‘Ho-land’ or ‘Kolhan Estate’¹¹⁶ where Ho and Munda Adivasis have their own traditional system of self-rule.

116. ‘Singhbhum: Jharkhand - Jungle andolan amidst state repression’, *Down To Earth*, 31 July 2003.

Conflict began between Adivasis and the State on the issue of ownership rights over the natural resources (lands, forests, water, hills and minerals) only after the British invasion in 1765. The issue of these rights, which the colonial rulers essentially took away, has never been resolved to this day. Right from the beginning, the State has been suppressing the Adivasis of this and neighbouring regions, who in turn have continued to insist on their prior ownership rights over the land, territory and natural resources where they live.

The Adivasi resistance against the British invasion into the Chotanagpur region started over the imposition of revenue tax on individual land. In 1831, the Ho Adivasis joined the rebellion (commonly called the Kol Rebellion) of the Oraon and Munda Adivasis of Chotanagpur. There had long been smouldering discontent among the latter, owing to the way in which their villages were granted away to foreign farmers in suppression of their headmen.

The explosion was actually occasioned by the treatment of the Mundas resident in or to the north of Singhbhum. Harnath Sahi, the brother of the Maharaja of Chotanagpur, gave farms of some of the villagers in his estate to personal favourites, Mohammadans, Sikhs and others, in utter disregard of their ancestral occupants. Twelve villages bordering on Singhbhum, which had been held by a Manki (traditional head of a region) called Singrai, were thus given to the Sikhs. A similar complaint was made against the Mohammadan farmers.¹¹⁷ The final outcome of this resistance was that the government was forced to make a rule and recognise the Adivasis' rights. Wilkinson's Rules were introduced in 1832, which recognise the traditional rights of the Adivasis. However, this did not end the conflict.

117. *Ibid.*

Gradually, the British Indian government had empowered itself by enacting numerous laws for taking over control of the natural resources, starting out with land. Next it was the turn of the forest. The first Conservator of Forests was appointed in 1806 to organise timber supplies from the west coast. This is how the so-called forest conservation started. In 1855, the government of India issued a memorandum outlining the rules for the conservation of forests for the whole country.¹¹⁸

Lord Dalhousie, Governor General of India, proclaimed through this policy that timbers standing on State forests were the State property and that other individuals had no rights or claims. The Indian Forest Service was introduced for the first time in India to pave the way for policy implementation. The conservation and protection of existing forests were its primary objectives.¹¹⁹ These steps were taken in order to enhance State control over the forest, thereby depriving the forest dweller communities of their traditional rights to it.

The British Indian government started imposing laws on the forests from this time. The first Forest Act was introduced in 1865. Its basic features were the management and preservation of the forests.¹²⁰ The Act empowered the government to declare any piece of land covered with trees or brush-wood as government forest and to make rules regarding the management of the same. This is how the communities were alienated, excluded and denied free access to their forests. The next step of the rulers was the establishment of the Forest Department in 1866,¹²¹ using the pretext that the forests of the country were fast disappearing due to the 'spread of cultivation'.¹²² Adivasis

118. Vasant Desai, *Forest management in India: Issue and problems*, Bombay: HPH, 1991, pp. 2.

119. *Ibid.* p.2

120. S. R. Hiremath, SadanandaKaniwalli & Sharad Kulkarni, *All about draft forest bill and forest lands*, Dharwad: SPS, 1994, pp xix.

121. *Ibid.* p. xx.

122. Vasant Desai, *Forest management in India: Issue and problems*, Bombay: HPH, 1991, Pp. 2.

were blamed for having neither the capability to manage forests properly nor to understand how forests may be conserved and utilised to the best advantage¹²³ though they were the actual conservators and protectors of the forests.

Later, the Forest Act of 1865 was replaced by the Indian Forest Act of 1878, which was claimed as more comprehensive than the earlier one.¹²⁴ Forests were classified into three categories: (i) Reserved Forests, (ii) Protected Forests, and (iii) Village Forests. Several restrictions were put on the people's rights over forest land and forest produces in the protected and the reserved forests.¹²⁵ Provisions were also made in terms of imposition of duty on timber, etc. This duty later became one of the major sources of government revenue.¹²⁶ This Act was thus a further step in taking away people's free access to forests and its produces, which was the base of their economy.

The first investigation into the question of reserving forests in Chhotanagpur was sponsored by Dr. Anderson, Conservator of Forests, Bengal, in 1864. The forests of Singhbhum district were examined for the first time for this purpose in 1870-71, and again in 1879-80. Further investigations were carried out and damage done by fires and resin tapping were reported. Following upon the enquiries, the work of selection and demarcation was taken up and carried out. Thus, an area of 199,740 acres of Saranda Forest, as originally estimated, was notified under section 4 of the Indian Forest Act (Act VII of 1878) on 26 November 1880, and was finally declared on 17 May 1882 as Reserved Forest under section 19, but with effect from 1 April 1882.¹²⁷

123. *Ibid.* p. 2.

124. S. R. Hiremath, SadanandaKaniwalli& Sharad Kulkarni, *All about draft forest bill and forest lands*, Dharawad: SPS, 1994, pp xix.

125. *Ibid.* p. xx.

126. *Ibid.* p. xx.

127. *Forest Resources Survey*, South Chaibasa, 2006 published by the government of Jharkhand.

In 1947, colonial rule in India came to an end, yet everything apart from the rulers themselves remained the same. Indeed, in many ways the situation of forest dwellers became even worse. After Independence, the first step regarding forest policy of the government of India was the constitution of a Central Board of Forest (CBO) in 1950, to provide guidance to the government in formulation of forest policies and programmes.¹²⁸

The Indian government introduced a revised National Forest Policy in 1952. This policy emphasized, amongst others, weaning away the tribal people by persuasion from the baneful practice of shifting cultivation, controlling the grazing in forests and promoting the welfare of the people.¹²⁹

Meanwhile, the government's decision for the nationalisation of Kendu leaves and Sal (*Shorea Robusta*) seed trade in 1973 and 1976 followed by the government's takeover of all trade in minor forest produce (MFP) in 1978,¹³⁰ badly affected the lives and livelihoods of the Adivasis. These changes brought huge power into the hands of outside timber contractors, who discriminated against the local MFP collectors in favour of non-local consumers.

In 1975, the government created the worst situation for the Adivasis of Singhbhum, while implementing the recommendations of the National Commission on Agriculture (NCA), which had recommended to dedicate 48 millions hectares of forest land as production forestry. The Bihar State Forest Development Corporation (FDC) was formed and 192,000 hectares of forest of West Singhbhum district, including Saranda and Porhat forests, were leased out to the FDC for clear-felling

128. Vasant Desai, *Forest management in India: Issue and problems*, Bombay: HPH, 1991, p. 64.

129. *Ibid.*

130. M. Areeparampil, 'Forest Andolan in Singhbhum', in S. Narayan (ed.), *Jharkhand Movement: Origin and Evolution*, New Delhi: Inter-India, 1992, pp. 144–118.

and replanting teak and eucalyptus.¹³¹ This move of the Bihar government created antagonism between local people and the Forest Department, which came to a head as attempts to assert traditional forest rights and contest MFP nationalisation were greeted with increasingly repressive responses from the State.

In 1976, the NCA advocated for commercialisation of forests at all costs and with disregard to the sustenance of Adivasis derived from the forests.¹³² The Commission completely denied the rights and privileges of the Adivasis. The Commission also alleged that “free supply of forest produces to the rural population and the rights and privileges have brought destruction to the forests and so it is necessary to reverse the process. The rural people have not contributed much towards the maintenance or regeneration of the forests.”¹³³

The Commission recommended that the revised national forest policy of India should be based on important needs of the country and forests should be classified into (i) protection forests, (ii) production forests, and (iii) social forests. It further recommended for strengthening legislation on forestry for effective implementation of forest policy and enactment of a revised All India Forest Act.¹³⁴ The Commission was completely biased against Adivasis, and even denied them a role in forest management and regeneration. The Commission's recommendation resulted in further repression of Adivasis everywhere, including those in Saranda Forest.

Consequently, in the late 1970s, there were big clashes between Adivasis and the Forest Department in the entire Kolhan,

131. Ibid.

132. S. R. Hiremath, SadanandaKaniwalli& Sharad Kulkarni, *All about draft forest bill and forest lands*, Dharawad: SPS, 1994, pp xix.

133. Ibid.

134. Ibid.

including Saranda and Porhat Forest regions, which manifested as a 'Jungle Andolan' (Forest Movement), more evident here perhaps than anywhere else in India.¹³⁵ This Forest Movement intensified in 1978 against the FDC, which had begun clearing mixed forest and planting Teak. Adivasis resisted this felling of Sal trees and planting of Teak. They argued that Sal trees have a symbiotic relationship with the Adivasi community, as an intrinsic part of their tradition, culture and religion, whereas the teak has nothing to do with them. Teak trees had no purpose beyond generating revenue for the State, while the value of Sal goes far beyond its timber value. Adivasi activists destroyed several teak nurseries of the corporation, resulting in losses of millions of rupees.¹³⁶

Soon, the Forest Movement took the shape of reclaiming ancestral lands. Thousands of Ho and Munda Adivasi families decided to go back to the land from where their ancestors had been driven out by the British Indian government more than 80 years ago. But how did they determine where in the dense forest their villages had been situated more than 80 years before? The answer is very simple. The tombstones of their ancestors called '*Sasandri*' lay there as an indisputable landmark. For Ho and Munda Adivasis, a *Sasandri* is the only valid document of land ownership supplemented by the trees that Adivasis plant in their sacred groves called Sarna, which is an essential feature of an Adivasi village here.¹³⁷ The kinds of trees in a Sarna are not found in ordinary forest areas.

Meanwhile, the history of Indian forestry took a new turn. The government of India enacted the Forest Conservation Act 1980. The primary objective of the Act was "to provide for the

135. 'Singhbhum: Jharkhand - Jungle andolan amidst state repression', *Down To Earth*, 31 July 2003.

136. *Ibid.*

137. *Ibid.*

conservation of forests by checking the indiscriminate diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes".¹³⁸ The Act restricts the de-reservation of reserved forests and use of forestland for non-forest purposes, and prescribes punishments for people violating the law. Tea cultivation, coffee cultivation, spices, rubber, oil-bearing plants, horticulture crops and medicinal plants were all defined as non forest purposes in this Act.¹³⁹

Ironically, the 1980 Forest Act allows the government to exploit forests in the name of 'conservation', development and management of forests and wildlife, namely the establishment of check-posts, fire lines, wireless communications and construction of fencing, bridges and culverts, dams, water holes, trench marks, boundary marks, pipelines or other like purposes.¹⁴⁰ The Act is concerned to conserve forests and wildlife, but expresses no concern for forest dwellers at all, implicitly denying their rights and privileges altogether. At the same time, it strengthens the power of the central government and takes power away from the state governments regarding forest conservation, management and control.

The Forest Act of 1927 retained some scope of negotiation for forest dwellers regarding their rights and concessions on forests, whereby reserved forest can be de-reserved according to section 27, and the state governments retained the power to de-reserve the reserved forests. But in the case of the Forest Conservation Act 1980, there is no such provision for negotiation. The de-reservation of reserved forests is completely restricted. What this means is that people who were living in such forests must be thrown out, and state governments can only be mute

138. S.R. Hiremath, SadanandaKaniwalli& Sharad Kulkarni, *All about draft forest bill and forest lands*, Dharawad: SPS, 1994, pp. xix.

139. 2005. Report of the first national conference. Nagpur: NFFPFW, pp 43.

140. S.R. Hiremath, SadanandaKaniwalli& Sharad Kulkarni, *All about draft forest bill and forest lands*, Dharawad: SPS, 1994, Pp. 258.

spectators of this process, with no authority to protect the rights and privileges of forest dwellers, especially Adivasis.

The Forest Movement continued to fight against the unjust policy of the government. Several political leaders emerged from the Forest Movement, including Devendra Majhi, Shailendra Mahato, Bahadur Oraon of the Singhbhum Jungle Mazdoor Union.¹⁴¹ The agitation became part of the movement for the creation of the Jharkhand state. During the Forest Movement, Adivasi protestors were involved in the protest against the forest officials, demanding that the FDC's work be stopped. They also felled trees in attempts to reclaim ancestral land that had been taken away by the Forest Department.¹⁴² As usual, the State responded violently to the Forest Movement with police brutality. This first occurred in Simdega on 4 August 1978, when police fired at Adivasis who were protesting against the takeover of MFP trade, and killed one person.

After this incident, police brutality against Adivasis became a daily affair. Between 1980 and 1985, police reports in Singhbhum acknowledged about 19 instances where police fired on demonstrators, killing a total of 36 Adivasis.¹⁴³ A crucial example is the infamous Gua police firing that followed the arrest of 4,100 local people for illegally cutting trees.¹⁴⁴ On 8 September 1980, a new political party, the Jharkhand Mukti Morch (JMM) organised a public meeting at Gua Aerodrome to protest against State employment policies, State terror, and State forestry policies.¹⁴⁵ When the meeting was over, the crowd started to disperse.

141. It was a union of the forest workers of Singhbhum district.

142. Sarah Jewitt, *Political Ecology of Jharkhand Conflicts Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, Vol. 49, No. 1, April 2008.

143. *Ibid.*

144. *Ibid.*

145. *Ibid.*

Meanwhile, the Bihar Military Police (BMP) started abusing, beating and searching for the leaders to arrest them. Finally, there was a clash between protestors and the Police, which led to a police firing. Fifty-nine rounds of bullets were fired by the BMP, which led to killing of three policemen and eight marchers.

A further ten wounded Adivasis were surrounded, assaulted and then shot dead by the policemen at the hospital when they arrived for treatment. Immediately after this incident, State terror was unleashed over the region. Thousands of innocent Adivasis were dragged out of trains, buses, etc. or picked up from weekly haats (markets), courts or their places of work and put in prison. Villages were raided and women were raped and beaten up.¹⁴⁶

A survey conducted by the Tribal Research and Training Centre (TRTC), a civil society organisation in Chaibasa, reveals that 450 Adivasis' houses were destroyed after getting looted and burnt.¹⁴⁷ Forest officials also played tricks for trapping Adivasis. With timber merchants, they connived to cut forests using Adivasi labour, and once the timbers were removed, the Adivasis were charged with felling trees and thrown behind bars.

Thus, thousands of Adivasis were charged with cases, very often on false charges, with the intention of suppressing their movement. The Chief Judicial Magistrate reported in 1984 that 4,160 cases were pending against about 14,000 Adivasis in various courts of Singhbhum district.¹⁴⁸ This police repression led to gross human rights violations of the Adivasis in the region.

146. M. Areeparampil, 'Forest Andolan in Singhbhum', in S. Narayan (ed.), *Jharkhand Movement: Origin and Evolution*, New Delhi: Inter-India, 1992, pp. 144–118.

147. 'Singhbhum: Jharkhand - Jungle andolan amidst state repression', *Down To Earth*, 31 July 2003.

148. *Ibid.*

Meanwhile the Bihar government also put considerable efforts into defaming the Forest Movement by terming it either as a 'Forest Felling Movement'¹⁴⁹ or a 'Land Grab Campaign'.¹⁵⁰ The government stated that the leaders of the Jharkhand Movement "wrongly motivated the innocent Adivasis to clear the forests along the natural canals and valleys etc for cultivation and further settlement".¹⁵¹

Despite all this, the State failed to crush the Forest Movement. Adivasis continued to cut down trees and clear bushes in assertion of their rights over the land and forest. The government data shows that under the Forest Movement from 1980 to 1988, a total of 2,779 hectares, which is 3.2% of the forest land of Saranda Forest Division, had been felled and cleared by Adivasis for purposes of cultivation and settlement (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Reclaimed areas by Adivasis (1980-88)

Sl.No.	Forest Blocks	Reclaimed Area (in hectare)	Total Area (in hectare)
1.	Ankua	605.80	16,231.17
2.	Ghatkuri	486.64	12,466.80
3.	Tholkobad	242.60	10,617.41
4.	Trilposi	284.00	12,438.87
5.	Samtha	264.00	13,302.02
6.	Karampada	219.60	12,193.93
7.	Kodalibad	149.20	4,804.86
8.	Rabangda-Sunsuna PF	18.80	887.36
9.	Sagjuri PF	27.60	162.26
10.	Baheda PF	24.60	24.93
11.	Sonapi PF	110.00	700.24
12.	Jojogutu	52.40	202.95

149. 'Forest Tales' *Down To Earth*, 29 February 1996.

150. 'Tribal movement took a heavy toll on Saranda', *Times of India*, 9 February 2002.

151. Sarah Jewitt, *Political Ecology of Jharkhand Conflicts Asia Pacific, Viewpoint*, Vol. 49, No. 1, April 2008.

Martyr Monument Gua



13.	Marangponga PF	45.20	180.60
14.	Chhatanapur PF	23.00	104.25
15.	Dhobil PF	35.20	306.23
16.	Kasiapecha PF	43.60	646.39
17.	Nuia PF	4.84	151.17
18.	Baraiburu PF	27.80	360.08
19.	Gua PF	41.00	135.20
20.	Tagaidaburu PF	34.40	56.83
21.	Karujagdaburu PF	4.00	34.86
22.	Sutriburu PF	22.80	22.80
23.	Kurkatapai PF	12.71	13.71
	Total	2,779.79	86,044.92

Source: Forest Resource Survey 2006 published by government of Jharkhand.

Other government reports alleged that even more forest was cut that from 1980 to 1998 a total of 6,913 hectares (see table 5.2), which is 8% of Saranda Forest, had been illicitly felled and cleared by Adivasis for cultivation and settlement. Interestingly, the huge loss of forest due to mining activities in Saranda Forest was not even calculated properly. The impact of mining on the forest has been significant. The state forest reports show that that between 1997 and 1999 about 3,200 hectares of forest was lost in Singhbhum region. And between 2001 and 2003 some 7,900 hectares of forest was lost due to iron ore mining.¹⁵²

However, the Forest Department put all the blame for deforestation of Saranda Forest on the Forest Movement. This is why the rightful claim of Adivasis to their land and forest, led by their traditional chiefs, popularly known in the Singhbhum region as Mundas-Mankis, was portrayed as a 'Land Grab Campaign' by the Divisional Forest Officer of Saranda, H.S. Gupta. Out of the total area of 86,044 hectares of Saranda's Reserved Forest,

152. 'Forest Advisory Committee recommends mining in the Saranda Forest' *The Economic Times*, 11 March 2013.

he claimed that more than 7,000 hectares was encroached by Adivasis during 1978-2000.¹⁵³

Table: 5.2. Reclaimed areas (1980-98)

Sl. No.	Year	Reclaimed area (in hectare)
1.	1980	1212.50
2.	1981	454.20
3.	1982	10.00
4.	1983	80.00
5.	1984	789.10
6.	1985	419.50
7.	1986	116.00
8.	1987	271.00
9.	1988	609.00
10.	1989	686.50
11.	1990	586.10
12.	1991	455.00
13.	1992	411.00
14.	1993	107.00
15.	1994	93.05
16.	1995	20.00
17.	1996	35.00
18.	1997	177.00
19.	1998	381.38
	Total	6913.33

Source: Forest Resource Survey 2006 published by the government of Jharkhand.

Meanwhile, the government of India introduced a more comprehensive forest policy in 1988 to avoid such conflicts. The principal aim of the National Forest Policy of 1988 was to ensure “environmental stability and maintenance of ecological balance including atmospheric equilibrium, which is vital for

153. ‘Tribal movement took a heavy toll on Saranda’, *The Times of India*, 9 February 2002.

sustenance of all life forms, human, animal and plant. The derivation of direct economic benefit must be subordinated to this principal aim".¹⁵⁴ The policy also recognised the rights and concessions of the forest dwelling communities, especially the Adivasis. Their domestic requirements of fuel-wood, fodder, minor forest produce and construction timber should be the first charge on forest produce there and substitute materials should be made available through conveniently located depots at reasonable prices.¹⁵⁵

This policy recognises the 'symbiotic relationship between tribal people and forests' (section 4.6).¹⁵⁶ The policy also emphasized wildlife conservation, prohibiting shifting cultivation while promoting forest based industries, and laying stress on the increase in encroachments onto forestlands. The policy suggested creating a mass movement with women's involvement, to achieve these objectives and minimise pressure on existing forests.¹⁵⁷

In 1990, the government of India issued a guideline to the state governments for regularisation of forestland prior to the 1980 encroachments on forestland and also the conversion of forest villages into revenue villages, with guidelines to help fix a boundary, termed 'eligible category'.¹⁵⁸ To identify people who are living in the forests prior to 1980, they must now be able to produce proof about this. This guideline has, however, not been effective: thousands of people who had some documents to prove their presence in the area are still waiting for their status to be recognised. Hence, the Adivasis of Saranda Forest did not benefit from the guideline.

154. B.D. Sharma, *Forest Lands*, New Delhi: SPK, 2003, pp. 105.

155. *Ibid.*

156. *Ibid.*

157. *Ibid.* pp. 110

158. *Ibid.*

Another major development took place in 1990. The government of India issued a circular called Joint Forest Management (JFM), based on a recommendation in the National Forest Policy of 1988. This was the first time the government accepted and appeared to welcome people's involvement, and the vital role of forest dwellers and Adivasis in afforestation and management of forests.

The objectives of JFM are, amongst others to involve local Adivasis and other rural poor in protecting and developing degraded forests and to provide gainful employment and a sustainable economic base for Adivasis and other rural poor in the vicinity of their habitations.

Ironically, JFM was another dramatic failure. Officials of the Forest Department manipulate and dominate the programmes. People were merely used for the Department to gain control over forests in the name of Joint Management. And women, who are supposed to play a leading role, were not seen in the picture at all.¹⁵⁹

It would be interesting to recall here that gradually, the Forest Movement merged into the JMM, a regional political party, at the forefront of the Jharkhand statehood movement. Devendra Manjhi, a leader of the Forest Movement, contested a Parliamentary by-election from a JMM ticket in 1987, but lost to Bagun Subrai, a Janata Party candidate who got huge support from non-Adivasis, and who opposed the Forest Movement.

After this, a difference arose between the JMM and Devendra, resulting in his expulsion from the party. When he contested the Legislative Assembly election as an independent candidate, he won. The Forest Movement was going on, reclaiming the

159. Gladson Dungdung, *Whose Country is it anyway?* Kolkata: Adivaani, 2013.

forest land and forest by clearing trees and bushes. Tragically, Devendra was killed on 14 October 1994,¹⁶⁰ which was a big setback to the Forest Movement.

On 15 November 2000, 'Jharkhand' was created as India's 28th state. By this time the Forest Movement had already lost its momentum, lacking Devendra Majhi's charismatic leadership. Consequently, Adivasis who had reclaimed their ancestral lands and resettled their villages in the forest during the Forest Movement were worried about their future, afraid that the new government would throw them out of the forest once again, in which case, where could they go?

Mora Munda, a prominent Adivasi leader, who headed the 'Khutkati Andolan' (land rights movement) in the region, was concerned over the changing circumstances in the region. Having worked in the Porahat and Saranda regions, helping in resettling several villages during the Forest Movement, he wanted to protect these villages at any cost. With no hope of legalising ownership rights over the forest and forest land, he saw the Naxal Movement as a ray of hope. Later on, the Naxal Movement took over the Forest Movement as forest rights became one of their core issues. They manipulated the Adivasis' issues in order to strengthen their organisations across the Saranda region.

This was obviously a strategic choice. Some of the worst atrocities were inflicted as a result of evictions. The Ministry of Environment and Forest issued an order following the Supreme Court's verdict in 2002 to evict the illegal encroachers of the forests and forest land as fast as possible. The order also describes the encroachment of forests by powerful lobbies (contractors, medicine planters, poachers), which in truth causes great harm

160. 'Foundation does social work in Majhi's memory', *The Times of India*, 28 October 2002.

to forest conservation, particularly when these are carried out in remote areas in a honeycomb pattern.¹⁶¹

Ironically, none of the powerful lobbies, who were at the forefront of deforestation, were clamped down upon, while Adivasis and forest dwellers were immediately targeted. Though the exact number of evictions is unknown, it is estimated that at least 25,000 people were evicted from their lands and habitations across the country. Later on, these evictions were stopped due to an Adivasi backlash and the pressure from civil society organisations. Fortunately, there was no eviction move in the Saranda Forest, perhaps because the region was already Naxal affected, so Adivasis here were safe from this particular policy move.

Implementing the recognition of the rights of Adivasis and other forest dwellers has not been achieved though. Remaining forests are still being plundered and sold at market rates by politicians, contractors and other vested interest groups. Existing forest policies in effect not only deprive Adivasis and forest dwellers from their livelihood resources and destroy their culture and socio-economic and political system, but add insult to injury by depicting them as encroachers and an enemy of the forests and wildlife.

All the evidences suggest that most people in government are simply not concerned about the welfare of Adivasi and forest dweller communities, but under the guise of the protection and conservation of the forests concentrate simply on generating as much revenue as possible. By seeing forest dwellers as encroachers of forests and forest land that they have occupied for countless years, the State has continued to deny their right to livelihood in the coming decades.

161. B.D. Sharma, *Forest Lands*, New Delhi: SPK, 2003, pp. 105.

Finally in 2006, the government of India recognised Adivasi rights over the forest through the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act (FRA) 2006, after 60 years of Independence, which generated new hope for them. But ironically this Act, which aimed to give ownership rights over forest land and community forests to traditional forest dwellers, was vehemently opposed by the wildlife conservation lobby and the Ministry of Environment and Forests, who termed it “a recipe for ensuring the destruction of India’s forests and wildlife by legalising encroachments”.¹⁶²

The saddest part of the pro-Adivasi laws is that they have not been honestly enforced. The Jharkhand government claims that the prevalence of ‘extremism’ is the main obstacle against realisation of forest rights. Yet the same government has no problem in sanctioning forest land and forest to corporate houses for destruction by mining.

In the Saranda region, the Adivasis were hoping to get ownership rights under the Forest Rights Act. Therefore, 17,000 of them filled up forms, claiming entitlement to the lands they cultivate, but their claims were rejected on invalid grounds.¹⁶³ At the same time, 22 new mining leases were sanctioned to the mining companies with three given immediate forest and environment clearance at level one.

The Deputy Commissioner of West Singhbhum district claims that the district administration has given entitlement of forest land to 905 individuals and 3,736 communities and forest entitlements to ten villages of Saranda Forest. But he neither discloses the beneficiaries’ names nor such data reflects in the status report on implementation of the FRA 2006.

162. Gladson Dungdung. *Whose Country is it anyway?* Adivani: Kolkata, 2013.

163. *Ibid.*

Mission Saranda

Presently, there is a clear paradigm shift in the Saranda Forest in both the Forest Movement and State suppression. The Forest Movement is perceived as Naxal Movement and resistance against the mining companies rather than demands for forest rights under the Forest Rights Act 2006. In recent years, it was also manifested as the resistance against the Land Acquisition Ordinance introduced by the BJP led NDA government. Several mass rallies were organised in Manoharpur, Noamundi and Goilkera. However, the State has responded by killing, torturing and illegally detaining innocent Adivasis after coining them as Naxals. Thus, the historical injustice continues in the Sarada Forest.

Nevertheless, the Adivasis seem to be determined to reclaim their ownership rights over the Saranda Forest. Mangar Honhaga who led the Forest Movement in Usariya village in the 1980s says, "Saranda forest belongs to our ancestors, which we have recopied after a long struggle in 1980s. Many innocent Adivasis were brutally killed in police firings, hundreds of them were mercilessly tortured and thousands of them were sent to jail. Therefore we're not going to desert the forest at any cost." The State on the other hand is clearly determined to handover the forest to the corporate houses.

It is very clear that the future of both Adivasis and State lies in the Saranda Forest. Of course, both will never exist together in the forest as one believes in co-existence with the forest and the other in its exploitation for profit.

The Infamous Gua Incident

“Perhaps, it was the first incident of such a brutal killing by the police in history, when the wounded protestors undergoing treatment were brought out of the hospital, made to stand in line and shot dead.”

Anuj Kumar Sinha,
Senior Journalist, Ranchi

8 September 2013 was a significant day for the people of Gua, especially the family members of those who had been brutally killed by the police 33 years before, on 8 September 1980.¹⁶⁴ It was after this gap of 33 years that the Jharkahnd Mukti Morcha (JMM), the party that had been leading the Forest movement when these police killings terrorised a peaceful gathering of Adivasis, did its best to honour the martyrs of history. Chief

164. M. Areeparampil, 'Forest Andolan in Singhbhum', in S. Narayan (ed.), *Jharkhand Movement: Origin and Evolution*, New Delhi: Inter-India, 1992, pp. 144–118.

Minister, Hemant Soren, distributed appointment letters to the dependants of those killed by police firing at the site of their martyrdom. The government relaxed official norms related to age and other eligibility criteria, making a range of appointments¹⁶⁵ to fourth grade services in the state government. Of course, this was no delivery of justice, but an attempt to soothe old wounds. The most unfortunate part is that the policemen who had committed the terrible crime remained unpunished. This is not uncommon in India. Nearly always, police officers enjoy complete impunity after committing the most appalling crimes.

Gua is a small town inside Saranda Forest. It will always be remembered for two things: iron ore mines and this brutal killing of innocent Adivasis. A question arising in one's mind is, was the sacrifice of Adivasis a prerequisite for the area's modern development? Saranda Forest is full of iron ore, and every corner of the forest has also witnessed the bloodshed of Adivasis.

However, the Gua police killings were exceptionally brutal in nature. A senior journalist of Jharkhand, Anuj Kumar Sinha, who has authored a book on the Jharkhand movement entitled '*Jharkhand Andolanka Dastavej: Shoshan, Sangharsh aur Shahadat*' (Documents of the Jharkhand Movement: exploitation, struggle and sacrifice) writes, "Perhaps, it was the first incident of such a brutal killing by the police in history, when the wounded protestors undergoing treatment were brought out of the hospital, made to stand in line and shot dead". What more brutality than this can one expect from the police? This atrocity was done to people who were protesting peacefully.

165. The appointment letters were given to Chamru Purty, next of kin of martyr Jura Purty, Mangal Surin, related to martyr Rengo Surin, Lakhan Champia, related to martyr Chaitan Champia, Kanu Devgam, relative of martyr Bagi Devgam, Bagi Surin, related to martyr Jeetu Surin, Gopi Hansda, dependant of martyr Churi Hansda, Damu Hembram, related to martyr Gonda Honhaga, and Krishna Sardar, dependant of martyr Ishwar Sardar.

In the previous chapter, the history of the Forest Movement has already been discussed. The Gua incident was part of this movement, which the police tried hard to suppress, arresting at least 35 Adivasis in Gua and 159 from the Goilkera area. Police firing was also attested in Ichahatu and Serengdah villages, where four people were brutally killed. Despite this, the Adivasis were determined to reclaim their ownership rights over the forest land and forest.

On 8 September 1980, the people were angry with the police and administration, and had decided to hold a big protest at Gua. The Forest Movement leaders – Bhuneshwar Mahto, Sula Purty, Sukhdeve Hembrom, Bahadur Oraon, Devendra Manjhi, Shailendra Mahto, Mora Munda, Machuwa Gagrai and Lal Sigh Munda - started mobilising people from the villages. They had already organised a series of meetings in the villages.

However, when the police came to know about the proposed demonstration, an officer called Francis Deen was appointed as the Judicial Magistrate at Gua. A. Demta, the Circle Officer of Noamundi and B. Tirkey, SDPO of Kiriburu, were also deployed. An intelligence report alleged that the protestors, including Adivasis from Chaibasa, Chakradharpur, Sonua, Goilkera and Manoharpur were planning to attack Gua police station. Thus, the administration started checking all the trains, buses and small vehicles coming towards Gua. But most protestors came by foot. On 8 September 1980, they reached Gua after walking 40 to 50 kilometers. The police were unable to stop them. Bahadur Oraon and Bhuneshwar Mahto were among the leaders who reached the venue.

The protestors gathered near the aerodrome, holding their traditional weapons – bows, arrows and axes. They also had their traditional big drum, Nagara. They started beating the

Nagara around 2:30pm, marching towards Gua market. The police stopped them near Oriya school asking the protestors to return after submitting a memorandum to the administration. Their demands were to release the innocent protestors arrested since 1978, provide compensation for lands acquired by the Indian Iron and Steel Company (IISCO), give employment to local people in the mines, and the formation of Jharkhand as a separate state.

After submission of this memorandum, instead of going back to their homes, the protestors started marching towards the market, which was situated one kilometer away. They reached the venue proposed for the mass meeting, and started the meeting. After the leaders started speaking, police captured the mike and declared the protest illegal by imposing a prohibitory order in the area under the infamous section 144 of the Indian Penal Code. The protestors contested this move and continued their protest.

The police arrested some leaders including Bhuneshwar Mahto. This led to a clash between the protestors and police. The police fired tear gas canisters, which fueled the protestors' anger. A policeman also opened fire with live ammunition, which created chaos. In response, the protestors started attacking the police with bows, arrows and axes. In this fighting, three protestors and three policemen were killed on site, and hundreds from both sides were injured. Some policemen who were seriously injured were taken to Chaibasa for treatment, and wounded Adivasi protestors were admitted to the SAIL Hospital at Gua.

Some policemen with minor injuries were also getting treatment at the Gua hospital. Seeing the injured Adivasis there, they asked them to remove the arrows from their bodies. Intent upon taking revenge, they forced these wounded Adivasis out

of the hospital, ordering them to stand in a queue in front of the hospital, before opening fire on them. This is how Jura Purty, Rengo Surin, Chaitan Champia, Bagi Devgam, Jeetu Surin, Churi Hansda, Gonda Honhaga and Ishwar Sardar were brutally killed in a police firing. However, the anger of the police did not end here. They started hunting for the leaders of the movement, most of whom went underground. Many who were in police custody were saved thanks to Adivasi police officers.

Since 1980, Gua has grown into a large mining township from the small Adivasi village it once was. Today, it is one of the profit-making hubs for public and private sector companies including SAIL, Jindal Steel & Power Ltd, Adhunik, Rungta Mines Ltd etc; but local inhabitants are yet to be provided with proper education, health and other basic amenities

The history of development in India is full of this kind of injustice, exploitation, atrocity, bloodshed and sacrifice of the Adivasis in the name of growth, progress and development. The Gua police firing is an infamous chapter in this history. However, the Gua incident still inspires Adivasi youths to fight to protect their ancestral land, territory and resources. Unfortunately, their long-standing demands remain unheeded – to stop police atrocities, to end the destruction of their land by pollution from mines to ensure jobs for local people in the mines, to release innocent people thrown behind bars, and to establish inalienable ownership rights of the land they have long cultivated.

Map of Jharkhand



Naxal Movement in Saranda Forest

“Since the Adivasis were facing rampant police atrocities and there was no one to hear them, therefore, they decided to embrace the Naxal Movement.”

Sushi Barla

Political Activist, Manoharpur

The ‘Naxal Movement’ has emerged as the biggest armed struggle in India over the last four decades. The ruling elites term it the nation’s biggest internal security threat. It originated in a small village called Naxalbari, in Darjeeling district of West Bengal, and quickly had a massive direct impact in many regions of Jharkhand (then south Bihar). A nine-member Bihar State Committee of the ‘Communist Revolutionaries’ was the first Naxal group, which began spreading its activities in various parts of the state in 1969.¹⁶⁶ The Communist Party

166. Sanjay K Jhar, ‘Naxalite Movement in Bihar and Jharkhand’, *Dialogue*, April-June, vol.6 no.4, 2005.

of India, Marxist-Leninist (CPI-ML) came into existence the same year. In the early 1970s, some CPI-ML leaders began to establish contacts in Jehanabad (Bihar) and Palamu regions (now in Jharkhand), but many of them were arrested during the 'Emergency' imposed by Indira Gandhi in 1975.¹⁶⁷ When these leaders were released during the Janata Party's administration in 1977, some of them re-united into the CPI-ML in 1978 and spread their activities.

In 1978 another organisation was formed, called the 'Mazdur Kisan Sangram Samity' (MKSS). By the 1980s, three main groups were involved in the Naxal Movement in Bihar - the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPI-ML) Liberation, the CPI-ML Party Unity and the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI). In 1982, the Bihar government reported that as many as "47 out of a total of 857 blocks, spread over 14 districts, were affected by the Naxal Movement."¹⁶⁸ In 1992, the CPI-ML (Liberation), which had a formidable presence in the central parts of undivided Bihar, decided to function as an above-ground political party.¹⁶⁹

Nevertheless, the armed Naxal Movement continued to spread, especially in Palamu and Giridih regions of south Bihar, which are now districts in Jharkhand, with a centre in Kaimur hills. The MCCI and the CPI-ML (Party Unity) had a huge presence in these regions, which have a large Dalit¹⁷⁰ population. The Dalits were facing caste-based atrocities, including police torture and violence against Dalit women inflicted by the upper caste landlords. For example, Dalits of Lesliganj area claimed that they were treated as sub-human, exploited and tortured

167. Ibid.

168. Ibid.

169. Ibid.

170. The Dalit community is known as Scheduled Caste and is treated as an untouchable community in India.

by the upper caste landlords but the police officers refused to accept their complaints against them, and actually tortured them instead. They therefore embraced the Naxal Movement to overcome these caste based atrocities.¹⁷¹

However, the Singhbhum region, including Saranda Forest, which later became the Eastern Regional Headquarter of the CPI-Maoist,¹⁷² was largely untouched by the Naxal Movement before the creation of the state of Jharkhand. It is of considerable interest to know how the Saranda Forest became a CPI-Maoist 'liberated zone' in just a decade.

As we have seen, Saranda is known as an abode of the 'Ho' Adivasis, who were badly affected by the reserving of forest in 1882, resulting in a series of conflicts with the British Indian government, which were never resolved, even after independence, since ruling elites have continued the same path of exploiting and dispossessing the Ho from their land and natural resources. This took a new form in 1978, as the 'Jungle Andolan' (Forest Movement), focusing Adivasi resistance against the Forest Development Corporation (FDC), and its programme of replacing 'Sal Forest' with Teak plantations.

As noted in the previous chapter, the Forest Movement lost its momentum in the mid-1990s after the brutal killing of its charismatic leader Devendra Manjhi. Another prominent Adivasi leader, Mora Munda, who headed the 'Khutkati Andolan' (land rights movement) in the region, was concerned over the changing circumstances in the region. Though Mora Munda was originally from Derang village in Bandgaon region of Singhbhum district, he was working in the Porahat and Saranda regions, and had helped to settle Kadavdi and a few other villages during the

171. Gladson Dungdung & Sanjay Krison, *Crossfire*, Kolkata: Adivaani, 2012.

172. 'Between Maoists and Mines', *Down To Earth*, April 16-30, 2012.

Forest Movement. Wanting to protect these villages at any cost, with no hope of legalising ownership rights over the forest and forest land, he saw the Naxal Movement as a ray of hope. He therefore contacted members of the MCCI, who were operating in Palamu, and invited them to Saranda Forest.

A squad of seven members of MCCI from Palamu is known to have visited Kochang village in Saranda Forest in 2000, on the occasion of the Martyr Day for Niyarjan Bhuiya, who was killed by police in collusion with forest officials in 1999 during the Forest Movement.¹⁷³ In the words of political activist Sushil Barla, who was also part of the Forest Movement, “Since the Adivasis were facing rampant police atrocities and there was no one to hear them, therefore, they decided to embrace the Naxal Movement”. This is how the Naxal Movement shifted from the Dalit hamlets to the forest of the Adivasis, and Maoists took on the identity of new guards for the Adivasis in several regions of Jharkhand. And within a decade, the Saranda Forest had become one of the liberated zones of the CPI-Maoist. The Central Reserved Police Force (CRPF) actually claims that the entire 860 square kilometres area of Saranda Forest was under control of the CPI-Maoist since 2000.¹⁷⁴

At the formation of the state, eight districts of Jharkhand were known as ‘Naxal infested areas’, which is why the growth of Naxalism became a prime concern for the government of Jharkhand from the moment of its formation. The state’s first Chief Minister, Babulal Marandi, placed the issue of Naxalism at the top of his agenda. His idea was that the ‘Naxal menace’ must be ‘cleansed from the state through the power of the gun’, so a series of anti-Naxal operations was launched in many regions of the state, including Saranda, in 2001.

173. Mohan F Pradhan, *Jharkhand: Barren Monsoon*, www.satp.org, 2012.

174. ‘Saranda Myth Pictured’, *CRPF Newsletter*, vol.7, April 2012.

During these operations, on 27 November 2001, Ishwar Mahto, Manoharpur 'area commander' of the MCCI, was killed by the police at Bitkalsoy village located under Manoharpur police station, in the heart of Saranda Forest.¹⁷⁵ This was the first genuine encounter that took place between the police and the Naxals in the Saranda region. However, the police failed to flush the Naxals out of Saranda Forest. Instead, the Naxals strengthened their roots in the region and established a training centre at Panta village located under Goilkera police station in 2002,¹⁷⁶ slowly winning people's hearts. The government's strategy of 'teeth for teeth' had completely failed.

As the Naxal Movement gained strength, their attacks assumed a higher profile. On 20 December 2002, Naxalites ambushed a police convoy for the first time, killing 18 police personnel, two civilians, and injuring another 20 police personnel, near Bitkilsoy village under Manoharpur Police Station. They also looted 35 rifles and 1,690 live cartridges, and set fire to eleven vehicles in the convoy.¹⁷⁷ This incident inaugurated Naxal terror in the Saranda region.

The Naxals soon established Saranda's numerous iron ore mines as a major source of collecting funds for their movement. After the ambush, they started flexing their muscle in the region, and tendu leaf and mining contractors and owners were soon paying regular levies to them, funding the further expansion of the Naxals' arsenal.¹⁷⁸ The Naxals also established several arms training camps in Saranda Forest at this time.

Gradually, a deadly game of hide and seek between police and Naxals became a daily business in the region. Police located at

175. Pradhan F Mohan, *Jharkhand: Barren Monsoon*, at www.satp.org, 2012.

176. *Ibid.*

177. *Naxal violence*, published by PrabhatKhabar, Ranchi, 22 January 2012.

178. Mohan F Pradhan, *Jharkhand: Barren Monsoon*, www.satp.org 2012.

least two Naxal camps in 2003, at Hendecully on 22 August, and at Bendesoker on 13 November.¹⁷⁹ These police discoveries did minimal damage to the Naxals. On 31 March 2004, MCCI cadres attacked the Bara Jamda police outpost, where they looted ten rifles with other accessories. The government then launched massive anti-Naxal operations, but suffered a major defeat on 7 July 2004, falling into a trap near Baliba village, under Gua police station, in which 29 police personnel were brutally killed and more than 30 weapons, including a light machine gun, were looted.¹⁸⁰ This incident facilitated the emerging dominance of the MCCI throughout the Saranda region, forcing the security forces into the defensive.

Meanwhile, as anti-Naxal operations were intensified across the country, the two major Naxal outfits felt that they would lose the war if they continue their fight with the security forces separately. A series of dialogues was therefore held between the Bihar based Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI) and the Andhra Pradesh based People's War Group (PWG). These culminated in the merger of these two largest Naxal outfits, forming the Community Party of India (Maoist) as a new entity on 21 September 2004.¹⁸¹ This merger was officially announced on 14 October, 2004 by PWG Andhra Pradesh state secretary, Ramakrishna, at a news conference in Hyderabad, on the eve of peace talks between the PWG and the state government.¹⁸² This new set-up established Saranda Forest as the Eastern Headquarter of the newly established CPI-Maoist.

It is of great interest to understand why the Naxal Movement has such a strong hold in the areas of the country where mining is concentrated, such as Saranda Forest. In 2004-2005, the price

179. Ibid.

180. Ibid.

181. Gladson, Dungdung. *Whose Country is it anyway?* Kolkata: Adivani, 2013.

182. http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/terroristoutfits/CPI_M.htm

of iron-ore jumped up 70% in the international market, largely due to the Beijing Olympics held in China, which required huge quantities of steel for infrastructure construction.¹⁸³ It was the rapid boost in demand for iron ore that promoted so much illegal mining in Saranda Forest and other iron-rich regions of the country, such as Orissa, Andra Pradesh, Karnataka and Goa.

Evidence suggests that cadres of the CPI-Maoist were heavily involved in illegal mining activities and that the mining industry has funded the Naxal movement's empowerment in India. As we have seen, the Ministry of Mines (government of India) recorded 953 cases of illegal mining in Jharkhand during 2004-2009, most of these in Saranda Forest. How could this have taken place without Maoist connivance? The earnings of the CPI-Maoist from Saranda Forest is estimated to amount to Rs.500 crore (approx. US\$83.3 million)¹⁸⁴ per annum from levies collected from mining companies and contractors, including illegal mines.¹⁸⁵

The Saranda region witnessed numerous armed encounters during these years between the Maoists and security forces. On 26 January 2006, an exchange of fire took place in the Manoharpur area that left two police personnel and two Maoists dead. On 1 June 2006, twelve police personnel were killed in a landmine blast planted by Maoist cadres in the Saranda area.

In 2008, the British Finance Company, Execution Noble Limited, in a report on the growth of the Indian economy, stated that US\$80 billion of business was being blocked by Maoists in resource-rich areas, building pressure on the Indian government to force Maoists to vacate these areas. Soon after, the government launched a massive series of anti-Naxal operations that

183. Gladson Dungdung, *Whose Country is it anyway?* Kolkata: Adivani, 2013.

184. Rs. 1 crore is equal to Rs. 10 million.

185. 'Between Maoists and Mines', *Down To Earth*, 16-30 April, 2012.

immediately became known as 'Operation Green Hunt'. On 10 June 2009, in response to the State's anti-Naxal operations, the CPI-Maoist killed another eleven security personnel, including a CRPF Inspector and injured six policeman in a landmine blast in Saranda Forest.

In Jharkhand, the 'Operation Green Hunt' was started on 10 March 2010 with the objective of cleansing the CPI-Maoist from resource rich regions of the state, including Saranda Forest. The operation began with a Maoist counter-attack: just a day after the security forces left Saranda Forest, the CPI-Maoist blew up two water pump houses inside the jungle, demonstrating their unchallenged presence in their safe haven. However, on 13 June 2010, security forces killed ten members of the CPI-Maoist and destroyed eight training camps during massive anti-Naxal operations, which were jointly carried out by the state police, CRPF and Special Task Force personnel near Bandgaon in West Singhbhum district. Six security personnel were also injured in these encounters.¹⁸⁶

After the launch of Operation Green Hunt, many combing operations were carried out in Saranda Forest. A five-day long 'Operation Black Thunder' began on 25 September 2010, carried out by 2,000 security personnel, comprising a joint force of CRPF, COBRA and state police. It was claimed that ten fighters of the CPI-Maoist were killed in this operation, though only one dead body was recovered, and four security personnel were also killed. Short operations in Saranda Forest were also carried out in December 2010, March 2011 and June 2011. However, the security forces faced huge criticism in 2011, when they killed an innocent villager, Mangal Honhanga of Baliba village, under

186. Mohan F Pradhan, *Jharkhand: Barren Monsoon*, www.satp.org, 2012.

187. Gladson, Dungdung, *Whose Country is it anyway?* Kolkata: Adivani, 2013.

Chhotanagra police station, in a cold blooded murder while carrying out 'Operation Bravo Boy'.¹⁸⁷

A month-long anti-Naxal operation called 'Operation Monsoon', which included an episode termed 'Operation Anaconda', was carried out in Saranda Forest from 1 to 31 August 2011. As part of this operation, security forces seized 25 Adivasi villages and occupied them for the whole month. These villages are located under Manohapur and Noamundi development blocks and Chhotanagra, Kiriburu and Jaraikela police stations.¹⁸⁸ Approximately 500 Adivasis from these and other villages were brutally tortured and 33 were arrested by the security forces during this operation, with as many as 15,000 directly affected by police atrocities.¹⁸⁹ The outcome, according to the security forces, was that they regained control of the liberated zone from the CPI-Maoist.

Assistant Commandant of 209 COBRA Battalion, Mithilesh Kumar said, this was the first time in the last decade that the entire Saranda area was surveyed under a security net. A Saranda Action Plan was now in place, he said, and the region, which once used to be a land of terror, is ready to become a frequent visiting place for development officials. This unprecedented re-occupation or liberation, he said, has not only drawn a decisive line for future operations, but has also proved "our fundamental strength": "Saranda red zone is now a liberated green zone."¹⁹⁰

However, Adivasis have a different view altogether, and feel they are caught between two sets of guns. In the words of Binodini Purty of Tholkobad village, "The Maoists come to our village in

188. Their names are Tholkobad, Gundijora, Tirilposi, Baliba, Bitkilsoy, Digha, Samtha, Nayagaon, Hatnaburu, Karampada, Jombaiburu, Kulaiburu, Ponga, Holonguli, Kudliba, Bahada, Kumdi, Sonapi, Hedebruru, Tetrighat, Ratamati, Kaliyaposi, Jharbeda, Reda and Bhalulata.

189. Gladson Dungdung, *Whose Country is it anyway?*, Kolkata: Adivani, 2013.

190. 'Saranda Myth Pictured,' CRPF Newsletter, vol.7, April 2012.

the night and ask us for food at gun point. Police come during the day and torture us for feeding the guerillas of CPI-Maoist. What should we do?" She questions. Mangri Honhaga of Baliba village, whose husband was killed in a cold blooded murder by security personnel, says: "We want to get rid of the violence and live a peaceful life in the forest." Unfortunately, neither the CPI-Maoist nor the State is responsive to such pleas of the innocent Adivasis, who are losing everything in this remorseless war, which has engulfed their forest for a decade. The government promises to ensure peace and good governance for them in the region, and the CPI-Maoist assures them they will deliver justice, both using guns. But inevitably, what all Adivasis get at the end of the day is more and more misery.

One can conclude by saying that Saranda Forest has played a major role in strengthening the Naxal Movement, not only in Jharkhand, but India's entire Red Corridor. So far, it is clear that the Naxal Movement has created misery for the Adivasis far more than it has soothed their suffering and sorrow. Of course, the CPI-Maoist still manages to convince many Adivasis that their destiny will change only if they can get back their ownership rights over Saranda Forest. But thanks to the CPI-Maoist, in the name of counteracting the nation's prime internal security threat, it has become a lot easier for the State to crush people's democratic movements here.

Is Naxalism Taking Its Last Breath in Saranda Forest?

“You would have seen them here in uniform with guns at any point of time either at day or night. But now they have had to vacate the villages because there are CRPF camps everywhere in Saranda Forest and the Adivasis are also against them.”

Odeya Deogam, Ex-member
Naxal Movement, Saranda

“Bye Johnson, See you again”. This is what the Jawans of the COBRA Battalion, the elite force of the CRPF, had written on the wall of every school as they were deserting their camps in the schools, after carrying out two months of joint anti-Naxal operations in the Saranda Forest. This shows how important the name Johnson was for the Naxal Movement in the Saranda region. Johnson Gonjhu was one of the notorious area commanders of the most powerful Naxal organisation, the CPI-Maoist.

Perhaps, it was a coincidence that when the security forces were hunting for Johnson in the Saranda Forest day and night, I was there, collecting evidence regarding cases of alleged gross violation of the human rights of the Adivasis. And when local Adivasis caught and killed Johnson at Roro village, then too I was roaming in Saranda Forest to observe the ground reality of the Saranda Development Plan. The most important questions coming to mind are: Why did Adivasis kill Naxal, when they had previously brought them into their forest for protection? Has the Naxal Movement become a problem for them today? Is the Naxal Movement taking its last breath in Saranda Forest?

Before it could become breaking news for the media, political activist Sushil Barla informed me that the Adivasis of three villages have trapped Naxal Area Commander Johnson at Roro village from all corners, just like hunters trap a rabbit in the forest, and he was likely to be killed at any moment. I was stunned to hear this, and could not even imagine the emergence of such a drastic situation for the CPI-Maoist, especially in the Saranda region because the Adivasis themselves had brought the Naxals to the forest in 2000 as their protectors.

Meanwhile, the villagers informed the local police about the incident but the police did not turn up. Perhaps, the police assumed this was another strategy to trap them, and so avoided visiting the vicinity. This, clearly shows that there is a huge breach of trust and lack of co-operation between the villagers and the police.

The villagers were confident that they would catch Johnson on the third day after a long struggle to trace him, as he was hiding in a house in Roro. Significantly, Johnson had a gun while the Adivasis had only their traditional weapons – bows, arrows, axes, etc. But this time Johnson lost. The Adivasis caught and killed him,

after asking him many questions. The assassination of a Naxal commander by Adivasis cannot be taken as a simple incident. He was not trapped by any police conspiracy or victimised by a sudden outburst of the people. His death was a clear result of a well-planned Adivasi exercise, expressing the anguish that the Naxal Movement had caused them. They were obviously furious with him, and applied the rule of eye for an eye.

The Adivasis were angry because Johnson used to visit the villages, terrorise them and exploit Adivasi girls at gun point. This time too, he had arrived at Roro to meet his so-called 'girlfriend' Helen Cherowa, who was ill due to this man's inhuman treatment of her over many years. According to villagers, Johnson already had a wife in another village, but he was sexually exploiting Helen Cherowa repeatedly. Consequently, she was pregnant and aborted several times, which made her life a hell. Johnson had also killed four villagers, who had opposed his inhuman acts, alleging they were police spies. In fact, he had become a villain for the Adivasis instead of being a savior. Therefore, they wanted to get rid of him at any cost.

The majority of Adivasis who killed the Area Commander Johnson were illiterate, but the questions they asked him were beyond the capacity of most of the left oriented Indian intellectuals who repeatedly deny the ground realities and project the Naxal Movement as a panacea for Adivasi issues. Indeed, the ruling elites have used the Naxal Movement as a tool for the elimination of Adivasi communities. This is reflected in the questions which were asked to Johnson.

The Adivasis who captured Johnson asked him: "Why are the Maoist cadres, who had come to our villages in the name of ensuring our rights and justice, exploiting Adivasi girls? How many industrialists were killed by the CPI-Maoist? Why are

the Maoists killing the Adivasis whom they had promised to protect? How many companies were chased out of Adivasi territories by the CPI-Maoist? Why are our lands, forests, water, hills and minerals being looted even in the presence of the CPI-Maoist? Why are new mining companies coming to Saranda Forest? Why are Adivasis being forced to desert their villages? Why is the CPI-Maoist protecting the mining companies? Is money more important than the Adivasis for the CPI-Maoist? Why are they halting development schemes in the villages?” Johnson failed to satisfy the villagers with his answers. Finally, the villagers killed him. When the news broke about his death, it was beyond imagination for me.

It certainly represented a new development in the Naxal Movement. This is why we went inside the deep forest, where there are many villages that earlier used to be the Maoists' safest hideouts. Since the genesis of the Naxal Movement in Saranda region has already been discussed in the previous chapter, here we must take stock of how and why it weakened over time.

When we reached Kulaiburu village, it was already midday, and too hot in the early summer season. We stopped the vehicle under a mango tree in the middle of the village. As soon as Odeya Deogam saw us, he straight away came near our vehicle. Once the greeting ritual was over, he went to cook lunch for us. Earlier, he was one of the most important members of the CPI-Maoist. In fact, he was one of the backbones of the Naxal Movement in Saranda Forest.

While discussing the Naxal Movement, Odeya told us how Kulaiburu village used to be one of the safe hideouts for the CPI-Maoist. The guerrillas of the CPI-Maoist used to sit under the tree near his house. He said, “You would have seen them here in uniform with guns at any point of time either at day or night.

But now they have had to vacate the villages because there are CRPF camps everywhere and the Adivasis are also against of them.” “They would not do anything without my consent in the region,” he said, while explaining his role in the Naxal Movement. Deogam left the movement because of his age and he was also not happy with its actions.

In fact, he wanted to surrender before the police, but they suggested instead of surrendering, he should quit the Naxal Movement and live the rest of his life peacefully in the village. He says, “I get a phone call from the Superintendent of the Police of West Singhbhum district and Officer-in-Charge of Chhotanagra police station every day. They keep checking whether I’m still at home or have resumed the Naxal Movement.” While he was explaining us, his cell phone rang up, he received the call and it was none other than the Superintendent of Police calling him from Chaibasa.

Further, we tried to understand the interface of development and Naxalism in Saranda Forest as the Naxal Movement has been strongly criticised for targeting school buildings, halting development projects and blowing up health centers. True, there are many counter-examples in Saranda Forest, where the CPI-Maoist has promoted development activities, which helped them to spread their territory in the region. While we were crossing through Tholkobad village, which was another hideout for the CPI-Maoist, Odeya Deogam pointed his finger towards a paddy field and said, “Sir, that is a paddy field which the CPI-Maoist had developed for the Adivasis.”

The outfit had developed nearly 100 acres of paddy fields and canals for Adivasis in Tholkobad, which they harvested at least twice a year. Similarly, the Maoists had dug a pond and a well in Baliba village, and constructed a canal and check dam in

Tirilposi village. They spent some money in the construction of school buildings at Baliba and Tirilposi. They were running exclusive schools at Tholkobad, Trilposi and Baliba, which were destroyed by the security forces during anti-Naxal operations. At the same time, they had convinced the Adivasis that they were with them in the Forest Movement. This is how they had won the hearts of the Adivasis.

However, when the State started the anti-Naxal operations, Adivasis had to sense the Naxal Movement's bitter taste. For instance, in 2003, when Naxals brutally killed Chandan Sandilya of Samtha village, it was innocent Adivasis who were sent to jail on the allegation of involvement in this killing. Shankar Mundari of Gidong village was booked by the police. He was sent to jail, where he had to spend six years, even though he was innocent of this crime.

The police also used some villagers, mostly youths, as police spies. Consequently, the Maoists brutally killed many Adivasis including Debra Honhaga and Ramshay Honhaga of Dikuponga village, Shushil Aind of Dubil, Chandramohan Kumar, Alka Kumari, Uday Kumar and Jagmohan Hansada of Hatnaburu, and Libiya Sidhu of Tetlighthat village, on the allegation of being police spies. There were also cases of sexual exploitation of Adivasi girls by powerful Naxal leaders.

Meanwhile, the allegation of corruption of Rs.3 crore (US\$500,000) also emerged against Prashant Ji and Jonhson Gonjhu, who played a major role in collecting large sums as levies from the mining companies.¹⁹¹

By this time, the State had realised that the Naxal Movement cannot be contained only with the gun, it also have had to win the

191. Gladson Ddungdung, Is Naxal Movement taking last breath in Saranda, Ranchi:Prabhat Khabar, 8 April 2015.

hearts of the Adivasis. This is one reason for the government's 'Saranda Development Plan', which offered Rs.250.48 crore (approx. US\$41.7 million) for the development of 56 villages. The security forces also traced out all the major hideouts and planned to establish 18 permanent security camps in the Forest. Kulaiburu, Kodlibad, Baliba, Jumbaiburu, Tholkobad, Gundijora, Samtha, Tirilposi, Bitkilsoy and Digha villages were the major Maoist hideouts.

Therefore, the government established CRPF camps at Chhotanagra, Sendel, Jumbaiburu, Tholkobad, Digha, Kaliapose, Timra, Jaraikela and Manoharpur. These villages became major check posts. All the traditional heads and village heads were brought under the security net, leaving no space for the Maoists. Thus, the Maoists were blocked from all corners.

After travelling across the 'liberated zone of the CPI-Maoist' in Saranda Forest, I could see that its status as a 'liberated red zone' had come to an end, and it had become a liberated green zone. The CPI-Maoist's meeting places at Kulaiburu, Kodlibad, Baliba, Jumbaiburu, Tholkobad, Gundijora, Samtha, Tirilposi, Bitkilsoy and Digha villages were empty and remained silent.

Adivasis were living their normal life, though their freedom has been curtailed. The State has imposed unofficial ban on them. Now they had to inform the security forces about their day to day activities.

However, a senior journalist, Sanjay Verma, who has been covering the Naxal Movement for a decade, says that the senior leaders of the CPI-Maoist are discussing the serious allegations levelled against the Naxal Movement. They are also attempting to re-organise themselves and could bounce back at any point of time.

Mission Saranda

In short, there was a time when the Naxal Movement was a ray of hope for the Adivasis of Saranda Forest, but later on it became burden for them. As time went on, the CPI-Maoist collected huge amounts of money from the Saranda Forest – not least from the mining companies they were ostensibly opposing. These funds empowered the Naxal Movement nationwide, but Saranda's Adivasis hardly benefited.

Adivasis were losing their livelihood resources through the hands of corporate houses, many were brutally killed by the guns of both sides; women were sexually exploited, while many innocent people were tortured and imprisoned.

Thus, the Naxal Movement has turned into an oppressive force for Adivasis, alongside the State and corporate houses, who have used the Naxal Movement to achieve their own ends on many occasions, using complex ploys. This is a key reason why the Naxal Movement is taking its last breath in the Saranda Forest. Obviously, the killing of Naxal Area Commander Johnson by Adivasis is a symbol of this turning of the tide against Adivasi support for the Naxal Movement in Saranda.

Caught Among Three Sets of Guns

“The security forces victimise the innocent Adivasis after branding them as Naxal supporters, the CPI-Maoists exploit them alleging them of either being police spy or supporters of the PLFI¹⁹² and the PLFI targets them by branding them as Maoist supporters.”

Chandan Barjo, Social Activist, Gudri

We have been repeatedly told by the media that the Adivasis who live in the Red Corridor of India are caught between two sets of guns. This may be so for leftwing extremist affected states such as Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. But as far as Jharkhand is concerned, the situation has become even worse. Out of 24 districts, 22 are listed by the state government as leftwing extremist affected, and Adivasi villagers are caught among more than two sets of guns. There are more than 20 left

192. People's Liberation Front of India, a breakaway faction of the CPI-Maoist.

wing extremist groups in Jharkhand, who have been operating in the state by promising the villagers to protect their rights and deliver justice to them on the one hand, while the State has been carrying out a series of anti-Naxal operations in the name of bringing peace, good governance and development for the region on the other.

The ground realities completely negate such promises. Innocent Adivasis are killed, women are sexually exploited, villagers are tortured, youth are forced to migrate from their villages, children are denied their right to education, development activities are blocked, and the entire region is terrorised by both State and non-State actors.

The newly created Gudri development block of West Singhbhum district is one of the worst examples, where Adivasis are caught among three sets of guns. Since this region is close to Saranda Forest, which is the eastern headquarter of the CPI-Maoist, it was very easy for the Naxals to assert control over this area.

The region was ruled by the most powerful Naxal outfit, the CPI-Maoist, for a decade, but their inhuman behaviour towards Adivasis led to a bifurcation of the outfit. Many Adivasis embraced a rival Naxal group called the People's Liberation Front of India (PLFI) to counter the CPI-Maoist, which led to a fierce struggle between these two outfits for controlling the area.

As a result, many villagers, including Naman Kandulna, Jaimasih Barjo, Somnath and Lakshman were brutally killed by the Naxals. The villagers have also alleged sexual exploitation of Adivasi girls by the powerful Naxals. The Area Commander of the CPI-Maoist, Prasad Ji, whose actual name is Krishna Iyer, exploited two Adivasi girls, Silvanti Lugun of Kumdi village and

Salomi Lugun of Pinding village. In fact, he lived with them like with wives and later on deserted them, which fuelled Adivasis' anger against the CPI-Maoist.¹⁹³

Interestingly, the state government is unable to run the block office at Gudri. For this reason, it has been operating from Sonua block even though the new Gudri block was created in 2009. Development activities have been blocked by the Naxal outfits' demand for a levy.

In March 2015, both the Naxal organisations demanded five youths each from every village, which means the villagers have to surrender 10 youths from each village, who will be trained for coming gun battles, to shoot each other later on during the fight.

All this happens in the name of ensuring rights and delivering justice to the Adivasis! At the end, the Adivasis would lose everything. Adivasis seem to have understood this, which is why they are running away from the Naxal Movement.¹⁹⁴ But the question is: will they ever be able to get rid of it?

Most of the youth of Gudri block have migrated from their villages and are seeking shelter in small towns like Sonua, Goilkera, Manoharpur, Bandgaon and Khunti to save their lives. They live in small rented houses, bring food grains from their villages, and go for daily wages to sustain their families.

As an example of what happens, the PLFI alleged that Prakash Lugun of Burulunia village was a supporter of the CPI-Maoist, and asked him to pay Rs.200,000 (approx. US\$33333) as a levy. The outfit threatened to behead him in case he failed to pay.

193. Gladson Dungdung, *Naxal forcefully taking away youth from villages*, Ranchi: PrabhatKhabar, 9 April 2015.

194. *Ibid.*

Prakash deserted his village and lives at Goilkera with his wife and two kids. His old parents live in the village and take care of the land. Similarly, 20 year-old Santosh Barjo of Burulunua village was attacked by the CPI-Maoist in August 2014, alleging him as a PLFI supporter. Santosh migrated to Ahmedabad, where he works as a daily wage labourer to sustain himself.

According to social activist Chandam Barjo, the educated people of six panchayats migrated to the cities and small towns in fear of the Naxals after the Panchayat elections in December 2010. Of those who remain in the villages, the boys have to spend the night in the forest, while girls sleep together in a single house in fear of Naxals, since they arrive in the villages at night and forcefully take youths with them.

The genesis of the Naxal Movement in the Saranda region has already been discussed in the chapter seven. Once the Naxals established their rule in the Saranda Forest, they started expanding their territory.

In 2003, the CPI-Maoist started organising the Adivasis of Sonua, Goilkera and Chakradharpur regions. The Maoist Area Commander Masih Charan Purty with Birsa Lugun and Vikas, held a series of meetings in the villages. They told Adivasis that since the government has been discriminating, exploiting and inflicting injustice on them, they must unite to fight against the government.

They formed different committees among the Adivasi villages (Farmers' Committee, Women's Committee etc.), gaining support from a large proportion of villagers and asserting a unified control over the region, which in turn resulted in rampant police torture of innocent villages in allegation of support for the CPI-Maoist.

In October 2009, the Indian government launched joint anti-Naxal operations across nine Maoist-affected states, including Jharkhand, whose police force joined with paramilitary forces in conducting a series of anti-Naxal operations throughout the state, which resulted in many atrocities perpetrated on innocent Adivasis. Prakash Lugun, Sanika Bhuiyan, Chandan Barjo, Herman Lugun, Birju Burd and many others were severely beaten by members of the security forces. Shankar Singh and many other villagers were sent to jail on the allegation of being Naxal supporters.

The police also employed many youths as spies. So now the Maoists started killing youths on allegation of being police spies. In September 2011, the Maoists brutally killed an innocent villager named Bimal Longa of Jojodah village.¹⁹⁵ After Adivasis raised questions about this killing, the CPI-Maoist issued an apology, yet this case was not settled properly. It caused upheaval in the organisation as well as the villages.

Meanwhile, the CPI-Maoist split into two groups. Most of the Adivasis decided to embrace the new splinter group, PLFI, in order to teach a lesson to the CPI-Maoist. By the end of 2014, the power of PLFI rivalled that of the CPI-Maoist in the region, which led to a war between the two outfits.¹⁹⁶ At the same time, the security forces were also victimising innocent villagers during the anti-Naxal operations.

This is how Adivasis became trapped among three sets of guns: the security forces victimising Adivasis after branding them as Naxal supporters, the CPI-Maoists exploiting them in allegation of either are being police informers or spies of the PLFI, and the

195. *Ibid.*

196. Gladson Dungdung, Embrace PLFI to teach a lesson to Maoist, Ranchi: PrabhatKhabar, 10 April 2015.

PLFI targeting them after branding them as supporters of the CPI-Maoist.

As mentioned, this situation has caused many Adivasis to desert their villages, including village heads. Soma Longa, the village head of Sakhriuli says, “I’m head of my village but can’t live in it because the Naxals can kill me at any point of time.” A social activist, Chandam Barjo of Gudri, points out this three-way conflict and asks: “Where will the Adivasis go? Why can’t these people understand that Adivasis have a right to live and need to live peacefully and with dignity?”

In these circumstances, the Manki (traditional regional head) and Mundas (village head) of 52 villages decided to ask the police to protect their people, realising that the Naxal Movement cannot ensure rights and deliver justice to the Adivasis but instead has been creating more problems for them. Thus, Manki Manohar Barjo wrote a series of letters to the Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police of West Singhbhum district on 17 and 18 October 2014 and 16 March 2015 asking them to set up 5-8 permanent CRPF camps for their security.

Of course, they know that CRPF camps are hardly a permanent solution, and that security forces would also exploit the villagers during anti-Naxal operations. However, they felt they had no choice but to take support of the security forces to protect their lives.

Manki Manohar Barjo says, “If the security forces imprison innocent villagers, we can release them, but Naxals are straight away taking our lives. Saving our people is our priority at the moment, so we have demanded the setting up of 5-8 CRPF camps in Gudri block.”¹⁹⁷

197. A letter written to the DC and SP of West Singhbhum district by Manki of Gudri region on 17 and 18 October 2014 and 16 March 2015.

From interacting with the Adivasis of this region, it is my assessment, in recent, most Adivasis had joined the Naxal Movement due to fear, rather than from attraction to its ideology.

This is the main reason behind the failure of the Naxal Movement in the region. Adivasis took up guns to fight against the exploitation of the State, but later realised that the Naxal Movement is not a panacea for them. So they left the guns and took up their traditional weapons – bows, arrows and axes to counter the terror of both the State and non-State actors.

Presently, most of the Adivasis desire to live peacefully. Clearly, the barrels of guns have added more suffering in the lives of the Adivasis instead of soothing their pain.

Since the creation of the state of Jharkhand in 2000, there are 6,000 Adivasis languishing in prisons on allegation of being Naxals¹⁹⁸, more than 3,000 were brutally killed, hundreds of women were sexually exploited, thousands of innocents were tortured, and it has become easier for the government to crush people's democratic movements.

As Anil Burd of Jilingagutu village says, “We neither need the support of the police nor the Naxal, but we want to live peacefully.” Evidently, the Naxal outfits have also turned Adivasis against each other, just as the State has been doing for years.

Evidently, those Adivasis who joined the Naxal Movement in hope of getting rights and justice have lost everything. Therefore, both the government and the Naxal Movement need to rethink their strategies to ensure rights and justice for the Adivasis.

198. ‘There are now about 6000 Adivasis in jail’, *Hindustan*, 8 February 2012.

Mission Saranda

At the same time, the Adivasis also need to understand that they will never be able to secure their rights and justice with the power of guns, because those days have gone, when their ancestors protected their lands, territories and resources through the use of arms. Adivasis need to continue their struggles to achieve their rights and social justice by use of democratic ways and means; by using their constitutional, legal and traditional rights for achieving social justice. Trapped by three sets of guns, they need to get free of this trap as quickly as possible.

Corporate and Maoist Nexus in Saranda Forest

“Unless the State is able to provide them (mining companies and corporate houses) better security, they will have to pay these rents to protect their investments.”

P. Chidambaram, 21 July, 2010
Union Minister, Government of India

The Saranda Forest was known as a ‘liberated zone’ of the CPI-Maoist for a decade, since creation of the state of Jharkhand. However, after carrying out massive anti-Naxal operations codified as ‘Operation Monsoon’, ‘Operation Bravo Boy’ and ‘Operation Anaconda’ during the month of July-August 2011, the Central Reserved Police Force claims it regained control of the liberated zone, whose entire 860 square kilometre area it says was under control of the CPI-Maoist since 2000.¹⁹⁹

199. ‘Saranda Myth Pictured’, *CRPF Newsletter*, vol. 7, April 2012

The statement after this operation by COBRA's Assistant Commander, Mithilesh Kumar, that from being a land of terror, Saranda had turned into 'a frequent visiting place of development officials'²⁰⁰ expresses an official air of confidence that the Indian State has regained its control over the Saranda Forest.

However, the stunning fact is that 50 mining leases of iron ore were operational during this decade, covering over 14,000 hectares, which is one-sixth of the whole Saranda Forest, run by public sector as well as more than 20 private companies, including SAIL, IISCO, Tata Steel Ltd, Usha Martine Ltd, Rungta Mines Ltd, Orissa Manganese & Mineral Ltd, Shah Brothers, Torian Iron Steel Ltd and Singhbhum Mineral Company.

On 4 December 2011, Jairam Ramesh, Union Minister of Rural Development, stated that large 'liberated zones' in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, in the heart of the country, were no-go areas for government officials: "Our officers — be it deputy commissioners, block development officers or Anganwadi workers and health employees — don't venture into these places of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. The public distribution system is not working".²⁰¹

So how did it happen that mining companies operated comfortably in these regions? When the State is so helpless, are the mining companies more powerful than the State? Why did the Maoists allow them to operate in the liberated zone? Is there any nexus between the mining companies and the CPI-Maoist?

The answer to these questions is very simple. A huge nexus exists between the mining companies and the CPI-Maoist. Interestingly, the mining companies operating in the region

200. *Ibid.*

201. 'Reds call shots in 'liberated' zones: Jairam Ramesh', *The Times of India*, 4 December 2011.

admit that 'protection money' is paid to the rebels every month to ensure that they do not cause harm to their investment.²⁰²

The Ministry of Home Affairs (government of India) confirms that Jharkhand contributes the highest share to the CPI-Maoist exchequer, estimated at around Rs.1,000 crore (approx. US\$166 million) annually.²⁰³ In 2010, a report by the Ministry was leaked by New Delhi based Hindi weekly 'Chauthi Duniya', in which the Ministry lists more than 550 money sources of the Naxals across 15 districts of Jharkhand.²⁰⁴

This list includes mining companies (iron-ore, coal and bauxite), wood smugglers and government officials responsible for implementation of social security schemes.

The report reveals that in the financial year 2007-2008, mining companies such as Usha Martine Ltd, Ors India Ltd, Rungta Mines Ltd, Torian Iron Steel Ltd, Shah Brothers, etc., operating in the Saranda Forest, paid huge sums of money to the CPI-Maoist. For example, the 'Rungta Mines Ltd and the Usha Martine Ltd reportedly paid Rs. 25 lakh (approx. US\$41,666) each to the CPI-Maoist as protection money to protect their investment (see Table 10.1)²⁰⁵.

According to the 'Secret Service Reports' of the government of India, quoted by the Asian Centre for Human Rights in its 'India Human Rights Report', the iron ore mines and crusher units of Jharkhand contribute Rs.500 crore (approx. US\$ 83.5 million) to the CPI-Maoist.²⁰⁶ The outfit, however, vehemently deny allegation of their nexus with the corporate houses.

202. 'Alienation: Business in Red Corridor', *Forbes India*, 18 August 2011.

203. Ibid.

204. 'Naxal Funding Channel', *Chauthi Duniya*, 26 July-1 August 2010.

205. 'Between Maoists and Mines', *Down To Earth*, 16-30 April 2012.

206. Rahul Pandita. *Hellow Bastar*. Tranquebar: New Delhi. 2011.

**Table 10.1: Protection money given to the
CPI-Maoist in 2007-08**

Sl.No.	Name of the Company	Amount	
		INR	USD
1.	Usha Martine Ltd (through Manager Mr. Sameer Dahiya)	700,000	11,666.6
2.	Usha Martine Ltd, Ghatkuri	2,500,000	41,666.6
3.	ORS India, Dubil	1,200,000	20,000
4.	Rungta Mines Ltd.	2,500,000	41,666.6
5.	Rungta Mines Ltd, Ghatkuri	2,500,000	41,666.6
6.	Shah Brothers, Karampada	2,500,000	41,666.6
7.	Thakurani Ore Mines	1,500,000	25,000
8.	Torian Iron Steel Ltd.	2,500,000	41,666.6
9.	Anil Kumar Nirmal Kumar, Ghatkuri	2,500,000	41,666.6
10.	Crusher Owners Group, Noamundi	4,800,000	80,000
11.	Dumper owners Group	4,000,000	66,666.6
12.	Baljori Company Chandra Prakash	500,000	8,333.3
13.	Shivani Steel	800,000	13,333.3
14.	Shyam Minerals	300,000	5,000
15.	Shivshakti Minerals	3,00,00	5,000
16.	Contractor Biri leaves, Kolkata	100,000	1,666.6
17.	Contractor, Chatra	90,000	1,500
18.	Dinesh Kullu Tiriya, Simdega	150,000	2,500
19.	Dinesh Saw	90,000	1,500
20.	Vinay Pansari	3,500,000	58,333.3
21.	Shwati International	600,000	10,000
22.	Jai Durga Mills	600,000	10,000
23.	Sai Enterprises	500,000	8,333.3
24.	Triveni Minerals	400,000	6,666.6
25.	Durga Minerals	1,000,000	16,666.6
26.	Balaji Minerals	500,000	8,333.3
27.	Sharda Crushing	2,000,000	33,333.3
28.	Lehars Export and Service	1,500,000	25,000

Gladson Dungdung

29.	Padam Kumar Jain Mines	3,000,000	50,000
30.	Sharda Peti Works	1,500,000	25,000
	Total	44,630,000	743,832.40

Source: 'Naxal Funding Channel', Chauthi Duniya, 26 July-1 August, 2010.

The fact is that this wealth is enabling the rebels to get increasingly militarised. Once known for their rudimentary weapons, they are increasingly using rocket launchers, sniper rifles, and mortar launchers in combat. The mining companies are operating in the region in the name of the economic growth and development, but at the same time, they are also strengthening the CPI-Maoist, the internal security threat to the nation.

The story does not end here. The mining companies not only provide protection money, they also provide weapons to the CPI-Maoist. In 2011, when the security forces raided several Maoists camps in Saranda Forest, they discovered a large number of explosives and detonators, which are used by stone crushing units and mining companies in the region.²⁰⁷

This raises the question, how did these explosives fall into the hands of Maoist guerrillas? Are these mining companies supplying the explosives and other materials required for the CPI-Maoist arsenal? Inhabitants of Tholkobad, Baliba and Tirilposi villages inside Saranda Forest have stated that the mining companies are empowering the CPI-Maoist there by providing its cadres with money, explosives and so on. Instead of investigating this, the security forces exploited the villagers, forcing them to supply them with food, water and shelter.

So even as the corporate houses have been accelerating India's biggest internal security threat, they never get investigated or punished for this. The Indian State even justifies this behaviour.

207. Ibid.

When P. Chidambaram was India's Union Minister heading the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2010, with plenty of information about the corporate houses paying huge amounts of money to the CPI-Maoist for protecting their businesses, he justified this by saying, "Unless the State is able to provide them better security they will have to pay these rents to protect their investments."²⁰⁸

Yet the same State terrorise Adivasis and others in the Red Corridor on the allegation that they feed, shelter and support the CPI-Maoist guerrillas. How can the State be so selective? It is obvious that the State has been shielding the mining companies, and is willing to go to any extent to serve their interests. This allows the nexus between the corporate houses and the Maoists to thrive, while the common people pay the price.

Another interesting dimension is that the CPI-Maoist claims that it has been waging war on behalf of the Adivasis against the exploitative Indian State with the aim of regaining Adivasis' ownership rights over Saranda Forest. Yet the two biggest enemies of the Saranda's Adivasis are the government and corporate houses, who do not allow Adivasis to exercise ownership over the area's natural resources.

It seems that the CPI-Maoist has been colluding with the corporate houses for economic reasons. Adivasis are the losers all round. In an interesting conversation during my visit to Saranda Forest, ex-members of the CPI-Maoist admitted that the outfit bags huge amounts of money from Saranda Forest, using most of it for militarisation, instead of development for the Adivasis.

208. 'If someone can do the job better, I would be the happiest person: PC', *Indian Express*, 22 July 2010.

If the CPI-Maoist has this nexus with the corporate house, then why do many Adivasis still support it? Adivasis in Saranda have a clear answer for this. They say that the outfit has convinced them that their situation will not change until and unless they regain their ownership rights over Saranda Forest. The Naxal outfit has promised them that they will fight for this. That is why some Adivasis are still supporting the Naxal outfit despite the heavy price they have to pay for this fight. The question is then, whether this CPI-Maoist promise is real or just a political promise, bound never to happen?

Many questions were asked to the Maoists regarding their nexus with the corporate houses, but the outfit has attempted to bury these by saying that the organisation needs funds to gain power. Of course, the money has to come from the corporate houses and the government's development projects.

The unanswered question is, how can the CPI-Maoist to be fighting to save the Adivasis when it does financial deals with the same companies, that are exploiting Adivasis and devastating their lands, and why do they allow their operations to continue unhindered in exchange for support in funds and explosives? The CPI-Maoist needs to introspect and ask whether it has been really fighting a war to save the Adivasis, or serving the very corporate interests it claims are its enemy?

Crossfire in Saranda Forest

“The organisation alleging of human rights violation is Maoist sponsored. It is just to harass and disrupt police operations. Mangal Honhaga was a rebel”.

Naveen Kumar

Deputy Inspector General of Police, Kolhan

The literal meaning of the word ‘crossfire’ is ‘gunfire from two or more directions passing through the same area’. We often hear about such crossfire in the border areas of two countries. However, crossfire has become an unwelcome element in the lives of people who live in the Red Corridor of India. Of course, most rural people know about crossfire, which often takes place between the security forces and the Naxal outfits in the forest. But most city dwellers are hardly aware that what is often reported as casualties of ‘crossfire’ in reality is the shooting of innocent, unarmed villagers by security forces. These atrocious

acts get reported as encounters that are described in such a way as to make the nation feel proud of its brave soldiers. The security forces go hunting for Naxals in the forest, and when they do not find them, they kill innocent villagers, and term these brutal killings as the result of 'crossfire'. It seems that they commit such heinous crimes either to minimise their anger or to ensure promotion, medals and awards. This is exactly what happened with Mangal Honhaga and Soma Guria - both were killed in so-called 'crossfire' in 2011 when security forces were on patrol in Saranda Forest.

Since the launch of the joint anti-Naxal operation codified as Operation Green Hunt in the Red Corridor, cold-blooded murder under the guise of crossfire has become part of villagers' lives here. The intention of unearthing such ground realities was what brought me to Saranda Forest in the beginning of July 2011, knowing Saranda as a haven of corporate houses as well as an abode of the Maoists.

A friend of mine, who is a political activist, had informed me about a cold-blooded murder here. I requested him to take me to the victim's family for two reasons – the village is located inside dense forest with poor road access, and one cannot roam in the Red Corridor without a local contact. Most villagers walk or bicycle here. We took a motorbike to save time, but fell three times due to the rough condition of the track. This is how I reached Baliba village, which is located in the dense forest in the area of Chhotanagra police station.

The security forces had brutally killed 38 year-old Mangal Honhaga of Baliba village, and termed it a result of crossfire between the security forces and Maoists. To discover the facts about this encounter, we talked to several villagers who had gone to assist the security forces along with Mangal that day.

The villagers – Tasu Sido, Landu Deogam and Mangal's brothers, Suniya Honhaga and Ronde Honhaga were actual eyewitnesses to Mangal's brutal killing. They narrated the whole event, just as it happened.

Though the monsoon was at its peak, the sky was clear that day, on 28 June 2011. It was 10 o'clock in the morning. Suniya and Mangal Honhaga were eating some mangoes in the courtyard of their house. They had just returned after ploughing their paddy field. Suddenly, they noticed the arrival of more than 300 security personnel in their village.

The Superintendent of Police (West Singhbhum) Arun Kumar, and CRPF commandant Lalchand Yadav, were leading the operation. The security personnel caught both Suniya and Mangal Honhaga and took them to the 'Chabutra' (public sitting place in the middle of village), ordering all the villagers to collect there. Once the villagers had gathered, the security forces tied all of them (men, women and children) with the ropes normally used to tie cattle, collected from the village itself. The SP, CRPF Commandant and Jawans abused and threatened the villagers for their presumed support for the Maoists, warning them that they would face dire consequences unless they stopped feeding, sheltering and supporting the Maoists. The villagers were kept tied up the whole night long.

The next day, the police called in a helicopter of the Indian Air Force, making it clear that some top police personnel were landing in the forest. They asked five villagers to board the chopper and transported them to an undisclosed location. These five were later said to be Maoists and imprisoned. The security forces asked another 13 villagers, including Mangal and Ronde Honhaga to go with the paramilitary forces into the forest. Luckily, Suniya Honhaga was able to escape after witnessing these events.

Ronde Honhaga and Tasu Sidu narrated the further developments in the forest. All the 13 villagers were asked to carry the luggage of the paramilitary forces the whole day, without food and water. At night they were asked to sleep in the forest itself. After two days of anti-Naxal patrol, the security forces had nothing to show as an achievement, except for victimising the villagers, so they decided to stop the operation. On 30 June 2011, the security forces woke the villagers at 3 o'clock in the morning, and started walking towards Chhotanagra police station.

At one point, while it was still completely dark, Mangal and Tasu stopped for a moment in the forest, so that Mangal could relieve himself. Seeing this, the CRPF personnel assumed that he was running away. Flashing their torch lights on him, they fired three shots. Two of the bullets hit Mangal and killed him. Though it was dark, Tasu could see clearly what happened in the torch light. Immediately, the Jawans wrapped Mangal's body, which was not uncovered until they reached Chhotanagra police station. After this, the corpse was transported to Chaibasa for post-mortem. Finally, the police handed it over to the twelve remaining villagers, sending Mangal's body back to Baliba with them for cremation.

Later on the same day, 30 June 2011, the police filed a FIR in Chhotanagra police station stating that Mangal Honhaga, son of late Darmo Honhaga, resident of Baliba village, under Chhotanagra police station in West Singhbhum district of Jharkhand, was an innocent villager. The FIR further reads that the police had taken him to the forest with another twelve villagers to assist them in the operation and he was killed in crossfire that took place between security forces and the Maoists in the forest.²⁰⁹

209. An FIR was filed by the police in Chhotanagra police station on 30 June 2011.

According to another eye-witness, Landu Deogam, there was no exchange of fire as the Maoists were not present in the vicinity. It was a clear case of brutal killing by the security forces.

Since, the villagers knew the truth, the top police officers asked the officer-in-charge of Chhotanagra police station to offer a compensation package to the family members of the deceased immediately so that the public outrage could be controlled. Thus, Rs.300,000 (approx. US\$5000) and a government job was offered to Mangal's wife Mangri Honhaga but she declined it. She said, "I'll not accept the offer unless they tell me the truth".

In an attempt to cover up the brutal killing of this innocent villager by the security forces, the SP, Arun Kumar, organised a press conference in Chaibasa and told the media persons about their grand success in anti-Naxal operations. He accepted that Mangal Honhaga was an innocent villager, and that a bullet from the security forces had hit him, but maintained that this took place during crossfire between the security forces and Maoists.²¹⁰

An obvious question arises that how can a bullet from the security forces hit Mangal Honhaga instead of a guerilla during crossfire, when Mangal was alongside the security forces?

Later on, when the administration issued Mangal's death certificate, the cause of death was not mentioned - a classic example of the killing, denial and manipulation by police and security forces during their so-called anti-Naxal joint operations. The villagers shared about the terror of getting caught between the two sets of guns in the forest. Finally, we returned home after hearing several detailed testimonies.

210. 'Six hardcore Naxals arrested in Saranda' Prabhat Khabar, 1 July 2011

Meanwhile, there was another spin-off from this shielding of Mangal's killers. Ajay Linda was the Assistant SP and Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) and present during this anti-Naxal operation. He was the one who officially coined Mangal's death as the result of crossfire in his report, clearly under pressure from SP Arun Kumar and Deputy Inspector General of police (DIG) Naveen Kumar, with the clear intention of burying the case. Within a month of this incident, Ajay Linda was promoted as Superintendent of Police (SP Rural) of Jamshedpur. It was clear that he got this promotion as reward for supporting the police in shielding the killers.

Another similar case of police killing an Adivasi and terming it the result of crossfire, took place a few weeks later. According to the FIR filed by the police in Chhotanagra police station on 21 August 2011, Soma Guria was a member of the CPI-Maoist whom the police had arrested in Baliba village during their search operation and taken to the forest in search of the Maoist camp, where he was killed in the crossfire.²¹¹

Villagers have given a completely different version. According to Suniya Honhanga, when the security forces arrived at Baliba on 18 August, they took six villagers to the 'Chabutra'. There, these men, Ladura Barjo, Mangal Barjo, Sanika Barjo, Dubiya Barjo, Mangra Guria and Soma Guria, were kicked and severely beaten with sticks, tiles and gun-butts. Soma Guria fell down and was beaten unconscious.

At 5pm, the security forces took them to the forest. Since Soma could not walk, the Jawans dragged him there. Once in the forest, the Jawans again beat all six severely. After Soma died from his injuries, two bullets were fired into his chest. On 20

211. FIR filed by the Police in Chhotanagra police station on 21 August 2011

August, police handed over Soma's body to his fellow villagers, telling them that he was killed in crossfire between police and Maoists. The fact is that even if Soma was killed by Maoists, he was in the police custody at the time, so the responsibility lay with the police.

It is a regular practice of the armed police to enter any village without warning, rob the houses, catch innocent villagers, torture them, exploit women, shoot people, and finally hand over the dead bodies to family members after a couple of days, telling them that the person was killed in crossfire. These are the kind of inhuman acts the security forces have perpetrated in Saranda Forest. Villagers are tired of sharing their pains, sufferings and agony. But do they have any choice? This is why they decided to come to Ranchi, capital city of Jharkhand, to tell their story to the media, policy makers and implementers.

On 22 July 2011, Mangri Honhaga (30) and her four month-old son Dula Honhaga, Mangal's wife and child, came to Ranchi with ten fellow villagers, after travelling for more than six hours from Saranda Forest, in the hope of getting justice. We held a press conference, where they shared their saga. Both mother and child had been suffering from illness. Dula was a grade-three malnourished patient and Mangri was suffering from anaemia, so their condition was bad enough before those two CRPF bullets ended Mangal's life. Mangri Honhaga only knew this much that her husband was picked up by the police from her house, taken to the forest and finally his dead body was handed over to her. Their painful story became a symbol for many other victims of similar treatment throughout Jharkhand. As a result, this case of cold blooded murder raised loud questions in the Jharkhand Legislative Assembly that forced the government to order a high level probe.

Consequently, the Inspector General of Police (South Chhotanagpur), Razi Dungdung made an inquiry that established that both Mangal Honhaga and Soma Guria were innocent Adivasis, shot by security forces for failing to follow instructions. Nevertheless, the Home Secretary and the Director General of Police had attempted to term these two killings as the result of crossfire.

But finally, the truth was revealed during the magisterial inquiry. The officer-in-charge of Sonua police station, Rajesh Kujur who was also part of the operation, told the Executive Magistrate (Chakradharpur) Gyanendra Kumar, that the CRPF Assistant Commandant Shambhu Kumar Biswas had shot Mangal dead in Saranda Forest on 30 June 2011. Thus, an FIR was registered against Sambhu Kumar Biswas and an arrest warrant was issued. At the time of writing, he is still absconding.²¹²

However, the story does not end here. High ranking police officers verbally attacked the whistleblowers. The Jharkhand Human Rights Movement (JHRM), which had intervened and exposed these two brutal killings, was branded as a front organisation of the CPI-Maoist. The Kolhan DIG Naveen Kumar said, “The organisation alleging of human rights violation is Maoist sponsored. It is just to harass and disrupt police operations. Mangal Honhaga was a rebel.”²¹³

Similarly, the Inspector General and spokesperson of Jharkhand Police R.K. Mullick said, “Mangal Honhaga had some explosive with him”. These statements were made by high ranking police officers in Jharkhand to portray JHRM as a CPI-Maoist outfit while terming an innocent Adivasi as a member of the CPI-Maoist so as to bury their inhuman acts.

212. Gladson Dungdung, *Whose Country is it anyway?* Kolkata: Adivaani, 2013.

213. Gladson Dungdung & Sanjay Krison, *Crossfire*, Kolkata: Adivaani, 2014.

However, one of the eyewitnesses of Mangal's case, Landu Deogam, filed a Public Interest Litigation in the Jharkhand High Court, pleading for a Central Bureau of Investigation probe into the case, punishment for the perpetrators and compensation to the family of the deceased. When the hearing started, the Assistant Commandant of the CRPF, Jitwahan, contacted Sushil Barla and Landu Deogam, and offered them Rs.1000,000 (approx. US\$16,666) to withdraw the PIL.

But they did not accept the money, so coercive actions were initiated against them. Both were threatened with dire consequences. Sushil was summoned by the SP, Chaisaba. He was abused in the SP office and threatened with being booked in allegation of supporting the Naxals. Finally, Landu Deogam had to leave the Saranda Forest area to protect himself as the security personnels were always following him. The case is pending in the court, while the police officers enjoy complete impunity.

Meanwhile, after the truth of her husband's brutal killing was revealed, Mangri Honhaga accepted the compensation of Rs.200,000 (approx. US\$3333) along with a fourth grade government job. Thus, mother and child are trying to rebuild their lives at Chakardharpur, knowing that Mangal will never come back to life again. In bringing out the truth that Mangal was not killed in crossfire, it has become evident that speaking about basic human rights can get labelled as a crime in the world's largest democracy - especially when the rights of under-privileged communities are concerned. The most important question is of course: how long will the State continue to kill its people in the name of crossfire?

A War and Human Rights Violation

“A COBRA Jawan entered my house when I was breast feeding my baby. He pushed the baby aside and attempted to rape me. I was protected only because my aunt was at home.”

Durmi, Baliba village

Obviously, every war leads to gross human rights violations, which are rarely addressed properly. ‘Operation Green Hunt’ - India’s war against its own people - has caused appalling human rights violations against Adivasis. In Saranda Forest, as in many other areas sucked into this war, innocent Adivasis were brutally tortured, illegally detained, falsely implicated, jailed and killed, women were sexually abused, food grains and harvests were stolen and destroyed, schools were turned into security camps and children were denied the right to education and food, among many other atrocities.

Since, our team, the Jharkhand Human Rights Movement (JHRM), had already investigated a number of human rights violations, we decided to investigate reported instances in Saranda Forest too. Once primary information about any human rights violation reached us, we first filed complaints with the National Human Rights Commission and other competent authorities. Then a team from the JHRM²¹⁴ went to the area to examine the evidence. The evidence we collected on a number of cases was extremely shocking, consisting of vivid testimonies and other powerful data.

A series of anti-Naxal operations were carried out by the security forces since 2001. However, 'Operation Bravo Boy', 'Operation Monsoon' and 'Operation Anaconda', carried out jointly by the Jharkhand police and the paramilitary force during June-August 2011, were the worst. During these operations, 35 villages²¹⁵ were seized by the security forces. Approximately, 500 Adivasis were brutally tortured, 15,000 were directly affected by police atrocities, and 125,000 Adivasis were denied basic needs, services and facilities during this time, such as food, health, education, drinking water and road connectivity.

The security personnel frequently destroyed harvests, and ate and spoiled huge quantities of food grains stored in Adivasi houses – approximately 1,500 kg of rice, 66,100 kg of paddy (raw rice), 744 kg of bazra and 50 kg of maize. According to the data we collected, the security personnel also killed and ate

214. The JHRM team consisted of Sunil Minj, the Chairperson, Gladson Dungdung, General Secretary, and Sushil Barla, Biju Toppo, Bilarman Kandulnaand Dayal Kujurall are Executive Committee members.

215. Tholkobad, Gundijora, Tirilposi, Baliba, Bitkilsoy, Digha, Samtha, Nayagaon, Hatnaburu, Karampada, Jombaiburu, Kulaiburu, Ponga, Holonguli, Kudliba, Bahada, Kumdi, Sonapi, Hedeburu, Tetrighat, Ratamati, Kaliyaposi, Jharbeda, Reda, Bhalulata, Topoke, Thoyabo, Dugamdiri, Nurda, Pandujara, Kharigada, Jamardih, Barikudar, Koinarbera and Arauli. They are all within Saranda Forest Division, listed under Manohapur and Noamundi development blocks, and Chhotanagra, Kiriburu and Jaraikela police stations.

942 chickens, 114 goats and seven sheep. They destroyed many houses, and broke doors and windows in countless others. They consumed the edible materials in three private ration shops - two in Tirilposi and one in Balibal village - and also destroyed them. They also destroyed and stole a large number of bronze, steel and silver utensils, clothes and agricultural equipment, and seized many traditional weapons, such as axes, bows and arrows and muzzle-loader guns, and showed these as recovered from Maoist training camps.

As far as, the killing is concerned, we examined two instances in chapter eleven that showed how two villagers – Mangal Honhaga and Soma Guria were brutally killed by the security personnel in so-called crossfire. The security forces claim that both were killed in the crossfire that took place between the CPI-Maoist and the security forces but the eye-witnesses claim the police shot them. The naked truth is both villagers were killed in police custody.

There are cases of sexual violence against the Adivasi women. The villagers claim that the security forces sexually exploited several women during the anti-Naxal operations. A woman called Sukhmi, aged 30, of Trilposi village, was repeatedly gang raped by five COBRA Jawans over seven days, in the second week of August 2011. She said that the COBRA Jawans seized her house for more than a week. During this time they lived in her house and she had to cook for them. She did not wish to describe the sexual acts forced upon her. According to her husband Khujuria and other villagers, she was raped repeatedly by five Jawans. Since her son Kujuri Gagrai was arrested and sent to jail on allegation of being a member of the CPI-Maoist, she obviously fears for her son. This is why she is reluctant to speak of the gang rape she experienced, though she told her husband about it, who works in Odisha.

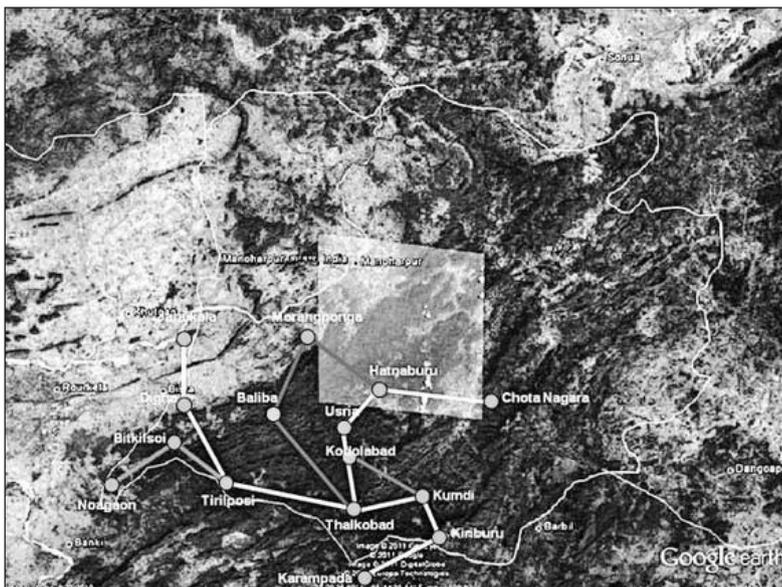
In another incident, a COBRA Jawan attempted to rape Durmi of Baliba village in her house on 29 June 2011. She was rescued by her aunt. Durmi gave testimony to the investigation team of the National Human Rights Commission, Jharkhand Human Rights Movement and media persons too. She said, "A COBRA Jawan entered my house when I was breast feeding my baby. He pushed aside the baby and attempted to rape me. After hearing my shout, my aunt rushed to rescue me. I was protected only because my aunt was at home."

There are large numbers of cases of illegal arrest and detention and fabricated cases. For instance, on 2 August, 2011, five villagers – Guruwari Sidhu, Binjray Guria, Fulmani Topno, Bagna Honhaga and Suleman Topno were picked up from Baliba village and were sent to jail on 12 August, 2011 after detaining them in police custody illegally for more than 10 days. Besides, 112 villagers suspected to be Naxals or their sympathisers were detained. Out of which 79 persons were let off after questioning while 33 persons were sent to prison.²¹⁶

According to the press release of the Jharkhand Police, 33 Adivasis of Saranda were arrested and sent to jail during Operation Anaconda. Of the 33, the police alleged that 13 were active members of the CPI-Maoist, seven were PMS, one each were RPC and SDS, three were members of the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army, one was a member of the women's group, and seven were arms suppliers. All 33 villagers were booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, the Arms Act and section 17 of Criminal Law Amendment Act. This list does not make much sense. It is clear that most of the arrested persons are innocent villagers and that police have falsely implicated them to merely show positive results of their

216. The Investigation Report of the National Human Rights Commission on police atrocity in Saranda Forest.

Map of Saranda Forest



Villages mostly affected during the anti-Naxal operations

anti-Naxal operations. For instance, security personnel went to arrest alleged Maoist Lobin Honhaga of Tholkobad village on 8 August 2011, but when they did not find him, they arrested his father, 65 year-old Gomida Honhaga, detained him for four days illegally and sent him to Jail on 12 August 2011 after branding him an active member of the CPI-Maoist.

There are hundreds of cases of severe torture of innocent Adivasis during the anti-Naxal operations. According to torture victim Suniya Soy of Tirilposi village, the security personnel took him along with some villagers with them on 2 August 2011 to assist them in anti-Naxal operations.

Next day, Suniya was brought to the empty house of Soma Guria, where the Jawans tied his hands behind his back. They also tied his legs and hanged him upside down in the house for four hours. The Jawans asked him to accept that he is a member of the CPI-Maoist and key person who supplies explosives and rations to the Maoists. He was severely beaten and locked in the house for two days without food and water. He requested them to shoot instead of torturing him. Later, they took him to Chaibasa where he was questioned and detained for many days. Finally, he was released on 23 August 2011 after he was forced to put his signature on a blank paper.

In another case, 74 year-old Jurida Honhaga, of Tholkobad village, was severely beaten by the security forces on 3 August 2011, calling him a supporter of the CPI-Maoist. After JHRM's intervention, the Secretary of Health (government of Jharkhand) Aradhana Patnaik, assured us that he would receive proper treatment. Despite this assurance, Jurida was not admitted to hospital. Finally, his family members admitted him to SAIL Hospital at Kiriburu on 13 September 2011. He was lying in bed there for more than a month, but his injury was not recorded in

the medical report. Instead, it was stated that he was suffering from tuberculosis. This was done with the clear intention of shielding the security personals. When Jurida died on 18 October, the cause of his death was shown as tuberculosis.

Similarly, security personnel arrived at Bitkilsoy village at 5am on 23 August 2011 and caught Nikolas Guria from his house and severely beat him. Later his hands were tied behind his back and he was paraded in the village and repeatedly beaten in front of the villagers with the intention to create terror in the village. The COBRA Jawans told him to accept that he is a member of the CPI-Maoist. They said that those who are living in the village are Maoists and all of them would be taught a lesson.

At the end, they released him but he was suffering from severe pain and was unable to walk properly. They asked all the villagers to show their identity cards and bank passbooks, and they took those with them. The next day, other police personnel arrived to the village and asked the villagers to show their identity cards and when they failed to obey the order, they said, “you all are Maoists therefore, you don’t have identity cards”. They caught and took some chickens and goats from the village.

In the name of anti-Naxal operations, the security forces created a severe livelihood crisis in these villages, as well as terrorising their inhabitants, through destruction of documents, torture, rape, killings, abductions, illegal detention and falsely implicated. As a result, the Adivasis of at least 15 villages²¹⁷ had deserted their homes for a month in August 2011 during Operation Anaconda. Most of the youth of these 35 villages had migrated elsewhere in fear of police atrocities. The security

217. Tholkobad, Gundijori, Tirilposi, Bitkilsoy, Baliba, Topoke, Thoyabo, Dugamdiri, Nurda, Pandujara, Kharigada, Jamardih, Barikudar, Koinarbera and Arauli.

forces did not allow entry of media persons and other outsiders to these 35 villages, which were barricaded during this time, clearly to avoid scrutiny of the exploitation and rampant human rights violations. For instance, security personnel burnt three houses in Tirilposi village in the month May 2011, with no witnesses except the villagers themselves. The ban on media persons' entry to these villages is a self-explanatory violation of the freedom of expression.

As far as the impact of anti-Naxal operations on children's right to education is concerned, we shall examine in the next chapter how the school buildings were converted into security camps, rice for mid-day meal was eaten up by the COBRA Jawans, study materials, chairs, tables and sports equipment were destroyed, the Village Education Committee heads and cooks were targeted and teachers were arrested. The most dangerous implication is that children are learning about gun culture instead of their curriculum. The overall picture is terrible and children's future is at stake.

Indeed, the State's war against the CPI-Maoist resulted in gross violation of the human rights and fundamental freedom of the Adivasis of Saranda Forest, guaranteed under the Indian Constitution, domestic laws and International human rights laws.

Where is the Right to Education?

“The CRPF Jawans alleged us of running a school for the Maoists’ children. They destroyed books, teaching equipment and sport materials. They also broke the boxes, tables and chairs, and ate up rice provided for children under the mid-day meal scheme.”

Binodiny Purty

Primary School, Tholkobad

On 27 September 2011, our team arrived at Tholkobad village in the afternoon by motor bikes. There was no road; a slippery path full of mud was the only way to approach the village. Tholkobad was once one of the safest hideouts for the CPI-Maoist in Saranda Forest. As soon as we approached the village, we saw about 100 security forces deployed in the village. They had been carrying out joint anti-Naxal operations in the region since July, 2011 and had set up a security camp in primary school premises. This served as their centre for checking out each and

every passer-by, on the assumption they may be either a member or supporter of the CPI-Maoist. They thoroughly checked us too before we could start our investigation work.

Since we were already aware of the gross human rights violations committed by them during anti-Naxal operations in this village, we were there to collect evidence. As far as the children's right to education is concerned, Tholkobad village was one of the worst affected villages in Saranda region.

When we entered the primary school building, the broken doors, scattered books, destroyed sport materials, scattered utensils and broken tables, chairs and boxes were enough to tell us that the children's right to education was officially denied in this village. We could see some cows, goats and dogs inside the school building.

Indeed, two rooms had become a cattle shed, but the government officials were least bothered about it. The security forces had messed up this school because they assumed that this government primary school was providing education to the Maoists' children. In fact, security forces consider all the Adivasis living in the Saranda Forest as members of the CPI-Maoist.

While talking to the villagers, they told us that the security forces had messed up the school, as well as targeting the teachers and staff, whom they alleged were Maoist aides. They beat a para-teacher Oliver Barla on allegation of teaching the Maoists' children. Oliver Barla said, "The CRPF Jawans entered into my class and beat me alleging that I teach the Maoists' children, even though I was doing my duty like they were." After this incident, from terror, Oliver stopped going to school.

The CRPF Jawans destroyed the utensils, land entitlement

papers and voter card of Binodini Purty too who was working as convener of the Mid-day Meal Committee and a cook as well. The Jawans also ate up nearly 200 kg of rice, which was kept in the school to serve meals to children under the midday meal scheme. Again, the Jawans said that this rice was being kept for the Maoists.

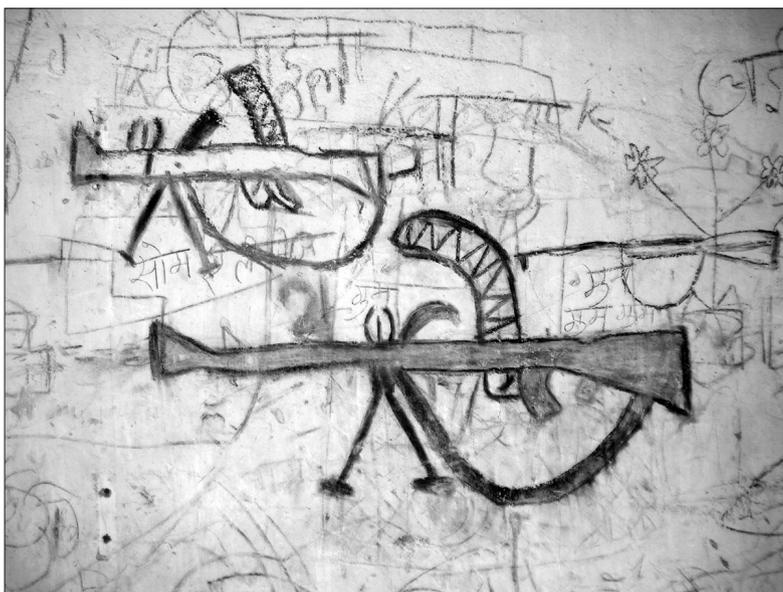
Binodani Purty said, “I cook food for children in the Primary School. While searching for the Maoists, the CRPF Jawans entered my house. They destroyed utensils, boxes and land pattas (entitlement papers) alleging me as working for the Maoists. I told them that I work for the government but they didn't believe me.” She further said, “The CRPF camp was set up in the Primary School. The CRPF Jawans alleged us of running a school for the Maoists' children. They destroyed books, teaching equipment and sport materials, they also broke the boxes, tables and chairs, and ate up rice provided for children under the mid-day meal scheme.”

After some time, we left for Baliba village, that was another hideout for the Maoists, that is why the security forces had set up another security camp in this village's school building too. The walls in a half built school building nearby were full of drawings of AK-47, SLR²¹⁸ and pistols.

I was shocked to know that these drawings were made by the children, who hardly understand their school curriculum. This clearly shows that these children are learning more about the arms used by the security forces and Maoists than anything else. They were seeing these weapons on a daily basis, that is why they drew them instead of making the picture one expects to see in a school of fruits, flowers, birds, animals or, trees. How can one imagine these children's future?

218. Self loaded-rifle.

Children's mind of Saranda Forest



A drawing by children on school's wall at Baliba village

Baliba Primary School was closed for many reasons. The school building was converted into a security camp, a para-teacher Haris Mahto and President of the Village Education Committee Suleman Topno, were arrested on allegation of being Maoist aides. The Jawans had also eaten up the food grains meant for children under the mid-day meal scheme.

Next we went to Trilposi village, which was another centre of the CPI-Maoist. Here the security forces had destroyed a newly built school building. They also ate up the rice meant for midday meals, and captured the ration shop of Pator Gagrai, President of the Village Education Committee, who used to supply the food grains for the scheme. He had to desert his home after Jawans threatened, they would kill him if he returns to the village. Besides this, the construction of two new school buildings was stopped at Baliba and Tirilposi, after the police arrested Suleman Topno and threatened Pator Gagrai to kill him. There was no Anganbari²¹⁹ centre in many villages and no High Schools in the range of 30 to 50 kilometres.

Travelling in Saranda Forest for a week, we found that all school buildings were converted into security camps since July 2011, with similar patterns of destruction and embezzlement of supplies. As a result, schools were closed and mid-day meals suspended. This was a State sponsored gross violation of children's right to education, but the violators were not even questioned by the State, whose duty is to protect and ensure children's rights.

As far as the quality of education is concerned, the children here are well educated about AK-47s, SLRs, pistols, bombs and landmines, but they do not know their text books. The students

219. The government-run Integrated Child Development Centre is called 'Anganbari Centre'.

of Class- VII cannot even read the books of Class- V, or solve the maths problems of Standard- III. In these circumstances, one can foresee the painful future for these children. They will be either victimised by the police or the CPI-Maoist will engage them in the war against the State. In either case, they will suffer. In this situation, can they hear about their rights from someone and demand enforcement of these rights when the government is not even ready to accept the serious violation of their rights by the security forces but blames the CPI-Maoist for everything?

On 1 April 2009, Dr. Manmohan Singh, as Prime Minister of India, appeared in the television channels with a blue turban on his head and declared the day as a historic day for free education for all. He said, "Today, our government comes before you to redeem the pledge of giving all our children the right to elementary education by enforcing the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009. The needs of every disadvantaged section of our society, particularly girls, Dalits, Adivasis and minorities must be of particular focus as we implement this Act... I want every Indian child, girl and boy, to be so touched by the light of education. I want every Indian to dream of a better future and live that dream."²²⁰

The bitter truth is that the kind of education children are being provided in Jharkhand gives them no basis to dream about a better future. Who is responsible for such a situation - the State, the Maoists, or both together?

220, 'I studied under the light of a kerosene lamp: PM', *NDTV*, 1 April 2010.

Where to Heal?

“There is a primary health sub-centre in our village but the doctor and ANM²²¹ never come to the centre. We still use the traditional system of healing to cure diseases, and women are forced to deliver their babies at home as there is no health facility available for us.”

Jano, Dedri village

On 27 September 2011, an investigation team of the Jharkhand Human Rights Movement entered the general ward of the SAIL Hospital, Kiriburu, where 74 year-old Jurida Honhaga of Tholkobad village was lying in bed. He was unable to move his body due to severe back pain, and could hardly speak. He was

221. In the rural health care system, the ANM (Auxiliary Nurse Midwife) is the key field level functionary who interacts directly with the community and has been the central focus of all the reproductive child health programs.

severely beaten by the CRPF personnel on August 3, alleging him as a supporter of the CPI-Maoist. Since everyone except the old couple had left the village in fear of the security forces, there was no one to accompany him to hospital. His wife was also ill, so the old couple were lying in bed for weeks without proper treatment.

When the news of his condition appeared in the newspaper, the Secretary of Health (government of Jharkhand) Aradhana Patnaik assured us that he would be treated, but despite this, Jurida was not admitted to the Hospital for weeks, until his family members returned home and admitted him to the SAIL Hospital at Kiriburu on 13 September.

He was lying, neglected at home for more than a month, and when he was finally admitted to hospital it turned out to be too late for treatment, leading to his death on 18 October. According to his fellow villagers, 25 people died in Saranda Forest due to malaria and lack of treatment during July-August 2011.

Since these cases were not recorded anywhere, as there was no health centre available in the radius of 30-50 kilometres inside the forest, the government rejects such claims. Interestingly though, the government accepts them implicitly through its website, which states that the climate of Saranda Division is notorious for its proneness to malaria.

It also admits that the tribal population residing in the deep forest areas, especially in the forest villages, suffers from malnutrition and lack of medical facilities. Though the government claims that medical camps are organised by various mining agencies to address the health problems in these areas as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities, villagers say that such camps are hardly organised in practice.

The major health centres are located at Meghahatuburu, Gua and Chiria, with a Primary Health Centre at Manoharpur. These are all at distances of 30 or more kilometres from the remote villages. The health sub-centres, located at the Panchayat level, are all in practice defunct, which means that villagers are in effect excluded from health facilities.

Jano, a woman of Dodri village, says, “There is a primary health sub-centre in our village but the doctor and ANM never come to the centre. We still use the traditional system of healing to cure diseases, and women are forced to deliver their babies at home as there is no health facility available for us.”

According to the report of PACS India, there are 2,777 villages in West Singhbhum district. Out of these, medical facilities are available in just 449 villages and 625 have a paved approach road. As far as health services are concerned, 32.6% of pregnant women received three or more ante-natal check-ups, 65% received tetanus injections, 21.9% had an institutional delivery, 60.8% of children were fully immunized and 66.5% got at least one dose of vitamin-A.²²²

As far as Adivasi communities are concerned, 85% women and 80% children are anaemic, and 64.3% children aged below five are underweight.²²³ However, there are only two Malnourishment Treatment Centres (MTC) in the district.

As per the Sample Registration System (SRS) 2013, the infant mortality rate is 53 per 1,000 live births against the national figure of 40 and maternal mortality rate is 275 per 100,000 women against the national figure of 190 in 2013, which is a matter of serious concern.

222. <http://www.pacsindia.org/west-singhbhum>

223. 'BJP has ruled Jharkhand for much of its 14-year existence but has delivered precious little', Scroll.in

The mining of iron ore has multiplied the health problems in the region. One main reason is the pollution of water sources. The Koel and Koena rivers, and perennial streams flowing east-west, including Lailornala, Tentrinala, Samtanala, Kaliannala and Pitidiri are all completely red during the rainy season, since mining waste and water polluted by washing the ore is dumped and channelled into these water bodies. Yet villagers have no choice other than using and even consuming this water. Basically, the heavy iron content in the drinking water causes severe health problems like lung disease.

Interestingly, there was a proposal under the highly hyped 'Saranda Action Plan' for running Mobile Health Units, proposed to be covered under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM). It was said that these Mobile Health Units will be operationalised to provide health services to all 56 selected villages.

The SAIL Hospitals at Kiriburu and Chiria were supposed to be providing health facilities to these villagers, and five ambulances services were in place. But ambulances never reach to the remote villages like Tholkobad, Gundijora, Baliba, Tirilposi, Bitkilsoy, etc. The end result is that many villages in Saranda still lack all health services, and await the day when they can get their ailments properly treated.

Toothless Tiger Roars in Saranda Forest

“There would be no conflict of interest in the investigation despite the fact that one IPS officer involved was investigating allegations against a batch-mate.”

Satyabrata Pal, Ex-Member NHRC

In mid-September 2011, I got a letter from the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), saying that a five member investigative team of the NHRC will visit Saranda Forest from 26 to 30 September, to investigate cases of alleged human rights violations by the security forces while carrying out anti-Naxal operation in the region. This was a highly charged moment for me, as I had raised the issue in the regional consultation of the NHRC held in Kolkata on 13 September, where I pleaded with

the NHRC to send a team. The NHRC had accepted my plea and was sending a five-member team headed by Deputy Inspector General (DIG), Mamta Singh, along with Deputy Superintendent of Police, K.H.C. Rao, Deputy Superintendent of Police, K.S. Bansal, Inspector Rajbir Singh and Inspector Rajesh Kumar.

I was excited about the NHRC visit, and released this information on the social media, e-groups and the print media. As usual, I got a huge response from across the country, and the print media carried the story, but one response was very different, making me rethink my initiative.

A renowned academician and activist Dr. Nandini Sundar, who had a very bad experience with the investigation team of the NHRC regarding the investigation on Salwa Judum in Chhattisgarh headed by DIG Mamta Singh, advised me not to expect much from her. The NHRC investigative report on Salwa Judum blamed the CPI-Maoist for whatever had happened with the Adivasis in the name of Salwa Judum in the state. However, I did not lose hope, feeling sure that we had enough evidence to prove that Adivasis' human rights had been grossly violated by the security forces.

Meanwhile, I got information that Mamta Singh, DIG of the NHRC, and Naveen Kumar Singh, DIG of Kolhan (under which Saranda region falls) were batch-mates of 1996 in the India Police Service training, raising questions regarding conflict of interest. Immediately, I sent an email about this to Satyabrata Pal, a member of the NHRC. At the same time, I spoke to him over the phone. While responding to my query and apprehension, he said, "You don't need to worry. There would be no conflict of interest in the investigation despite the fact that one IPS officer involved was investigating allegations against a batch-mate. My friend is the army chief but whenever there is complaint

against army personnel regarding human rights violations, I ask him to respond to the allegations. Therefore you shouldn't apprehend before the investigation is accomplished." After his assurance, I relaxed a bit.

Since the Jharkhand Human Rights Movement (JHRM) was the main complainer in these cases, the NHRC team had asked the JHRM team to be present on the spot, with required documents and witnesses. The district police and administration of West Singhbhum district were given responsibility to organise the NHRC visit to Saranda Forest due to security reasons. Since the DIG of Kolhan, Naveen Kumar, SP of Chaibasa, Arun Kumar and other police officers were allegedly involved in killing, torture and exploitation of Adivasis in Saranda Forest, it seems that they attempted to manipulate the NHRC's visit.

First they tried to cancel the NHRC visit by giving them wrong information about heavy rain and floods in the area. And when the JHRM team cleared this misinformation for the NHRC and their visit was ensured, the police and administration changed the route chart prepared by the JHRM and misguided the NHRC team. They organised the visit in a manner to make sure that the investigation team would not reach the most affected villages. For instance, they cut out Tirilposi village in the route chart, which was one of the worst affected villages. They also deployed heavy security and asked the team members to walk in the forest. Thus, the team lost a lot of time in walking, though they could have gone by motorbikes.

Hence, the NHRC team members were able to visit only Karampada, Jombaiburu, Tholkobad, Baliba, Digha, Kaliaposi, Samtha, Saagjodi and Chota Saagjodi villages. Though the team members could not visit two of the most affected villages - Tirilposi and Bitkilsoy suggested by the JHRM - they

nevertheless recorded testimony from most of the victims, with support from the JHRM. The JHRM team visited Karampada, Jombaiburu, Tholkobad, Gundijora, Kudliba, Baliba, Tirilposi, Bitkilsoy, Samtha and Digha and monitored and also assisted the NHRC team in the investigation.

The NHRC team was not allowing media persons to follow them during the investigation, but when I spoke to Satyabrata Pal over the phone and complained about the investigation team, he instructed the DIG Mamta Singh to allow the presence of media persons. After the investigation was complete, while leaving for Delhi, DIG Mamta Singh told reporters that gross human rights violations had occurred and victims would be delivered justice. These statements boosted my confidence.

After a couple of months I received the draft report of the NHRC. The report states that the Investigation Team of the Commission conducted an extensive inquiry into the allegations made by the complainant and came to the following conclusions:²²⁵

Firstly, the police and CRPF had a month-long operation in 20 villages named in the complaint and on arrival of forces a few villagers left the villages out of fear but the majority of villagers remained in their villages. The allegations leveled by the complaint regarding torture of the villagers by the police were not substantiated though some inhabitants of the villages Baliba, Tholkobad, Bitkilsoy and Trilposi alleged that the police personnel beat them during operation and also damaged their big utensils and mixed up a variety of grains.

The police forces did not, however, indulge in any misbehaviour against the women in these villages except in one case of a

225. The NHRC's Investigation Report on the gross human rights violations in Saranda Forest. 2011.

lady who was allegedly slapped by the police personnel. The allegations of destroying crops and not permitting the villagers to collect forest produce were not substantiated.

Secondly, during the operation 112 persons suspected to be Naxals or their sympathizers were detained. Out of which 79 persons were let off after questioning while 33 persons were sent to prison. The team however found that the five villagers, picked up on 2 August 2011, were sent to jail on 12 August. The provisions of law relating to arrest and detention were not followed and they were detained for ten days in illegal custody.

Thirdly, the allegations of schools having been closed and the mid-day meal scheme suspended for a month due to operation were also not substantiated. In the village Tholkobad, the school building was demolished by Naxals a few years back and there was no regular teaching in the school even before the operation. In the village Baliba functioning of the school was affected due to arrest of Harish Mahto, a teacher of the school on 14 July 2011, i.e. before the start of 'Operation Anaconda'. Since the mid-day meal scheme is implemented by the teachers, it remained suspended due to absence of teachers in the schools in the four villages.

Fourthly, the allegation of 20 persons dying due to Malaria during the period of operation was also not substantiated because no medical facility is available in these villages and the Health Centers are located at a long distance.

Fifthly, the allegations of the killing of Mangal Honhaga, it was revealed that his death had taken place in the month of June, 2011, i.e. prior to the operation and there was no eyewitness of the incident. In this regard the forces reiterated their version that he was killed in cross-firing during encounter with Naxalites.

A sum of Rs.2,00,000 (approx. US\$3333) has been awarded as compensation to the next of kin of the deceased Mangal Honhaga.

Sixthly, regarding the killing of civilian Soma Guria by the security forces during the operation it was found that he was in the custody of the police forces when he died in cross-firing between police forces and the Naxalites on 20 August 2011 at a place near Baliba. There was no eye-witness of this incident either. In this matter a case has been registered and is being investigated by CBCID.²²⁶

Seventhly, the allegations of taking over the shop of one Pator Gagrai in Trilposi village and taking away cereals and other items from his grocery shop also could not be verified.

Eighthly, the claim of complainant regarding killing of 550 Adivasis as Maoists and charging of 4,372 persons under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, the Arms Act and section 17 of Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, could not be verified due to non-availability of information in this regard.

Ninthly, the District Administration however furnished information that since the year 2002 only two, namely Soma Guria and Mangal Honhaga, had died and a total of 159 persons, including 33 during Operation Anaconda, had been arrested by the police.

Having considered the findings of the investigation team, the Commission directed the following:-

- Let the District Magistrate, Chaibasa be asked to have a general survey done assessing the loss to the villagers caused during the operation and submit a report to the commission.

226. Central Bureau of Crime Investigation Department.

- Let the District Magistrate, Chaibasa be also asked to resume the functioning of schools and provision of mid-day meal immediately in villages Tholkobad, Bitkilsoy, Tirilposi and Baliba.
- Let the Director General of Police, Jharkhand be asked to verify whether there has been any illegal detention of those who were arrested or detained for questioning, beyond the time permitted by law, and send a report thereof.
- Let the Chief Secretary, government of Jharkhand be asked to ensure facility of health care and benefits of PDS, MGNREGA²²⁷ and other social welfare schemes of State and Central government to the people of affected area at an early date.
- Let the Chief Secretary, government of Jharkhand also be asked to send copies of the Magisterial Enquiry and CB/CID investigation into the cases of death of Soma Guria and Mangal Honhaga within six weeks.

I was stunned and deeply upset after reading the report. Therefore I wrote a letter to Satyabrata Pal, as member of the NHRC who was looking after the Saranda cases, on 10 February 2012. An excerpt from my letter:

- I'm shocked, speechless and stunned to read the Fact Finding Report of the NHRC. I had written you long back stating that there would be a conflict of interest in the Report as Madam Mamta Singh, the DIG of NHRC who led the NHRC Fact Finding team to Saranda Forest, and Naveen Kumar Singh, DIG of Kolhan, under whose leadership the joint operations had been carried out in Saranda Forest, are batch-mates of the 1996 IPS.

227. 'Public Distribution System' and 'Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act'.

- Despite your assurance, the report only speaks about the police version in its findings and conclusions. It seems that the NHRC believes only the police and also assumes that the Adivasis are either Naxals, their supporters or sympathisers. I am bound to believe that the NHRC had sent an investigation team to give the character certificate²²⁸ to the police, hence the sufferings of victims continues and the police officers continue to enjoy impunity.
- The NHRC team members took photographs of mixed food grains, broken cooking pots, utensils and boxes by the security forces. The villagers also told them that the Security Forces destroyed their houses and belongings. I also have the photographs and visual of same.
- A woman, Durmi of Baliba village, gave testimony to the members of the NHRC investigation team of how the COBRA Jawans attempted to rape her. She was quite angry and even publicly showed how the Jawans had molested her after pushing her child on the floor. But still the NHRC investigation team headed by a woman does not see the violation of right to life and personal dignity of a woman.
- The NHRC report states that there was no such violation of the right to education and mid-day meal due to anti-Naxal operations and the security forces did not do anything to schools in Saranda Forest. The anti-Naxal operations were carried out by the security forces from time to time and the Operation Anaconda was one of them. The NHRC says that the Naxalites destroyed a school in Tholkobad two years back therefore there is no such school in Tholkobad.
- However, the fact is that a residential school was demolished by the Naxalites in 2003. But the primary school was being run in a two room school building. The security forces took

228. Clean the image of security forces from the allegation of being human rights violators.

over that school building during the anti-Naxal operation and converted it into a security camp. They broke the steel cupboard, boxes, tables and chairs. They had also destroyed books, science kits and sport materials. The NHRC team took photographs of this school too but they do not even bother to mention it in the report.

- An innocent villager, Mangal Honhaga, was killed by the Assistant Commandant of the CRPF, Sambhu Kumar Biswas. In this case, Landu Deogam and Tasu Sidho are eye witnesses; therefore the NHRC cannot say that there is no eye witness in the case. According to the officer-in-charge of Sonua Police station, Rajesh Kujur who was also part of the operation, has given statements to the Executive Magistrate (Chakradharpur) Gyanendra Kumar stating that the CRPF Assistant Commandant, Shambhu Kumar Biswas, had shot dead Mangal Honhaga in the Saranda Forest on 30 June 2011 and the top cops had coined it as result of crossfire to save the CRPF and Police Jawans.
- Another villager, Soma Guria, was severely beaten by the security forces in Baliba village and later on he was shot dead on 21 August 2011. Suniya Honhanga is eye witness in this case. The fact is that both Mangal Honhaga and Soma Guria were shot dead while they were under police custody; hence the responsibility lies with the police. Therefore, if the NHRC is not able to see the fact, it should have recommended a CBI probe in both the cases.
- The NHRC team did not visit Trilposi and Bitkilsoy villages despite our repeated demand. In Trilposi village two private ration shops were taken over by the security forces and three houses were also burnt by the force in May 2011. There were cases of gross human rights violation in both the villages.

Mission Saranda

- Therefore, I completely fail to understand why the NHRC is lying. However, I will keep sending you complaints to know how long the NHRC joins hands with the police and administration in denying justice to the people, especially the Adivasis of conflict areas.

To date I have not get any response from the NHRC. I remember the words of a renowned human rights defender, Henry Tiphangne, who is also one of my mentors in the human rights movement. While discussing the role of the NHRC, he said that the NHRC is a toothless tiger, who roars but can't bite. After my Saranda experience, I can say that the NHRC is a toothless tiger, who cannot even roar, when it is highly required.

In my work in the human rights movement for a decade, I had seen that investigations were done in thousands of cases of gross human rights violations committed by the security forces, many victims of police atrocities were compensated and perpetrators (police officers) were also brought to justice. Therefore, I was excited to bring the NHRC's investigation team to the Saranda Forest. However, the NHRC proved through its fact finding report that Dr. Nandini Sunder was right and I was wrong this time.

Saranda Action Plan

Development Model or Road Map for Mining?

“We will develop all 56 villages in the Saranda Forest as model villages. We will replicate it in other areas like Jangal Mahal in West Bengal and Abujmad in Chhattisgarh.”²²⁹

Jairam Ramesh, 4 December 2011
Union Minister, Government of India

Since launching it in December 2011, the Indian government has propagated the Saranda Action Plan²³⁰ (SAP) [later renamed Saranda Development Plan (SDP)] as a model for development in Naxal affected areas. While launching it, Union Minister of Rural Development, Jairam Ramesh claimed that the Saranda Development Model would be replicated in other Naxal affected areas across the country. Replicas of the SAP within Jharkhand

229. ‘Reds call shots in ‘liberated’ zones: Jairam Ramesh’, *The Times of India*, 4 December 2011

230. The Saranda Action Plan (SAP) was later renamed as Saranda Development Plan (SDP) and therefore both names are used in the book.

include the Saryu Action Plan of Rs.400 crore (approx. US\$66.7 million) and the Jhumra Action Plan of Rs.300 crore (approx. US\$50 million), both launched in July 2013.²³¹

The SAP was hyped across the globe as the best development model ever evolved by the Indian State to address development challenges in the Naxal affected regions. Therefore, I decided to monitor, examine and expose the ground realities of this Action Plan so that the world would know the truth: has this development model been translated into reality or not, and was the intention really to provide development to the people living in Saranda Forest or is it a road map for ensuring more mining in the Forest?

Context of the Saranda Action Plan

The Indian State largely follows two approaches to counter Naxalism—(i) military action, and (ii) promotion of developmental activities in the Naxal affected regions. Therefore, when it was reported to the central government that Saranda Forest was liberated from the control of the CPI-Maoist, Union Minister Jairam Ramesh conducted an internal meeting in the Ministry on 17 October 2011, to undertake development activities in Saranda Forest.²³² Thus, a nine member team comprising of the officials from the Ministry of Rural Development, the World Bank and the Jharkhand government visited the West Singhbhum district from 18-20 October 2011.²³³ The team members visited some villages and also had detailed discussions with the

231. Saryu forest was another haven of the CPI-Maoist located in Latehar district and Jhumra was another of their 'safe zones', in Bakaro district.

232. A letter written by Shri Jairam Ramesh, as Union Minister of Rural Development, to Shri Arjun Munda, Chief Minister of Jharkhand, on 25 October 2012.

233. The team comprised of Sh. N. Muruganandam (Joint Secretary, MGNREGA, MoRD), Smt. Nita Kejrewal (Director, NRLM, MoRD), Sh. S.P. Vasisht (Director, MGNREGA, MoRD), Sh. Kamlesh Prasad (NMMU, MoRD), Smt. Meera Chatterjee (World Bank), Sh. Varun Singh (World Bank), Sh. Vinay Vutukuru (World Bank), Sh. Paritosh Upadhaya (Special Secretary, Rural Development, Jharkhand) and Sh. S.N. Pandeya (Project Director, JSLPS, Jharkhand).

district administration of West Singhbhum. On the basis of this visit, a detailed plan was chalked out and submitted to the Union Minister of Rural Development for ratification and enforcement.

This is how the Ministry of Rural Development (government of India) came up with its Saranda Action Plan, based on a budget of Rs.250.48 crore (approx. US\$41.7 million) supposedly aimed at bringing development to 56 villages of Saranda Forest. This was the first time in the history of Indian democracy that the government planned to spend such a huge amount of money for a relatively small number of Adivasi villages. The Ministry claimed that Saranda's Adivasi inhabitants had been victims of long years of official apathy and isolation from the development process due to the Maoists' presence.²³⁴

In fact, the region was isolated and completely left out by the government for decades, even though the central and state governments, along with the mining companies and contractors, earn more than Rs.3000 crore (approx. US\$500 million) per annum from the mining in Saranda. Therefore, the blame cannot be fixed only on the CPI-Maoist, as the Indian State did not do anything for development of the region in six decades since independence. The CPI-Maoist landed in the region only in 2000.

Saranda Action Plan Coverage Area

As per the original document of the SAP, it covers 7,236 Adivasi households, including 4,177 families classified as living below the poverty line (BPL).²³⁵ This represents a population of 36,215 people, in 56 villages, located in six Panchayats in Saranda Forest (see Table 16.1). Out of these 56 villages, 14 are counted as forest villages (established since decades but not officially recognised),

234. Ibid.

235. Saranda Action Plan.

ten are un-surveyed Jharkhandi villages (established after the formation of Jharkhand state), and the rest are revenue villages (officially recorded villages).²³⁶ While Saranda Forest falls under two administrative blocks, Manoharpur and Noamundi, the Action plan covers only those villages under Manoharpur block. Hence, the major part of the Saranda region was excluded from the SAP, leaving most people unhappy about it, and questioning the government's intentions.

Table 16.1: Coverage area under SAP

Sl. No.	Name of Panchayats	No. of villages	Total population	No. of households	No. of BPL families
1.	Makranda	04	5,331	1,060	354
2.	Lailor	09	6,478	1,296	539
3.	Chotanagra	10	4,833	966	637
4.	Chiriyā	04	5,895	1,179	825
5.	Gangda	14	6,735	1,347	918
6.	Digha	15	6,943	1,388	904
	Total	56	36,215	7,236	4,177

Source: Saranda Action Plan

Saranda Action Plan Interventions and Budget

The SAP was divided into two parts – (i) short term interventions and (ii) medium term interventions (see Table 16.2). The short term interventions were proposed to be completed within six months of its launching, and the medium term ones were to be completed within two years.²³⁷ Since the SAP was launched in December 2011, therefore all interventions were supposed to be completed by the end of November 2013.

236. A letter written by Shri Jairam Ramesh, as Union Minister of Rural Development, to Shri Arjun Munda, Chief Minister of Jharkhand, on 25 October 2012.

237. The Saranda Action Plan prepared and implemented in December 2011 by the Ministry of Rural Development (govt. of India).

Table 16.2: SAP short and medium term interventions

Short term interventions	Medium term interventions
1. Solar lamps: Distribution of solar lamps to all 7,000 families.	<p>1. Livelihood interventions: To empower Adivasis and to promote sustainable livelihoods, social mobilisation into self help groups is a sine qua non. Among the proposed livelihood interventions are :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of improved agriculture & horticulture. • Development of animal husbandry and poultry. • Supporting collection of and processing of/adding value to non-timber forest products (NTFP). • Skill trainings leading to employment, particularly in the mining sector.
2. Bicycles: Distribution of bicycles to all 7,000 families.	
3. Transistors and musical instruments: Distribution to all 7,000 families.	
4. BPL list: Inclusion of all 7,000 households in the BPL list (3,000 eligible households had been left out).	
5. IAY²³⁸ houses: Provision of IAY houses to around 4,000 households, based on local design and contractors acceptable to local Adivasis.	
6. NSAP pension and community certificate: After inclusion of the left-out families in the BPL list, special camps to be conducted, promoting old age pensions, widow pensions etc. to all eligible persons. Cash payment of these pensions to be permitted to ensure the benefits reach the people. The camps can be used to provide caste certificates to all Adivasis, which can be used for education and other purposes as an identity card.	2. Watershed programmes: Five watershed projects to be approved and implemented with relaxation of the minimum non-forest area norm.
7. Forest rights: Distribution of forest rights titles (which had not progressed in Saranda, so far with an estimated coverage of less than 5% of eligible families) in forest villages where possession and ownership are well established. In other villages the awareness about forest rights titles is very poor and there help from a facilitating agency should be sought.	3. Residential/Ashram schools: Five residential schools to be constructed in Saranda under the scheme of Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
8. a) Employment guarantee under MGNREGA: ²³⁹ It was recommended that around 30 Adivasi youths can be engaged as Rozgar Sahayaks ²⁴⁰ under MGNREGA. b) Employment linked skill training for youth: Providing skill training to youth who can be absorbed in the mining and other sectors.	4. Integrated Development Centres (IDCs) to be set up in temporary structures where security and civil officials could be put up up to deliver various government schemes.

238. Indira Awas Yojna (Indira housing scheme for families living below the poverty line).

239. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.

240. Assistant under the MGNREGA, who provide assistance in implementation of MNRGA .

Mission Saranda

9. Manoharpur in NRLM ²⁴¹ : Inclusion of Manoharpur as a pilot block under the NRLM to facilitate livelihood interventions.	
10. Mobile Health Units : Under the NRHM, Mobile Health Units can be operationalized to provide health services to all 56 villages.	
11. Drinking water supply : To be provided to all 56 villages, which lack safe drinking water.	
12. Mukhyamantri Dal Bhat Yojna ²⁴² : The state government was to start 10 new centres in Saranda Forest, as a good entry point activity.	
13. Watershed programme for Gangda : A proposal pending with the State government and the Department of Land Resources, Central government, in order to satisfy the minimum non-forest area norm, which needs to be relaxed in order to take up six watershed programmes in the Saranda area.	
14. PMGSY ²⁴³ roads : eleven roads to be constructed under the PMGSY, of which five are PCC ²⁴⁴ roads.	
15. Capacity building : Capacity building for the PRI ²⁴⁵ functionaries to discharge their functions.	

Source: Saranda Action Plan

The SAP document states that the medium term interventions, particularly those related to livelihood have to be initiated in the fringe villages first and moved gradually to the core. The short term interventions are meant to provide immediate relief and for trust-building, to set the stage for taking up the medium term interventions. While most of the short term interventions can be taken up across all villages of Saranda, the sustainable interventions were to be taken up in the following order of priority: (i) Jharkhandi villages, (ii) Forest villages and (iii) Revenue villages.

241. National Rural Livelihood Mission.

242. Chief Minister Meal scheme - cooked food provided to the poor under the programme at the cost of Rs. 5 per meal.

243. Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna – Prime Minister Rural Road Scheme.

244. Permanent Cement-Concrete is made such a way that does not need repairing.

245. Panchayat Raj Institution.

While there are 19 planned interventions in the SAP, the budget was outlined only for ten activities. Other activities are to be supported from the Integrated Action Plan.²⁴⁶ One most interesting aspect of the SAP is that it is not a new development package of the central government but an engineered clubbing together of existing schemes.

Table 16.3: The budget of SAP

Sl. No.	Activities	Particulars	Per unit cost (INR)	Total cost (INR & USD)	Source of funding
1.	Roads	130 km	8,000,000 per km	104 crore (17.3 million)	PMGSY
2.	Drinking water & sanitation	200 hand pumps	60,000 per unit	1.2 crore (200,000)	NRDWP
		10 piped drinking water systems	2,000,000 per unit	2 crore (333,333.3)	NRDWP
3.	Indira Awas Yojna (IAY)	3,500 units	50,000 per unit	17.5 crore (2.9 million)	IAY
4.	Watershed	6 watersheds	60,000,000 per project	36 crore (6 million)	IWMP
5.	Additional manpower	75 local persons	5,000 per month per person	1 crore (166,666.6)	Special Package from MNREGA relaxation
6.	Residential School	5 schools	50,000,000 per school	25 crores (4.1 million)	Ashram School of Tribal Development
7.	Integrated Development Centres (IDCs)	10 centres	60,000,000 per centre	60 crore (1 million)	Special package
8.	Special incentives	5,000 Solar lanterns	3,000 per unit	1.5 crore (250,000)	CSR/Special Package
		5,000 Bicycles	3,000 per unit	1.5 crore (250,000)	CSR/Special Package
9.	Recreation facilities	56 villages	50,000 per village	28 lakh (46,666.6)	CSR/Special Package

246. IAP is the central sponsored scheme for the Naxal affected districts. Under this programme infrastructure such as roads, watershed, school buildings etc. is constructed.

Mission Saranda

10.	Public transport	5 mini buses	1,000,000 per unit	50 lakh (83,333.3)	CSR/Special Package
		Total		250.48 crore (41.7 million)	

Source: Saranda Action Plan

Saranda Action Plan Monitoring Mechanism

The SAP contains a proposal for the formation of a Steering Committee under the Chairmanship of the Development Commissioner at the state level to monitor the implementation of the SAP.²⁴⁷ Hence, the monitoring team was formed which comprises of the government officers of central and state government (see Table 16.4). However, no representatives from the target group were included and thus the Adivasis were put merely at the receiving end.

Table 16.4: Monitoring Team

Sl. No.	Officers in the monitoring team	Post
1.	Development Commissioner, govt. of Jharkhand	Chairman
2.	Principal Secretary, RD Department, govt. of Jharkhand.	Member
3.	IG, CRPF	Member
4.	District Collector, West Singhbhum	Member
5.	NRLM Commissioner, govt. of Jharkhand	Member
6.	Commissioner, NRHM	Member
7.	A representative from MoRD	Member
8.	A representative from MHA in charge of IAP	Member

Source: Saranda Action Plan

The Reality Check– Saranda Action Plan Implementation

Since I was monitoring the SAP, I repeatedly asked the Union Minister of Rural Development, Jairam Ramesh to provide me the progress report of the SAP, a progress report was provided

247. Ibid.

by the Deputy Commissioner of West Singhbhum district.²⁴⁸ This report seems to be imperfect and questionable as it does not contain the list of beneficiaries, it does not match with the ground realities and it also differs with status report on the implementation of Forest Rights Act 2006. The following describes the data on actual implementation collected and verified during my visits to Saranda Forest.

I) Short term interventions:

- **Distribution of solar lamps, bicycles and transistors:** These items were distributed among all 7,000 families, but their quality was very poor. Most solar lamps stopped working within a couple of months of distribution. They became decorative show pieces in Adivasi homes, and traditional kerosene lamps and lanterns have reoccupied their places.
- **BPL list:** Among the 7,000 households, 3,000 were left out in the BPL list before the introduction of SAP. However, 2,000 new BPL cards were distributed under the additional BPL scheme of the state government, and new ration shop licences issued for the Saranda area. Approximately 6,000 families out of the 7,000 got rations under the Public Distribution System. 1,000 families were still excluded from the BPL list. Consequently, they are denied rations under the PDS²⁴⁹ – in effect, a denial to their right to life. The SAP has failed to address these basic livelihood issues.
- **Provision for IAY houses:** The district administration had estimated a thrust need of around 4,000 IAY houses to be provided to all the eligible households. However, the provision was made in the SAP merely for 3,500 families and 500 were left out. Finally, the administration confirmed that out of

248. Available on www.saranda.nic.in

249. Public distribution system.

7,000 families, 6,000 are eligible for the IAY. However, by the end of the project in December 2013, the SAP progress report records sanctioning a first instalment to 5,500 families and a second instalment to 963 families. Deplorably, the District Administration asked Adivasis to destroy their mud houses and build another if they wanted the money under the IAY. According to the rules of IAY, concrete houses should be built, but this was not followed in the SAP. For example, in Dubil village, nearly 60% of houses constructed under the SAP have either fallen down or remained useless, either because Adivasis were not given money on time or because they already owned bigger and better mud houses than the two room houses on offer under the SAP. Thus, this money was spent in vain, which could have been used for the promotion of livelihood programmes.

- **NSAP Pension and community certificate:** Nothing has been done for ensuring these.
- **Forest rights :** The District Administration claims having distributed 905 individual pattas (land entitlement papers) and 3,736 community pattas, as well as giving forest pattas to all ten forest villages. However, according to the status report on the implementation of the Forest Rights Act 2006 of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (government of India), till 31 January 2015, the Jharkhand government has not given a single community entitlement, calling the above claims of the district administration into question.
- **Employment guarantee under MGNREGA:** The District Administration claims to have appointed Additional Rojgar Sevak (ARS) in all 56 villages, and to have taken up MGNREGA work such as construction of ponds, irrigation wells and connectivity projects in all 56 villages too. However, the fact is that only 29 ARS were appointed and many villages were left out. The worst thing is that 23 ARS left their jobs because

they were not paid for the last two years and another six who are still working are also not being paid regularly. For instance, Paikirai Devgam of Jamkundia village, who was appointed as ARS on 16 November 2011 with the promise of Rs.3,500 (US\$58) as monthly salary was not paid for two years. All the ARSs covered travel cost from their own pocket but the district administration does not pay their due salary and travel allowance. They are running from pillar to post but no one is ready to hear them. The district administration claims that since the project period of SAP got over and the governments have also changed at the centre and the State therefore, they cannot pay the due amount.

- **Employment linked skill training for youth:** Since twelve big mining companies are operating in Saranda Forest, it was proposed under the SAP to impart skill training for youth, and a residential training centre (gurukul)²⁵⁰ was started to implement this proposal but result are yet to be seen.
- **Manoharpur in NRLM**²⁵¹ : The Manoharpur block was included as a pilot block under the NRLM to facilitate livelihood interventions. But the major activities were not yet started. 91 self-help groups were formed and 24 old self-help groups were revived and strengthened. However, it is not at all clear what actual activities were carried out to strengthen and revive these self-help groups.
- **Mobile health units:** The SAIL Hospitals of Kiriburu and Chiria are providing health facilities to the villagers and five ambulances services are in place. However, ambulances do not reach the remote villages either due to incomplete or lack of road.
- **Drinking water supply:** The government admits that all 56 villages are in need of portable water because there is

250. Residential training centre.

251. National Rural Livelihood Mission.

a serious problem of high iron content in the water due to mining activities. However, the district administration has installed only 118 instead of the proposed 200 hand pumps. Most of these were installed in roadside villages. Remote villages such as Tholkobad, Gundijora and Baliba were left out. Some hand pumps went out of order within a couple of months of installation. Hand pumps were also installed in CRPF camps rather than in villages.

Binodini Purty of Tholkabad village, who fetches water from a small stream, says that the government has installed a hand pump in the CRPF camp in her village but not a single hand pump was installed for the villagers. She still collects drinking water from a stream. In the SAP ten piped drinking water schemes were also proposed but these have not been implemented.

- **PMGSY roads:** Thirteen cemented/concrete roads were supposed to be constructed under the SAP. Out of these, two were completed and eleven are under construction, with forest clearances accorded. Interestingly, the two completed roads are precisely where the Electro Steel Casting Ltd and the Rungata Minse Ltd need them to facilitate its planned mining operations.

II) Medium term interventions:

1. **Livelihood interventions:** The SAP recognised a 'thrust need' to intervene in regional livelihood issues. It had envisaged empowerment of the Adivasis and to promote sustainable livelihoods, social mobilisation into self-help groups but unfortunately nothing has been done except the formation of the self-help groups and the skill trainings of youth. The work was not yet started in the improvement of agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, poultry and forest produces.
2. **Watershed programmes:** None of the six watershed

projects, with proposed investment of Rs.36 crore (approx. US\$6 million), have come up by the end of the project period. The government attempted to involve big NGOs like PRADAN and Ramakrishna Mission for implementing these watershed programmes, but villagers protested against this and did not allow these NGOs to undertake the work, arguing that the Gram Sabhas should be involved in implementing the SAP instead of NGOs, according to their rights under PESA Act.²⁵²

3. **Residential/Ashram Schools** : The construction of five residential schools with an investment of Rs.25 crore (approx. US\$4.2 million) was proposed in Saranda Forest under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs scheme. However, the government failed to even identify locations for the establishment of these schools within the completion of project period of two years, showing clearly the low priority the government gives to educating the Adivasi children.
4. **Integrated Development Centres (IDCs)**: Ten IDCs centres were proposed to be set up in Saranda Forest with an investment of Rs.60 crore (approx. US\$10 million). The government had identified ten locations for the IDCs but only one was built at Digha. Union Minister Jairam Ramesh had envisioned IDCs as a one-stop destination for the daily needs of villagers of at least six panchayats, each complete with a fair price shop, health centre, bank, post office and delivery offices of various social security schemes. Unfortunately, even the single centre built at Digha has been lying unutilised for a year. The Mukhiya (Panchayat Samity head) of Digha Panchayat, Guruwari Mundari, who is also sanctioned an office in the IDC, Digha says that it's useless because it is constructed at an inaccessible location therefore the centre remains closed.

252. Provisions of Panchayat (Extension in Scheduled Area) Act 1996.

5. **Security camps:** In the SAP, the establishment of Security Camps was not proposed. Nevertheless, the administration has since built nine Security Camps for the CRPF and its elite force of COBRA battalions. These permanent camps have been established at Chhotanagra, Sendel, Jumbaiburu, Tholkobad, Digha, Kaliapose, Timra, Jaraikela and Manoharpur.

Right from the beginning, the Adivasis of Saranda Forest were perceived merely as recipients under the SAP. They were neither involved in planning nor implementation nor monitoring. When the JHRM repeatedly demanded inclusion of the community in implementation and monitoring of the SAP, Union Minister Jairam Ramesh, agreed to form a Saranda Vigilance Committee (SVC) under the chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner of West Singhbhum and Deputy Inspector General, Superintendent of Police, Inspector General-CRPF, traditional leaders, panchayat representatives, political representatives, Tribes Advisory Council members and social activists as members. The fact is this Saranda Vigilance Committee was not constituted. Is this because the District Administration was not very transparent and accountable, and fears the questions that communities are bound to raise?

SAP represents the first time in the history of Indian democracy that the government has sanctioned an economic package with such a large budget for the development of just 56 Adivasi villages. The Rs.250.48 crore (approx. US\$41.7 million) would mean Rs.4.47 crore (approx. US\$745,000) per village, Rs.34,6160 (approx. US\$5,770) per family, or Rs.69,165 (approx. US\$1,152) per person. The fact is that the Adivasi families got very small amounts as direct beneficiaries, and the major part of this money found its way into the hands of contractors, government officials and mining companies. Out

of the Rs.250.48 crore (approx. US\$41.7 million); nearly 65% was spent on infrastructure development like roads and offices alone.²⁵³ A network of 130 kilometres of cement/concrete roads was constructed at the expense of Rs.104 crore (approx. US\$17.3 million). One of course wonders what villagers provided with bicycles would need such expensive paved roads for.

Perhaps, the most significant contribution of Union Minister Jairam Ramesh through the SAP was that he added political mobilisation, along with police action and development initiatives, to address the issue of Naxalism. Yet this has not worked in the Saranda region. The lack of democracy in India's Red Corridor has contributed greatly to the growth of Naxal outfits. Once an election gets over, political activities are closed down, which leads to the non-existence of a functioning redressal mechanism. The government officers — be it deputy commissioners, block development officers or health employees — do not venture into these places. Standard state mechanisms remain absent. Consequently, there is no one to hear the common people's problems. This is how the CPI-Maoist takes over an area, listening to the people, addressing their problems and encouraging them to fight for their rights. So if government officials blame the CPI-Maoist for absence of development in the region, they need to question more deeply: who is responsible? Who is really to blame? Shouldn't the Indian State be held responsible, rather than the CPI-Maoist?

A Flawed Model of Development

Looking at the status of implementation of the SAP one can rightly question whether the SAP is really a valid model that can address the development challenges of the Naxal affected areas. From what we have seen here, it is a fundamentally

253. 'Between Maoists and Mines', *Down To Earth*, 16-30 April 2012.

flawed model. The distribution of solar lamps, radios and bicycles is simple charity work, which anyone can do who has money. It is no different from numerous schemes over the last several decades. And what is unique in installing hand pumps, constructing mud houses and forming women's self-help groups? What is new in constructing 130 kilometers of concrete roads, check dams, and residential schools building or clubbing all centres at a single IDC so that villagers can access all facilities at one place? Was it unique to club all existing programmes into one big basket?

Of course, there is nothing unique at all. In fact- the SAP merely engineered a clubbing together of budget allocations of existing schemes, to fool people, a make-believe manufacturing of consent through media propaganda, promoting the idea that the government is offering a unique development package. Solar lamps, radios and bicycles were already offered under SAIL's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes, roads were already being constructed under the PMGSY,²⁵⁴ watershed funds were allocated for IAP, houses were constructed under the IAY and new residential schools were already covered under the Tribal Welfare programme.

Another very interesting aspect is that when the SAP was launched, the CPI-Maoist strongly opposed it and asked villagers to boycott it. This opposition was precisely due to the word 'action', often used for police 'action' against them. After villagers started opposing the SAP, we witnessed a series of meetings with villagers, traditional leaders and Panchayat representatives, who suggested renaming the 'Saranda Action Plan' as the 'Saranda Development Plan'. Saranda Action Plan was immediately changed to Saranda Development Plan because

254. Pradhan Mantri Gramin Sadak Yojna – Prime Minister Rural Road Scheme.

that helped the government to defuse CPI-Maoist opposition, but at the same time, other valuable pro-people suggestions were all thrown into the dustbin.

Thus, the failure of the Saranda Development Plan is one more addition to the long list of failed government development schemes. The SDP has proved that there is still a huge gap between talks and deeds of the policy makers and implementers. Though the three tier Panchayat system exists at the grassroots, the Indian rulers still runs the same top-down model of development with a clear intension to grab the public money in the name of development. The main affected citizens, especially Adivasis, are either seen as victims or beneficiaries. This is the main reason for the failure of the government's plan. Whether it is the radical new development model claimed, or just the same old model, it is bound to fail until beneficiaries are actively involved in the planning, monitoring and implementation of schemes meant for them. Calling it SDP instead of SAP, of course, is not going to address the development challenges of the Naxal affected region. Though Union Minister Jairam Ramesh, had promised to develop all 56 villages as model villages, even after spending the Rs.250.48 crore (approx. US\$41.7 million), the villages remain more or less the same except that they are now connected with cemented roads.

A Road Map for Mining?

On 9 February 2012, I wrote a letter to the Union Minister Jairam Ramesh, asking him to make it clear whether his government is paving the way for the mining companies in the name of Adivasis' development. In response, he seemed to take it for granted that I am a sympathizer of the CPI-Maoist. During his Saranda visit, he told media persons while responding to their questions that the "Maoists and their sympathizers spread

propaganda that the SDP is aimed at clearing the way for private mining companies to make an entry to the forests. But this is wrong, baseless and mischievous.”²⁵⁵ Events have proved that I was absolutely right. The SDP has failed to bring the envisaged regional development, but opened the door to facilitate the mining companies' entry.

Even since the launching of the massive joint anti-Naxal operations in Saranda Forest of Jharkhand in March 2010, the questions started arising from various corners of the state: is the Indian government facilitating entry of the mining companies in Saranda by 'cleansing' the Adivasis in the name of cleansing out the CPI-Maoist? Is peace the government's real aim through these massive anti-Naxal operations? What is the fundamental intention of the State in spending such a huge amount of money on anti-Naxal operations and associated development initiatives?

These questions become very relevant when we know that in September 2010, the then Union Home Secretary, G.K. Pillai, assured the London based finance company 'Execution Noble Ltd' that the Indian government would clear the Red Corridor by 2013 even if it has to recruit an additional 30,000 security personnel each year,²⁵⁶ which may even go up to 150,000. Earlier in 2008, while studying the growth of the Indian economy, Execution Noble Ltd reported to the Indian government that it can secure investments of US\$80 billion by clearing the Red Corridor to access the deposits of iron ore, coal, bauxite, and manganese that are blocked by presence of the CPI-Maoist.²⁵⁷ Did Execution Noble consider clearing away all the democratic movements of Adivasis and other local people against mining

255. 'Ramesh for Saranda mining curbs - Union minister to lobby Centre to disallow new firms in West Singhbhum forests', *The Telegraph*, 3 July 2012.

256. 'Pillai to End Maoist Grip on US\$80 Billion Investments', *Bloomberg*, 17 September 2010.

257. *Ibid.*

projects too, alongside the Maoists perhaps? How does registering these democratic movements fit with implementing this foreign-funded formula for clearing the Red Corridor for better economic growth of the country?

Since 2008, the Indian government's series of military offensives against the CPI-Maoist have increased in scale. As far as the massive joint anti-Naxal operation in Saranda Forest is concerned, it was launched in the forest's western part, where 22 new mining leases were sanctioned to world steel giants including Arcelor Mittal India Ltd, Tata Steel Ltd, Jindal Steel & Power Ltd, JSW Steel Ltd, Bhushan Steel & Power Ltd, Essar Steel Ltd, Rungta Mines Ltd, and Electro Steel Casting Ltd. This list shows the real intentions behind the intensification of anti-Naxal operations. The mining clearances of these companies are in different stages in the Ministry of Environment and Forest. For instance, the Union Ministry of Environment and Forest gave clearance to Jindal Steel & Power Ltd for diversion of 512.43 hectares of forest for its iron ore mining project and diversion of 998.7 hectares of forest for iron and manganese ore by JSW Steel Ltd.²⁵⁸ Some of the mining companies have already started the ground work. For example, Tata Steel Ltd has conducted a survey of the Ankua reserved area, the Jindal Steel & Power Ltd has also done a survey of its intended lease area, the Electro Steel Casting Ltd conducted a Public Hearing at Usariya village on 6 January 2015 and the Rungta Mines Ltd also had a Public Hearing 8 January 2015.²⁵⁹

An analysis of the joint anti-Naxal operations - 'Operation Monsoon', 'Operation Bravo Boy' and 'Operation Anaconda' carried out in July-August 2011, shows that the security forces exploited, tortured, raped, killed and in many cases forced

258. 'Jharkhand lost Rs14,000 cr worth natural resources', *Deccan Herald*, 30 August 2014.

259. The information was collected from the villagers, who took part in the Public Hearing and Survey activities.

Adivasis to leave their villages. They broke utensils, and in places destroyed food grains and crops. Consequently, the Adivasis of Tholkobad, Gundijora, Tirilposi, Baliba and Bitkilsoy and other places had to desert their villages for a couple of months. Electro Steel Casting Ltd, Sunflag Iron & Steel Ltd and Rungta Mines Ltd have had iron ore mining leases sanctioned in an area close by, at Dinsumburu mines, Kodlibad, which raises suspicion on the reason why so many Adivasis were forced to leave their villages. Is it just for paving the way for acquiring forest and environment clearance? The State government and mining companies tend to see Adivasis as the biggest obstacle in acquiring the clearances.

This is most likely also the reason why Adivasis of Saranda Forest have not yet been given entitlement on forest lands under the Forest Rights Act 2006, even though they are most eligible for it, as they have been living in these areas for decades. When the Act came into force in January 2008, 17,000 Adivasi families had filled up the claim forms and submitted them to the Circle Offices, Manoharpur and Noamundi, but their claims were not admitted.²⁶⁰ The security forces also burnt up all the land records, BPL cards, voter cards, ration cards and job cards²⁶¹ of the Adivasis of Tholkobad, Gundijora, Baliba, Bitkilsoy and Kodlibad villages with the clear intention of declaring them as encroachers on forest land so that the mining companies could easily acquire forest and environment clearance for their mining projects. This is similar to what the company POSCO did to protesting villagers in Odisha.²⁶²

When the government announced the SAP in 2011, the geographical coverage of the plan revealed the true intentions. Saranda Forest falls under two administrative blocks, Manoharpur

260. Gladson Dungdung, *Whose country is it anyway?* Adivaani: Kolkata, 2013.

261. 'Between Maoists and Mines', *Down To Earth*, 16-30 April 2012.

262. 'Anti-Posco: Villagers resist the government's push to acquire lands', *Sanhati.com* 1 July 2013.

and Noamundi. An estimated 25,000 Adivasi families, a with total population of about 125,000,²⁶³ reside in the whole area. So why does the Saranda Action Plan cover only 7,236 Adivasi families (36,215 people), all under Manoharpur block? Why was Noamundi block completely left out of the SAP?

Clearly, major mining projects are operational in the Noamundi region over a number of years. This is not an area where new 'green field' explorations are planned. Hence the government does not seem to be interested in investing money for development activities of Noamundi block, despite Adivasis' dire poverty there. The 22 new mining projects are all proposed in areas under Manoharpur block, with every possibility of more mining there in the future as further exploration of new mineral-rich areas is undertaken. This is clearly why the government is wooing the Adivasis there through the SAP. Since a series of people's resistance movements against mining projects has been active across Jharkhand, it is not easy for the government to hand over the entire Saranda Forest to the mining companies. This is why the SAP was launched – a development package to silence the barking dogs. SAP's conspicuous failure is a huge setback for the government, since it claimed to offer a solution to areas affected by Naxalism.

As we have seen earlier hardly any of the funds spent benefited the local population. Nearly 65% was spent on infrastructure development like roads and offices alone, with the government relaxing restrictions that formerly allowed only unpaved roads inside Reserved Forests.²⁶⁴ A network of 130 kilometres of cement roads was constructed at the expense of Rs.104 crore (approx. US\$17.3 million), which is Rs.80 lakh (approx. US\$134,000) per kilometre. Since 7,000 villagers have been provided with bicycles under the SAP, this raises questions about who these paved roads

263. 'Saranda Myth Pictured', *CRPF Newsletter*, Vol.7, April 2012.

264. 'Between Maoists and Mines', *Down To Earth*, 16-30 April 2012.

are really for the villagers riding their new bicycles, or for the mining companies? As anti-mining activist Sushil Barla says, "Such expensive roads are of course not meant for Adivasis or department officials, delivering development programmes; this kind of road, with a meter deep cement-concrete is precisely what is required to transport iron ore. Trucks carrying the ore weigh up to 30 tonnes, and require heavy duty roads." All this makes it crystal clear that the SAP is far more oriented to benefitting the mining companies, rather than Adivasis.

Underlying the SAP and similar 'development' schemes, a two-pronged strategy is clearly visible, as anti-mining activist Xavier Dias reveals: "The SAP, which received funds from industries through their CSR, would help garner acceptance from the forest dwellers on opening up of new mining areas. CSR, which is aimed at co-option and diluting the mass resistance against mining and allied companies, will also benefit in another way. By building roads and infrastructure in inaccessible areas, it will deny access to the Maoists. So in a way, it is killing two birds at one stroke."

The most revealing facet is that the government involved the World Bank in designing the SAP, but not the Gram Sabhas or the Tribal Advisory Council (TAC), even though no development activity should be under taken without the consent of Gram Sabha and participation of the TAC in the 5th Schedule Areas. Saranda Forest lies in the 5th Schedule Area, so why were these bodies not consulted in planning the Saranda Action Plan? Obviously, because the strategies of the government and its collusion with the mining companies would have been questioned and exposed. Thus, it is very clear that the Indian government has been making a comfortable entry for the mining companies in Saranda Forest with this two-pronged strategy: shooting the barking dogs on the one hand and also luring them with bones on the other. But can our barking dogs be silenced?

What Do You Mean by Development?

“Don’t you see that our village is more or less the same as it was a few years back? We still drink water from a stream. Our houses are broken. We don’t have any health facility either.”

Sukhmi, Tholkobad village

Tholkobad was one of the worst Naxal-affected villages in Saranda Forest. As we have seen, after its extended series of anti-Naxal operations, the Indian government implemented the Saranda Development Plan to address development challenges. So I was interested to see what changes may have occurred in the village. Tholkobad is one of my favourite destinations in Saranda Forest. I had visited the village several times in 2011 while investigating cases of human rights violations, and in 2012 for observing the progress of the Saranda Development Plan. Since the term of two years for the implementation of

this plan had ended in December 2013, I was curious to know whether the development model, which was being hyped through the media, had brought real changes in this village.

I reached Tholkobad in the afternoon on 2 April 2015. I could see a well established CRPF camp at the entrance of the village, with a cemented road crossing through it. Besides, I also noticed a few half-built houses and a new school building. The rest of the scene was more or less the same as in 2012.

I went to meet Binodini Purty at her house, to get the latest news about her village and to learn what benefits the Saranda Development Plan had brought, and what, if anything, had gone wrong with it. Drying Mahua flowers were scattered on the courtyard of her house, chickens were busily searching for food, and a tiny girl was cleaning the dust from the yard with a broom.

As soon as I entered the courtyard, the girl alerted her mother about my arrival. Binodini came out of her house but seeing me with a camera, she darted back and hid inside. I was stunned at her unexpected reaction. She was at the top of my list as one of the bravest women of the region, who had always dared to speak out to media persons, police or anyone else, without fear. Indeed, she used to be one of the vocal women in the forest. This time her behavior was just the opposite. She was evidently reluctant to talk. Helpless in this situation, I called a friend of mine to establish communication between us. He requested Binodini to come out of the house. She came out and started speaking. Although I had guessed that something was wrong, I was really surprised to hear the reason for her reluctance.

According to Binodini, on 31 March 2015, the Deputy Inspector General of Police, R K Dhan, and the Superintendent of Police,

Michael Raj, had conducted a meeting with the villagers at Tholkobad CRPF camp. They wanted to know about problems the villagers faced in their day to day life. While responding to these queries from the police, Binodini had said that there is no provision for drinking water, and no transportation or health facilities available in the village. She said forcefully, "There is a hand pump in the CRPF camp but none for us in the village. We still fetch water from a polluted stream." After hearing this, the police officers were furious. They scolded the assistant commandant of the CRPF, Jitwahan Oraon, for not being able to address the villagers' genuine problems.

The next day, Binodini was summoned to the CRPF camp. The assistant commandant abused and threatened her, saying he would teach her a lesson if she failed to keep quiet in future. This is why she decided not to open her mouth and to keep herself away from anyone who asked her reactions on any matter. Of course, Binodini had been repeatedly raising the same questions regarding lack of development and availability of basic facilities in the village since 2011. However, the government has failed to address her questions, despite the Saranda Development Plan. The saddest part is that now her freedom of expression is also curtailed, with the clear intention of covering up the State's failure to address development challenges.

Meanwhile, I saw some women fetching water from a stream near the village. So I went there to get their views. I asked them, "Why are you fetching dirty water from a stream instead of hand pumps? Your village was developed under the Saranda Development Plan? Have you not benefited from development now?" Sukhmi responded with her own questions: "What do you mean by development? Don't you see that our village is more or less the same as it was a few years back? We still drink water from a polluted stream. Our houses are broken. We don't

have health facilities either. How can we even imagine getting electricity? The road was constructed for the police so that they'll have easy access to our villages." I had strong answers now, so did not dare to ask more questions.

I went a little further down the stream, where children were enjoying a bathe in the dirty red water on which they had no choice. I felt sad to think that the government and mining companies earn more than Rs.3000 crore (approx. US\$500 million) per annum from Saranda Forest, while the Adivasis do not get any share in this money, which is generated in the name of economic growth and development.

Meanwhile, I saw a half broken school building, which was blown up by the CPI-Maoist in 2003. It had been a government-run residential school, which was converted into a police camp, and when the security forces vacated the school, the Maoists blew it up. There was a plan to build a residential school at Tholkobad with the investment of Rs.5 crore (approx. US\$833,333) a watershed project with the investment of Rs. 6 crore (approx. US\$1 million) and an integrated development centre (IDC) with the investment of Rs.6 crore (approx. US\$1 million) but these plans were not implemented, and nobody knew the reason.

While leaving the village, I saw the village head coming out of the CRPF camp, where he had gone to inform them about his programme. He has to inform the CRPF personnel everyday about his activities and update them about the villagers' movements too. Now all the villagers are under a security net. Their freedom is under control of the State in the name of security.

The CRPF camp was established under the Saranda Development Plan in the name of bringing peace and good governance to the region. But instead of peace, the villagers are unsettled and

under surveillance. The village head said, “We are bound to live under the shadow of the guns. Earlier, we were living under terror of the Maoists. Now the CRPF has replaced them. We desire to live peacefully, but none of them let us live freely.”

It has always been said that the top-down model of planning, implementation and monitoring is the main reason for failure of the government’s development programmes. This has not changed, despite the three tier panchayat system and the system of traditional self-governance that still exists in Adivasi areas. It is evident that the villagers and their heads were never asked what kind of development they want, or what is necessary for them at the moment. The Adivasis of Tholkobad hardly needed new mud houses, bicycles or radios. If they had been asked to plan the development of their village, they would have emphasized clean drinking water, a residential school, health centre, electricity, village road, etc.

The main problem with the Indian politicians and bureaucrats is that they consider Adivasis merely as victims or beneficiaries, but not as opinion makers or rights holders. They are never made part of the system as decision makers. However, the failure of the Saranda Development Plan in Tholkobad has given another opportunity for the Indian State to learn, but is the State ready to learn from its blundering mistakes?

Manufacturing the Consent

“As far as the anti-Naxal operations are concerned, the journalists were either reporting the police version or views of the Maoists, but they were not applying the ethics of journalism.”

Sanjay Verma, Senior Journalist

For a while, Hotel Ashok in Ranchi became a shelter for the Union Minister of Rural Development, Jairam Ramesh, during his frequent visits to Saranda Forest. The hotel was therefore the main meeting point for us to discuss issues related to the Saranda Development Plan, which was his dream project. On 9 February 2012, at around 11am, we were in discussion on the progress of the Saranda Development Plan in the lounge; the editor of a leading newspaper came to the lounge with copies of his newspaper, some books and reports. He handed over some of these to the Minister. Later on I was told that

Jairam Ramesh had invited the editor to discuss the Saranda Development Plan. He wanted good coverage of the Plan in the leading newspaper for his image building. Of course, this was an attempt for manufacturing the consent.

During the following days, I could see the front page news printed with the Minister's good photograph. In fact, the editor assigned a special correspondent to cover the news of Jairam Ramesh's visit. This is how he was made messiah for the Adivasis of Saranda Forest. Whatever he would say, the Newspaper would publish without cross-checking. For instance, when he hoisted a flag in Digha school on Independence Day, a front page story claimed that this was the first time, a national flag was hoisted in a school in the liberated zone of Saranda Forest. Anyone who read this news item would believe that this story was true, though it was not. For years before the national flags had been hoisted in many schools in Saranda Forest.

Similarly, while speaking in a programme organized by a media house in Ranchi in 2013, Jairam Ramesh said, "Unfortunately the track record of mining operations was neither environmentally sustainable nor socially beneficial be it in public sector or private sector. Mining is not essentially a boom but a curse."²⁶⁵ He also said that he is against mining by private company in the Saranda Forest.

But the fact is he was walking against his talk. Instead of checking the mining activities, he promoted more mining in Saranda Forest. When he was the Union Minister for Environment and Forest, he had given environmental and forest clearances to the public sector company SAIL for diversion of 595 hectares of forest²⁶⁶ for iron ore mining, and he had also given clearance

265. 'Tribals are not show pieces for museums: Ramesh', *IBN Live*, 14 January 2013.

266. 'SAIL gets clearance for mining Chiria reserves', *The Economic Times*, 10 February 2011.

to the private mining company Usha Martin Ltd for diversion of 117 hectare²⁶⁷ of forest for the Vijay Iron Ore project on 23 February 2011. But the media didn't question him, may be also because the owners of a few print media were directly involved in iron ore mining in Saranda Forest and elsewhere, or had received favour from the Minister, creating a win-win situation for both the parties?

Later on, he became even more media savvy and made every effort to use the media to his best advantage. While speaking in a mass programme in Digha, he enthusiastically said that he wanted to change his name from Jairam Ramesh to Jairam Munda. He also said that he wished that his dead body should be cremated in Saranda Forest. His statements became breaking news for the all-India media. What more did he want?

This is surprising. If a failed programme is a Union Minister's best achievement, then what might be his worst? I believe that the Minister pronounced those sentences with the clear intention to make headlines. This is how the powerful people manufacture consent for their works through the media. Indeed, the media is the most powerful communication tool on the globe, but the most marginalised people have little or no access to it. They and their well-being become pawns in media outlets.

As far as police atrocities in Saranda Forest are concerned, the media played a vital role after our intervention. But achieving this was very difficult. When I met a local journalist from one of the leading newspapers, who was covering Saranda news, he told me how difficult it was to report on cases of police atrocity. He said that there are four entry points to Saranda Forest and the security forces are deployed at every point, where they prevent the entry of journalists, human rights defenders

267. 'Jharkhand lost Rs14,000 cr worth natural resources', *Deccan Herald*, 30 August 2014.

and social activists, on spurious security grounds. Also, local journalists have to survive, and they take a major risk whenever they question the role of security forces. If they report on such cases, they can be victimised, by being portrayed as Maoist supporters.

I was surprised when he told me that the security forces had burnt three Adivasi houses in Tirilposi village in May 2011. He said, “The Journalists were aware about the incident but they didn’t report it for fear of being victimised by the police, and there was lack of support from the management too. My boss told me to avoid reporting on such cases unless the situation is inevitable.”

Another senior journalist, Sanjay Verma who visited Saranda Forest several times to cover the cases of human rights violation explained the role of media in anti-Naxal operations. He said, “As far as the anti-Naxal operations are concerned, the journalists were either reporting the police version or the views of the Maoists, but they were not applying the ethics of journalism. The actual ground reporting from Saranda Forest was totally missing.”

Evidently, when an innocent villager, Mangal Honhaga of Baliba village, was shot dead by security forces on 30 June 2011, and it was termed the result of crossfire by the Superintendent of Police, Arun Kumar, the media merely reported the police version. They neither did investigation nor cross-checking of statements. When I visited Saranda, villagers revealed the hidden truth, as we have seen in the previous chapters. I planned to expose the case in the capital of Jharkhand, Ranchi, where we organised a press conference. Here Mangri Honhaga, her son Dula Honhaga and other victims were exposed before the media. The next day, the headline of the leading Hindi daily read: ‘Security forces kill

Mangal Honhaga'.²⁶⁸ This headline created and fuelled a fire. There were protests and roars in the Legislative Assembly. As a result, the government ordered an investigation and the truth was revealed.

Once we exposed the cold blooded murder of Mangal Honhanga, some of the daily newspapers, including Prabhat Khabar, Dainik Bhashakar, Dainik Jagran, the Hindustan Times and the Hindu consistently reported on issues of human rights violations by the security forces while carrying out anti-Naxal operations in Saranda Forest. They also sent their special correspondents to the area. Besides, two regional news channels – News11 and Taza TV - played a vital role in exposing the truth about police atrocities in Saranda Forest. They even organised a series of prime time debates on the issue without prejudice. Of course, they also presented the police version, which boiled down to a conspiracy theory that the CPI-Maoist was trying to derail anti-Naxal operations.

However, I was surprised when these same media houses stopped reporting the failures of the Saranda Development Plan after frequent interactions of the Union Minister with some of the top decision makers of the media houses. Why are the media houses so much obliged to the State? Why do they suppress genuine issues of the common people to save the faces of Ministers, policy makers and bigwigs? Why is the media constantly diluting its role of watch dog to that of a mere business entity? Is it because the corporate houses have taken over democracy, through control of the media? Is the media playing a major role in manufacturing the consent instead of bringing out the truth? It seems that the investigative journalism has already become part of the history in India. The views of the State, are dominating the media.

268. *Prabhat Khabar*, 23 August 2011.

Perhaps free, fair and fearless journalism has become history for us. Based on my experience with the media for a decade while dealing with gross human rights violations committed by the law enforcement agencies, I can say that presently, journalism is defined through the relationship between the management of media houses and the State. If their relationship is cosy, then of course there is very little chance for negative reports to be published that reveal misdeeds by agents of the State. Therefore, I am of the opinion that the media has ceased to be the fourth pillar of democracy, but has emasculated itself to become a mere business entity. Of course, for powerful people, this makes it a useful tool to manufacture consent for their pet projects. It is time for the media, and all who work in it, to rethink their role in our democratic republic.

Don't They Rule Anymore?

“The traditional heads have lost their capability to lead the community. Now they are highly influenced by the elected representatives, social activists and company representatives.”

Guruwari Mundari

Head of Panchayat Samity, Digha

As mentioned earlier, the Singhbhum region, including Saranda Forest, is also known as Kolhan province, where the Adivasis' traditional self-rule, recognised as the 'Manki-Munda system', used to be very strong. Manki is the traditional head of a group of villages and Munda is the head of one village. The Manki-Munda system still exists in the region, but is now becoming more and more irrelevant. Historically, after the Kol resistance²⁶⁹

269. The Kol Resistance was a resistance of the Adivasis against the imposition of revenue on cultivated land by the British Indian government.

against the British rule in 1832, the British Indian government enforced a separate rule in the region known as 'Wilkinson's Rule, 1837'. Since then, the region was known as Kolhan estate. Wilkinson's Rule recognises the traditional system of governance, revenue collection by the traditional heads and the unique culture, custom and tradition of the Adivasis.

Since Wilkinson's rule was enforced in the region, recognising the separate identity of Kolhan Estate, the traditional leaders considered the region as in effect a separate country. In 1972, the founder of Kolhan Raksha Manch and traditional leader of Kolhan, KC Hembrom, went to the United Nations Organisation to represent the Kolhan as a separate country, claiming that since due process was not followed during the freedom movement, Kolhan still exists as a separate country. The leaders of Kolhan Raksha Manch, KC Hembrom and Narayan Jomko, were leading mass movement for the independence of Kolhan from India and they fixed a date for the declaration of Kolhan as a separate country.

On 26 October 1981, they organised a big programme for the declaration of Kolhan's independence. Consequently, there was a fight between the Adivasis and the police. In another attempt, the leaders of Kolhan Raksha Manch mobilised the Adivasis for declaring Kolkan as separate republic on 2 December 1981. As a result, the police filed a case of sedition against the leaders of Kolhan Raksha Manch, so they had to go underground. On 30 July 1984, the Home Minister Dulari Sinha accepted in the Lok Sabha that there is a separatist movement in Kolhan for independence. This shows how strong the traditional system of governance in Kolhan was.

On 24 December 1996, when the Indian Parliament passed the Provisions of Panchayat (Extension in Scheduled Areas) Act

1996, the Adivasis of Kolhan region beat drums, sang songs and danced together in celebration. They believed that they would now be ruled by themselves forever, as the Indian State had finally recognised their system of traditional self governance. However, soon they realised that the government had no intention of empowering them, and that that the PESA Act was not being enforced in the region. However, their struggle for self rule was still going on. They protested against Panchayat elections.

On 15 November 2000, Jharkhand was created as the 28th Indian state, bifurcating from the state of Bihar. This gave rise to another great celebration, as the Adivasis of Kolhand region were part of the statehood movement during the preceding 70 years. Though they had wanted Kolhan as a separate republic, they were happy to be part of this separate state. This time too, they believed that the time has come when they would be able to rule themselves again. However, the BJP swiftly formed the government in the new state, even though it had always opposed its creation!

Instead of enforcing the PESA Act in the state, the new Jharkhand government introduced the Jharkhand Panchayat Raj Act 2001. Though some of the PESA provisions were incorporated in this Act, the main features of PESA, especially in terms of the power of the Gram Sabha (village council) in managing of the natural resources was withheld.

This is how the Adivasis were betrayed time and again, and their traditional system of governance was weakened. Meanwhile, a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) was filed in the Jharkhand High Court challenging the PESA Act as unconstitutional. The argument was made that it violated the Article 14 of the India Constitution because 100 per cent reservation is given to Adivasis

in the top posts of the Panchayat system in 5th Scheduled Areas. The Jharkhand High Court declared PESA as unconstitutional. However, the Jharkhand government challenged this in the Supreme Court, which rejected the High Court ruling by declaring the PESA Act as very much constitutional. The Supreme Court said that since the 5th Scheduled Areas are historically the territory of Adivasis, their rights should be respected.

Meanwhile, a media hype was created that no development was occurring in the villages because panchayat elections were not taking place. A huge pressure was created on the government. As a result, panchayat elections were held in December 2010. This became the death knell of traditional self-governance. After the panchayat election, a huge conflict arose between elected representatives and traditional heads. Since the development projects were funded through elected representatives, the importance of traditional heads was confined merely to social affairs. Hence, the villagers started giving more respect to the elected representatives than the traditional heads.

The Naxal Movement also damaged the traditional system. Naxals knew that the traditional system of governance was very strong in the region. For this reason, they started involving the traditional heads in their activities. Traditional heads were incorporated into village units such as the Kishan Samity (farmers committee). Conflict resolution was one of the major activities of the traditional system of governance – a system known for giving effective justice, though at a slow pace. Cases often took three weeks to resolve. Naxals realised that addressing Adivasis' day to day problems was a good way to attract them to their movement, so they started organising Jan Adalat (public hearing) at night, where they tried to solve problems overnight. Thus, Adivasis started approaching the Naxals to resolve their problems. In a decade, most of the traditional heads were under

CPI-Maoist's control. According to some of the village heads, the Maoists visit the houses of village heads and ask them to organise meetings, prepare food for them and shelter them.

Later on, the police, representatives of the corporate houses and politicians also played similar tricks. They too approached the traditional heads to serve their interests, and started bribing them. The head of Panchayat Samity, Guruwari Mundari, says, "The traditional heads have lost their capability to lead the community. Now they are highly influenced by the elected representatives, social activists and company representatives."

Eventually, in the era of globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation, the traditional heads of Saranda Forest region have lost their capacity to lead the community, as they are not upgrading themselves in terms of information, knowledge and technology. Those who approach them have all this at their finger tips, and they know well how to influence the traditional heads. In effect, it is the corporate democracy driven by the market economy that has broken down Kolhan's renowned system of traditional self governance.

It's Called a Public Hearing

“An officer of the Rungta Mines, Hansada, told us to perform a folk dance while welcoming the officers. We were paid Rs.40,000 for performing a folk dance, the village-head was given Rs.30,000 for chairing the public hearing and 40 kg mutton was also cooked for us.”

Savitri Honhaga, Usariya village

A half burnt JCB (earth mover) machine, still lying in Usariya village, which is situated in the middle of Saranda Forest, was enough to tell us that we were in the Red Corridor. The CPI-Maoist guerillas had burnt it a couple of years back in protest against the sanction of iron-ore mining leases to the mining companies. When we reached Usariya, it was already 11 am. Since it was the beginning of summer, the day was very hot, but the Adivasis were busy collecting Mahua flowers, which is one of the major forest produces that sustain their lives in the forest.²⁷⁰

270. Several edible items are made of *mahua* flowers and it is also used for making traditional liquor, so its cost is almost equal to the price of rice.

Usariya village is located close to Dirsumburu forest, which is one of the 700 hills in Saranda Forest. The forest looked beautiful as the trees and bushes got new leaves and flowers after the autumn season. We could smell the scent of Sal, Mahua and other flowers. However, this forest, land, village, Adivasis and all other living beings of the vicinity may disappear soon, as three mining companies are about to start iron ore mining operations here.

The availability of iron and manganese ore in Saranda Forest has become a curse for Adivasis, even if it counts as a blessing for certain others. The Dirshumburu mines is going to add a lot more suffering. The Jharkhand government has sanctioned mining leases to three mining companies here, Rungta Mines Ltd, Electro Steel Casting Ltd and Sunflag Iron & Steel Ltd, together covering an area of 663 hectares.

The Adivasis had established many villages in the vicinity after clearing trees and bushes during the forest movement in the 1980s, and therefore they are against being displaced. Mangar Honhaga, who led the forest movement in Usariya, says, "We have settled this village after a long struggle, so we're not going to surrender it to the mining companies easily." But do they have any choice?

Once the Rungta Mines Ltd, the Electro Steel Casting Ltd and Sunflag Iron & Steel Ltd got mining leases, all of them initiated the process of obtaining environmental and forest clearances from the Ministry of Environment and Forest (government of India), and also from the communities. These companies were given first level clearance from the Ministry.

However, the CPI-Maoist was against these new mines without advance payment of levy, which is why they burnt

the JCB machine. That act created fear and annoyance for the mining companies, and was part of the reason why the Indian government launched its massive anti-Naxal operation during July-August 2011 in Saranda, which was followed by the Saranda Development Plan.

As we have seen, under the plan 130 kilometres of roads were constructed, and nine CRPF camps were established, which made these villages accessible for the security forces and mining companies alike. It also bridged the gap between security forces and Adivasis and denied safe haven to the CPI-Maoist. Thus, the Maoists had to leave the areas of Kodlibad, Tholkobad, Baliba, Tirilposi and Bitkilsoy villages.

Once the security concerns were dealt with by establishment of the CRPF camps in the forest, the mining companies arranged to hold a public hearing in the villages. Strategically, the Electro Steel Casting Ltd organised a public hearing at Baiyahatu village instead of Kodlibad, on 13 April 2012. Since this village is situated 15 kilometres far the mining location, where most of the affected families were not invited, therefore, the villagers, including their elected Panchayat representatives and traditional heads objected to public hearing. The district administration duly rejected the planned public hearing.

The companies realised that they would not be able to get Gram Sabha clearance easily. Therefore, they formed a plan to 'divide and rule' the Adivasis. Since Adivasis often have more faith in their traditional leaders and social activists than in their political representatives, who have often betrayed them in the name of democracy, the companies targeted these people.

An anti-mining activist turned political activist Sushil Barla was playing a crucial role in the 'Movement against the Displacement'

caused by iron ore mining in Saranda Forest. He had a very good team of young Adivasis, as well as a cordial relationship with the traditional heads and political representatives in the region. At a time when it was very difficult to access Saranda Forest, Sushil had become a door for all the social activists, human rights defenders and journalists who wanted to visit the forest.

Therefore, the district police tried to portray him as a Naxal supporter, but failed. It was difficult for the mining companies to coerce the Adivasis without breaking this team. They started their 'divide and rule' strategy by deploying some of their officers, middlemen and government officers to negotiate with a selected traditional heads, local political representatives and social activists, bypassing Sushil, knowing they would not be able to win him over.

They targeted three key players – Bamiya Manjhi, a district council member of Chhotanagra, Lagura Deogam, the Manki of twelve Adivasi villages, and Bilarman Kandulna, a young social activist, who had been the right hand of Sushil Barla. The villagers alleged that Manjhi and Deogam were paid huge sums of money, while Rungta Mines Ltd employed Kandulna and his wife as teachers in the primary school, promising him a job in the mines too.

Manjhi was assigned the job of convincing the local political representatives, while Deogam was told to convince the traditional heads. Kandulna was assigned the work of convincing the villagers and communicating with their traditional heads on a regular basis.

Kandulna was the lynch-pin of this plan, as he was a very committed social activist, from Kodlibad village. He had got married recently and was hunting for a job, which made him

relatively easy to trap. When the officers of Rungta Mines Ltd came to know about this, they offered a job to the couple immediately. The newly wedded couple chose to live a good life instead of struggling for their survival. Thus, half the work of the company was done.

They also took support of R. Bara, an officer working in the welfare department, who started humiliating Sushil Barla and his team in public by saying that 'you people had raised the issue of forest rights but why are villagers not applying for entitlement under the Forest Rights Act?' The villagers were also told that they should not listen to Sushil Barla, he owns a petrol pump, so he is not going to lose anything, but it is the villagers who will lose jobs if mining work does not start.

The companies used the support of government officers to target the economic base of Sushil's team. A para-teacher named Vikram Mundari, who worked closely with Sushil, was suspended from his job in July 2014, in allegation of being absent from his school, even though he had taken leave. News to this effect was published in the newspaper. These actions split the anti-mining group.

When the officers and middle men of Rungta Mines Ltd and Electro Steel Casting Ltd were able to convince the local political representatives, traditional heads and social activists, they planned public hearings and fixed the dates and places with the support from the local administration.

The Electro Steel Casting Ltd conducted a public hearing at Usariya on 6 January 2015, and Rungta Mines Ltd on 8 January. The Adivasis of Hatnaburu, Kodlibad, Bahada, Usariya, Kulayburu, Sonapi, Baliba, Marangponga and Dikuponga were invited. Although Marangponga and Dikuponga villages would not be

affected by the proposed mining projects, they were invited, clearly in order to manipulate events through numbers.

According to villagers, Rungta Mines Ltd provided three goats and Electro Steel Casting Ltd gave two goats to every village for a feast, the village heads were bribed Rs.30,000 (approx. US\$500) along with a mobile phone, and welcome teams were paid Rs.40,000 (approx. \$666).

Besides, the local political representatives, middlemen and social activists were also paid according to their manipulation capacity in convincing the villagers. The villagers say that everyone who spoke in favour of the company in the public hearing was paid Rs.5,000 to 10,000 (approx. US\$83 to 166) according to the impact of their words.

Though all the villagers admitted this foul play had taken place, most of them hesitated to tell the truth. Women seemed to be more honest in exposing the fact. Besides, many see the public hearing just as business. Roya Honhaga, who played music during the welcome ceremony said, "Since I was paid Rs.2,000 (approx. US\$33), therefore I played music for the folk dance group".

The public hearing conducted for Rungta Mines Ltd is one of the worst examples of how Adivasis get cheated, manipulated and betrayed through this supposedly democratic process. Savitri Honhaga of Usariya, who was part of the welcoming team, described how the script was written in advance for public hearing of the Rungta Mines Ltd.

An officer of Rungta Mines Ltd named Hansada was assigned for the public hearing, who was visiting the villages almost every day by motorbike to convince the villagers. He could speak their language, which made his job easier.

According to Savitri, Hansada informed them that some officers of the Rungta Company will be visiting their village for interacting with them, therefore they have to welcome them. Hansada identified 20 women and three men for performing folk dances to welcome the officers of Rungta Mines, political representatives and government officers. They were asked to practice this folk dance for a week. Besides, four women were identified to speak during the public hearing.

On 8 January 2015, the public hearing was conducted at Usariya village, chaired by the village head of Kodlibad village, Budhram Torkod, while the Circle Officer of Manoharpur presided. As per the plan, the welcome team performed folk dances to welcome all the company and government officials. Three women – Budhni Honhaga, Bonga Honhaga and Savitri Honhaga, and a few men were given the opportunity to speak. They spoke as they were taught by Hansada. “If we are given jobs, health and education facilities, we’re ready to give our land for the mining because agriculture is no more profitable work”.

At the end, Hansada told the villagers that those who want to have food need to either sign or put their thumb impression on the register. Some of them signed and others put their thumb impression on the register. Thus, the public hearing was successfully conducted.

Savitri Honhaga said, “An officer of the Rungta Mines, Hansada, told us to perform folk dance while welcoming the officers. We were paid Rs.40,000 (approx. US\$666) for performing folk dance, the village-head was given Rs.30,000 (approx. US\$500) for chairing the public hearing and 40 kg mutton was also cooked for us. Hansada told us that if you want to have mutton put your signature or thumb impression on the register. We did it. We didn’t know that we were surrendering our land for

mutton.” “All 20 women and three men who performed folk dance shared the money. Rs.1,700 (approx. US\$28) was given to each woman for dancing and Rs.2,000 (approx. US\$33) was given to each man for playing musical instruments. I too was given Rs.1,700 (approx. US\$28)”, she added.

Another villager, Gergende Honhaga, who was also part of the preparation processes and public hearing supported Savitri Honhaga's claim. He said, “Hansada was frequently visiting our village. He identified a dance team of 20 women, and out of them, four women were assigned to speak during the meeting. They were also told what to say. They were told that they should tell during the meeting that the villagers are ready to give their land for mining because the agriculture can't sustain their lives.”

Further he said, “Hansada also told us to protest against those outsiders who oppose the mining and tell the journalists too that we are ready to give our land for mining because there is no agricultural work left. Everyone who played some kind of role during the public hearing was paid by the company.”

According to the traditional system of the Adivasis, the village head of Usariya village, Vishnu Honhaga was supposed to chair the public hearing but, instead, it was chaired by the village head of Kodlibad village, Budhram Torkod, as per the script written by the representative of Rungta Mines Ltd. Though, at the beginning of our conversation, the village head of Usariya, Vishnu Honhaga, who was present during the public hearing, said that it was conducted with the consent of all the villagers, when some villagers opposed his view, he unearthed the truth, which villagers were also not aware of.

He said, “I'm head of the village but I was neither allowed to chair the public hearing nor given a chance to speak. The

village head of Kodlibad village, who chaired the hearing was paid Rs.30,000 (approx. US\$500) along with a new mobile phone.” “On the next day a teacher appointed by Rungta Mines, Kandulna of Koldibal village, took me to the office of the Circle Officer located in Manoharpur, and I was told that there is some paper work regarding the caste certificates of the villagers, therefore I have to sign on the register. I did it, but now I know that it was done for the mining. I was misguided by the Circle Officer,” he said with anguished.

Besides, the Mukhiya (head of Panchayat Samity) of Digha panchayat, Guruwari Mundari, revealed how the local political representatives were bribed by the mining companies. She said, “I was invited to participate in the public hearing by both the companies – Rungta Mines Ltd and Electro Steel Casting Ltd. Meanwhile, I got a phone call from the Chairman of District Council, Bamiya Manjhi, who told me that there is an ‘envelope’ kept for you, so you must collect it from me during the public hearing. But I didn’t go to attend the public hearing.”

“The Electro Steel Casting Ltd had requested me to support their mining project and had also offered Rs.5,000 (approx. US\$83) for attending the public hearing held at Baiyahatu village on 13 April 2012, but I refused their offer and didn’t attend the public hearing as I’m against mining in Saranda Forest. I had written a letter to the Deputy Commissioner of West Singhbhum district to cancel the public hearing of the Electro Steel Casting Ltd. There should not be any new mining unless the Adivasis are given individual and community rights under the Forest Rights Act 2006,” she said. She alleged, “The Adivasis are not being given land entitlement papers in Saranda Forest only because the government has a clear intention to hand over the forest to the mining companies.”

In short, the Adivasis of seven villages were simply cheated in so-called public hearing in Saranda Forest by the Rungta Mines Ltd and Electro Steel Casting Ltd. Saranda Forest is becoming a big issue for Adivasis now, similar to the Niyamgiri issue in Odisha,²⁷¹ since 22 new mining leases have been given to big corporations, including Mittal, Jindal, Tata, Rungta and Electro. The important questions are: was this really a public hearing, or rather a public function organised by the Rungta Mines Ltd? How can the administration support such an unethical public hearing? Were government officers also bribed by the Rungta Company and Electro Steel Casting Ltd? Can we demand a high level investigation on this public hearing? How long will Adivasis be cheated, betrayed and displaced in the name of economic growth, development of the nation and greater common good?

271. See e.g. 'Battle for Niyamgiri Hill', *Down to Earth*, at <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/battle-niyamgiri>

Saranda Politics

“Much (work) has to be done. Problems are there. Roads are not good.”²⁷²

Rajnath Singh, 23 September 2014
Union Minister, Government of India

Breaking news in September 2014 promised a visit to Saranda Forest by India’s Union Home Minister, Rajnath Singh, to review the Saranda Development Plan, focused on the present BJP led NDA government’s serious intention to tackle the Naxal issue. On 23 September, he landed at Tholkobad village by chopper in the afternoon. Obviously, he had a clear intention to erase the image of former Union Minister Jairam Ramesh from the Saranda region, bagging political mileage with a view to

272. ‘Much to be done in Saranda: Rajnath’, *Deccan Herald*, 23 September 2014.

influence the upcoming Jharkhand Assembly election. So he had to do things a little differently from Jairam Ramesh. By visiting the forest, hoisting the national flag in the liberated zone, and dancing with the Adivasis, Jairam became a poster politician of the extremist affected regions.

Indeed, Jairam Ramesh was the first Union Minister to visit these areas repeatedly, sometimes even travelling by motorbike, sitting behind a cop. Indeed, Rajnath Singh did not like this, and wanted to make his mark in Saranda Forest. Therefore, he went one step further. Instead of sitting on a bike behind the cop, he decided to ride the bike and asked the cop to sit behind him! A Union Minister riding a motorbike in Saranda Forest became headlines for the national media, and of course, a picture of his bike ride became the day's key photo-op.

After seeing it, Jairam must have kicked himself for missing such a great opportunity to steer a bike through Saranda Forest - which would have left no space for Rajnath Singh to beat his headlines with such marvellous photography. But opportunity never knocks twice, and Jairam Ramesh was now relegated to second place in the world of photo-aggrandizement.

After his Saranda visit, Rajnath held a press conference in Ranchi, where he directly blamed his predecessor's initiative, calling it inadequate. He said, "Much (work) has to be done. Problems are there. Roads are not good." Of course, he did not forget to talk about his bike ride in the forest, commenting "I learnt how to ride when I was a youth. Today I rode a motorcycle while visiting the area."²⁷³ This clearly shows that the visit of Rajnath Singh was more to harvest political mileage than to address the Naxal issue. This is how politics is played in India.

273. Ibid.

Our political leaders bother little about our real issues but spend most of their time bagging the political mileage, to bolster their power.

Nevertheless, on 5 May 2015, the BJP-led Jharkhand government decided to replicate the ‘Saranda model of development’ in ten more Naxal strongholds – a surprising endorsement of an idea conceived by the NDA’s political arch-rival, its predecessor, the UPA government. This also countered the view expressed by Rajnath Singh terming the Saranda development Plan inadequate. Indeed, there can be no doubt about the failure of the Plan, and we have already outlined how it constitutes a failed model of development. Jairam Ramesh himself accepted its failure on 12 September 2012 which he blamed on the BJP-led Jharkhand government, saying: “Centre can only provide assistance for development projects but it is the state government which is responsible for its speedy implementation.”²⁷⁴

It would be interesting to know how politics ensured the failure of the Saranda Development Plan. The Indian government had declared Left Wing Extremism as India’s biggest internal security threat, and the Saranda Development Plan was conceived as one strategy to deal with it. After carrying out joint anti-Naxal operations, the CRPF informed the central government of liberating the ‘liberated zone’ of the CPI-Maoist. This is how Union Minister Jairam Ramesh first visited Saranda Forest with a team of bureaucrats, who designed the Saranda Development Plan together on this visit. Since then he visited Saranda Forest several times, as we have seen, coming up with a new theory for how Naxalism should be addressed – enforcement of security measures combined with development initiatives and political mobilisation.

274. ‘Jairam blames Munda government for tardy development of Saranda’, Webindia123.com, 12 September, 2012.

At the time the BJP-led NDA government was ruling Jharkhand, it believed that successful implementation of the Saranda Development Plan might lead to a political resurrection for the Congress party, who was marginalised in the state. The Congress was trying to take credit for addressing the issue of Naxalim, through a successful model that could be replicated across India's Red Corridor, to attract middle class voters. So the BJP started criticising the Plan. Instead of visiting Saranda Forest to review the Saranda Development Plan, then the Chief Minister Arjun Munda accused Jairam Ramesh of politicising the Plan so as to garner political mileage and regain lost ground for the Congress. This is why the plan was not being implemented properly.

Meanwhile, differences arose between the two allied ruling parties - JMM and the BJP, which led to the fall of their joint government. However, after sometime, the UPA formed a coalition government in the state under the leadership of Hemant Soren in mid-2013. The Union Minister, Jairam Ramesh, had played a big role in forming this government, with the clear intention for a successful implementation of the Saranda Development Plan. He started frequent visits to Saranda Forest again. However, the JMM-led UPA government was less than enthusiastic. Perhaps, JMM leaders were aware that if the plan was implemented successfully, Congress would take all the credit. Instead, Hemant Soren played a different politics. He went to Saranda Forest with the aim of giving jobs to the family members of those killed in the infamous Gua police firing in 1980. This gave new political mileage to the JMM, which directly translated into votes in the last Jharkhand Assembly Election.

Saranda Forest always has significance in Jharkhand politics. In the 1980s, the Forest Movement strengthened the Jharkhand statehood movement, which produced political leaders like

Devendra Manjhi, Shailendra Mahato and KC Hembrom. The Forest Movement also played a very important role in strengthening the regional political party, JMM, which led the Jharkhand statehood movement. However, after Jharkhand state was created in 2000, Saranda region was completely neglected. The political mobilisation was channelled into either electioneering or observation of the Gua martyrs' day. The CPI-Maoist took over the region and started dictating local politics around this time. Anyone who wished to win elections had to get support from the CPI-Maoist. Local politicians who did not have Maoist support simply stopped visiting the villages. This had completely stalled political mobilisation in the region.

After the uproar in the Jharkhand Legislative Assembly during the monsoon session in 2011, concerning the security forces' cold blooded murder of Mangal Honhaga, considerable pressure came to bear on the government. Consequently, the CB-CID inquiry was ordered into Honhaga's death, which confirmed the fake encounter. It was soon after this, more than a decade after the formation of Jharkhand, that political mobilisation began in the Saranda region, with the visit of Union Minister Jairam Ramesh, who highlighted this as a key strategy to deal with Naxalism. Indeed, he was right, in as much as there had been no-one to hear the villagers' grievances, which is why they had approached the Naxals to solve their problems.

Meanwhile, when the UPA lost the election at the centre and state levels in 2014, this locked Saranda's door for Jairam and opened it for Rajnath Singh. This is how Rajnath Singh came to visit Saranda.

Evidently, after forming the government in Jharkhand in December 2013, neither the Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh nor the Jharkhand Chief Minister Raghuvar Das visited

Mission Saranda

Saranda Forest. Perhaps, the Jharkhand Assembly election reminded them that visiting Saranda for political mileage would make no impact in the electoral politics of the state, since the BJP had lost all seats in the Saranda region. Interestingly, the JMM, which was part of both the NDA and the UPA government, won all six Assembly seats of the region. This is what Saranda politics is all about. If Adivasis love someone, then they will die for this person; but if they start hating someone, they will never fall in love again. The BJP and Congress must learn from this. Indeed, the poster politicians are not given mandate in Saranda region.

Are We Indian Too?

“We settled down in this vicinity during the forest movement in 1980 and are eligible for the entitlement of land and community forest under the Forest Rights Act 2006, but we have not yet been given our rights, just because the mining companies have been sanctioned the mining leases in the entire Saranda Forest.”

Vijay Kerai, Jojodera Forest village

On 2 April 2015, while travelling in the southern part of Saranda Forest, we saw a group of Adivasis coming out of the dense forest carrying bows, arrows, axes and other traditional weapons. They had gone for hunting. On the other side of the road, some Adivasi men and women were working in their paddy field and some of them were also returning home after collecting Mahua flowers in the forest. Of course, this is not uncommon. What is shocking is that they

have not yet been recognised as Indian citizens, despite their status as the indigenous peoples of India. They do not possess any document to prove their citizenship. Often, they do not even have voting rights. The security forces are liable to catch them and throw them straight behind bars at any point of time, on allegation of being encroachers or intruders. They do not bother much about this. Yet they live in fear of being thrown out of the forest in case they are not given entitlement to the lands they cultivate.

Vijay Kerai is originally from Bandgaon village. His family settled down at Jojodera village during the Forest Movement in 1980, and since then, has been struggling for entitlement rights to the lands he cultivates. When the Forest Rights Act of 2006 came into force on 1 January 2008, he regained the hope of getting entitlement of the land. So he, along with other villagers, submitted their claim forms to the Circle Officer of Manoharpur. Yet their claims have not been honoured.

Vijay Kerai says, “We settled down in this vicinity during the forest movement in 1980 and are eligible for the entitlement of land and forest under the Forest Rights Act 2006, but we have not yet been given our rights, just because the mining companies have been sanctioned the mining leases in the entire Saranda Forest.” What Vijay Kerai says seems to be true, since the world’s steel giant, Arcelor Mittal India Ltd, has been sanctioned a major mining lease in Sarambatiburu near his village. If Adivasis are given entitlement to their land and forest, this would make it very difficult for the company to get forest clearance under the Forest Rights Act, 2006.

In fact, a sample survey of 17 unrecognised forest villages (see Table 22.1), conducted by political activist Shushil Barla, shows that 431 Adivasi families, with a population of 1,918,

do not possess even basic identity cards proving their Indian citizenship i.e. voter cards, ration cards and adhaar²⁷⁵ cards. This clearly indicates that they are not yet recognised as Indian citizens, and can be forced to desert their forest homes at any time.

According to them, the forest department is also applying a sinister 'divide and rule' policy, by sending certain non-Adivasis to settle these areas, with the clear intention of creating conflict.

As a result, there is a fight between these two communities, which could force an exodus from the forest of the people originally inhabiting it, despite their clear eligibility to get entitlement of the forest land they cultivate, under the provisions of Forest Rights Act 2006, which state that those Scheduled Tribes (Adivasis) who have occupied the forest land before 13 December 2005²⁷⁶ are eligible to claim the entitlement of the land.

Table 22.1: List of unrecognised villages in Saranda Forest

Sl. No.	Village	Number of families	Total population
1.	Kulatupu	47	213
2.	Barikudar	21	109
3.	Jojodera	20	105
4.	Gatigada	12	55
5.	Marida	23	93
6.	Topkoa	19	96
7.	Koenarbera	31	108
8.	Jamardih	33	113

275. National identity card.

276. The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006.

Mission Saranda

9.	Toybo	15	76
10.	Kasigada	24	93
11.	Ratamati	10	57
12.	Nuiyagada	47	226
13.	Rogada	24	109
14.	Jundijora	23	118
15.	Dumagdiri	20	105
16.	Lailor	42	171
17.	Nurda	20	71
	Total	431	1,918

Source: A letter of the NCST dated 17 October 2014

Interestingly, the present BJP led Indian government has given citizenship to 4,300 Hindu and Sikh refugees from Pakistan and Afghanistan in one year.²⁷⁷ It has also given long-term visa to 19,000 refugees in Madhya Pradesh, 11,000 in Rajasthan and 4,000 in Gujarat.²⁷⁸

The government has also declared to grant citizenship to Bangladeshi Hindu refugees. Yet thousands of Adivasis of Saranda Forest, indigenous peoples of India, are not yet given proper citizenship!

Saluka Jojo, originally from Ichakutti village of Chakradharpur, whose family settled down at Jojodera forest village in 1980 questions, “Are we Indian too? Why are we not given citizenship? Is it only because we are Adivasis? Why is the government discriminating against us? Have we committed any crime?”

In response to the complaint of Sushil Barla, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST), New Delhi, sent a letter to the Secretary of the Tribal Welfare Department, government

277. ‘4,300 Hindus, Sikhs from Pakistan, Afghanistan get Indian Citizenship’, *Dawn*, 15 June 2015.

278. ‘Modi government granted citizenship to 4300 refugees from Pakistan, Afghanistan in one year’, *Indian Express*, 14 June 2015.

of Jharkhand on 17 October 2014, stating that 35 forest villages, which were established 20 years back, with a present population of 3,000 Adivasis, are still awaiting recognition under the Forest Rights Act. They depend on agriculture and forest for their livelihood. However, they still lack voter identity cards, ration cards, as well as health and education facilities.²⁷⁹

Under Article 338(a) of the Indian Constitution, the NCST has ordered the state government to issue land entitlement papers and all three sets of citizenship cards, and to provide these villages with basic amenities, including road, electricity, drinking water, health and education services.

The NCST has also asked the Jharkhand government to furnish a compliance report within 15 days of issuing of this letter. The state government has shown itself reluctant to respond.

In 2011, the Inspector General of Police of South Chhotanagpur had written a letter to the Home Commissioner, Ranchi, stating that there are about 200 forest villages in the Saranda Forest, which needed to be recognised; but nothing was done to address it.

On 1 November 2014, when a journalist approached the Deputy Commissioner of West Singhbhum district, Abubakar Siddique, the latter expressed surprise. He said, "I have a doubt whether their names are really missed out."²⁸⁰

He also promised to investigate and ensure the Adivasis' voting rights. "I'll investigate it. If they are missed out from the voters' list then they'll be included and given the voting rights," he said.

279. A letter of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, New Delhi, sent to the Secretary of the Tribal Welfare Department, government of Jharkhand on 17 October 2014.

280. 'Saranda's Adivasis have no voting right', *Dainik Jagran*, 2 November, 2014.

However, after the state Assembly election in December 2014, under the new government formed in the state, these promises of the Deputy Commissioner remained unfulfilled. This is how bureaucracy operates in the state. The Adivasis of these villagers are still running from pillar to post, but no one is ready to hear them and therefore they are still not Indian citizens. Of course, this is shameful for our nation. The biggest question is do they need to become Hindus to ensure their citizenship rights in their own country?

Mining against Life

“Haphazard mining is posing a threat to Saranda's ecology”²⁸¹

K.K. Sharma, Head of Zoology Department
Co-operative College, Jamshedpur

As noted earlier, Saranda Forest is known for its biodiversity and abundance of flora and fauna. The forest is famous for profusely regenerating Sal trees.²⁸² It also has extensive groves of *mango*, *jamun*, *jackfruit*, *mahua*, *kusum*, *tilai* and *gular* trees.²⁸³ In 2011, a state government expert committee collected around 480 samples, including 270 plant species. There are more than 700 different species in Saranda Forest.

281. 'Wake-up call to save Saranda', *The Telegraph*, 23 May 2013.

282. 'Surprise Discoveries in Saranda', *The Telegraph*, 8 December 2011.

283. *Ibid.*

The forest tract of Saranda, due to its density and hilly terrain, supports less fauna than some other wildlife habitats. The direct sighting of animals is very rare owing to its extent, hilly terrain, inaccessibility and dense cover.

However, the good forest cover and adequate water supply throughout the year in the form of perennial streams and rivers provides natural abode for a wide variety of wildlife, including elephants, leopards, wild boar, sloth bears, sambhar and barking deer, Indian hares, jackal, fox, langur and rhesus monkeys, wild cats, giant and flying squirrels, and many snakes, such as krait, Russell's viper, cobra, python and rat snake. Among birds, the red jungle fowl, grey hornbill, woodpeckers, partridges, owls, and night jars etc. are common.²⁸⁴

Saranda Forest is also famous as an 'elephant corridor'. In 2001, the West Singhbhum district was declared an elephant reserve under the central government's elephant project, but the number of elephants went down from 424 in 2002 to 375 in 2005.

The Wildlife Trust of India has identified two elephant corridors in Saranda: Karo-Karampada and Ankua-Ambia. A recent elephant census shows the presence of 150 elephants in Saranda Forest, indicating that yet the Saranda Forest is a natural home and preferred habitat for elephants.²⁸⁵

The entire area of Saranda Forest Division forms part of the core area of the Singhbhum Elephant Reserve. By virtue of its large size, this reserve plays a most important role in harbouring a significant population of elephants, with a relatively less disturbed core area, and the presence of vital corridors or migratory paths in the buffer area.

284. Ibid.

285. 'Four elephant corridors in pipeline for Saranda', *The Telegraph*, 19 January 2015.

The main priorities for elephant conservation in this division include habitat maintenance, increasing forest cover through plantations, conserving crucial elephant corridors, minimising man-elephant conflicts, controlling poaching and possibly evicting encroachers living inside forest areas.

Therefore, the Jharkhand government has been designating 'corridors'²⁸⁶ for the elephants to migrate to locations spread across Kolhan and also into bordering districts of Odisha. The Forest Department is setting up four elephant corridors by making provision of enough fodder along routes that the animals are known to take, so that they do not stray into human habitats and get poached during migration, which starts with the advent of winter every year.²⁸⁷

According to the Saranda Divisional Forest Officer, K.K. Tiwary, the elephants migrate to other forests in herds every September and return to Saranda Forest before the advent of summer.²⁸⁸ But while travelling from Saranda to other places and back, they often deviate into human habitats and damage crops and houses. In many cases, the herds trample villagers to death when these come in contact with them, trying to save their crops and homes.

Hence, the government has decided to demarcate these corridors. He says, "We will study their normal migration routes and plant trees like bamboo and ficus that they are fond of along the paths. Once the routes have enough trees, the elephants will not venture into the villages." The Forest Department claims that on an average, every year two elephants get killed by poachers

286. The corridors that have been identified are from Saranda to Seraikela and Kharsawan jungles, Porahat jungles, Sundergarh and Keonjhar. While Seraikela and Kharsawan jungles fall in Seraikela-Kharsawan district, Porahat is in West Singhbhum.

287. 'Four elephant corridors in pipeline for Saranda', *The Telegraph*, 19 January 2015.

288. *Ibid.*

while on migration, by poison or shooting. However, the iron ore mining projects have adversely affected the elephant habitat. The high iron ore content in the rivers makes the water unfit for drinking and the noise of the trucks carrying iron ore scares elephants away from Saranda Forest.²⁸⁹ Yet the department is completely silent on mining activities as a threat to the elephant world.

This despite the fact that the government accepts through its website that mining of iron and manganese ore deposits is bound to have adverse impact on plants, wildlife and other ecosystem of the area,²⁹⁰ yet several private mining companies were sanctioned new mining leases, which clearly reflects the government's interest.

Indeed, the mining activities have badly affected the biodiversity in terms of soil cover, animals, birds, plants species etc. The habitats of the wild animals, birds and other species were either destroyed or disturbed, resulting in migration or extinction. The vegetation in the forest areas has been under constant threat because of the unsustainable exploitation of minerals.²⁹¹

The Koina and Karo rivers, which flow close to the mines, are full of residues which are directly released into these water bodies when ore is washed. This leaves the water and the river bank red. As a result, Koina's crocodile population has completely vanished and its other wildlife species too face extinction.²⁹²

At present, out of 86,044 hectares of forest in Saranda (including Protected and Reserved Forest) 14,410 hectares is under mining

289. 'Mine or Yours?', *Down to Earth*, 16 January, 2006.

290. www.saranda.nic.in

291. Dr. Nitish Priyadarshi, Effect of mining on environment in the state of Jharkhand, India, 2 May 2012, available at <http://nitishpriyadarshi.blogspot.dk/2012/05/effects-of-mining-on-environment-in.html>.

292. *Ibid.*

leases, and an additional 9,337 hectares, more than 10% of Saranda Forest, has been sanctioned to be opened up for mining,²⁹³ together these are 23,747 hectares, which is almost 28% of the Saranda Forest. What could possibly constitute a more severe threat to Saranda's ecology and biodiversity?

Ironically, on the one hand, the Ministry of Environment and Forest is busy issuing environment and forest clearance to the mining companies, on the other, the Ministry of Science and Technology is making an effort for conservation of natural resources.

The Ministry is conducting a study on the impact of mining on the ecology of Saranda Forest. In 2012, this Ministry sanctioned Rs.70 lakh (\$116,666) for a study project entitled *Changing face of Saranda Forest: implications for conservation of natural resources*. These funds are to pay for a three year project to be carried out by an NGO called Yugantar Bharti, founded by a minister associated with a right wing political party. The NGO claims to be running the 'Save Saranda Campaign', but apart from the study and seminars, it is seldom seen on the ground with the people.

A member of Save Saranda Campaign, Manoj Kumar Singh, while speaking in one of their seminars held in Jamshedpur, said, "We have gathered here with environmentalists, representatives of the State and corporate sector to discuss ways to save Saranda. We are not against development, but it needs to be planned in a way that forests are not harmed." This clearly indicates that this campaign is more or less a State-corporate run show, which is hardly likely to play a significant role in saving Saranda Forest.

293. 'Between Maoists and Mines', Down to Earth, 16-30 April 2012.

However, it is very interesting to know that K.K. Sharma, head of the Zoology Department of Co-operative College, Jamshedpur, is leading this study, and is also the convenor of this 'Save Saranda Campaign'. In his words, "Haphazard mining is posing a threat to Saranda's ecology. We are trying to study the sustained impact of mining activities on the rivers Karo and Koina, the area's socio-economic status and biodiversity, including the precious Sal. We are still in the process of documenting how rampant iron ore mining led to trees and animals in Saranda getting a reddish coat."²⁹⁴

Preliminary investigations have shown that sustained mining has contributed to an increase in forest degradation and ecological imbalance. Iron ore mining is a big threat to ecologically sensitive areas. Surface mining changes an area's hydrological profile, transforming the quality of soil, vegetation and even rocks. Rampant felling leads to breaks in tree canopies, disturbing the age-old habitats of birds and animals. Besides, thousands and thousands hectares of forest is burnt by the security forces every year in atom season to ease out the anti-Naxal operations, which creates upheaval in the forest. In reduced forests, the population of crucial wild animals drops, leading inevitably to inbreeding and weaker offspring.²⁹⁵

Though the iron ore mining is carried out in the name of economic growth and development, the fact is that it has adversely affected the biodiversity of Saranda Forest. Thousands and thousands of wild animals and birds were lost and precious forest and diverse plant communities destroyed merely to meet the human's greed. But who is responsible for it? Indeed, the buck stops at the doors of ruling elites and corporate houses.

294. 'Centre funds study on Saranda damage dossier', The Telegraph, 26 May 2012.

295. *Ibid.*

Is Mittal More Powerful Than Our God?

“What kind of development is this, where there is no place for us and even for our God? This forest belongs to us. Why should we desert it?”

Ritu Champia

resident of Tontogara village

Just imagine, how would you react if you were informed that a corporate house is going to destroy your house, grab your land, and also displace your God in the name of development? Of course, you would be angry. You would resist and fight to save them. This is exactly what is happening for the Adivasis of Tontogada, ever since the steel giant Arcelor Mittal India Ltd acquired the mining lease of Sharambati Buru (Forest).

Tontogada is a hamlet of Jarbeda village, situated in the middle of Saranda Forest. A mining company called Usha Martin Ltd has been excavating iron ore east of this village since 2006. Jarbeda is located at the edge of Sharambati Buru, which comes under Karampada Reserved Forest and is one among 700 hills in Saranda Forest. Jarbeda village combines several hamlets: Tontogara, Chardah, Kalachata, Nuigara, Jombai, Baad and Tintidighat. Nearly 1,000 Ho Adivasis live in these hamlets. Their livelihood is based on agriculture, forest produce and cattle rearing.

Five youths from Jarbeda are employed as daily wage labourers in the Usha Martin Ltd's mines. They are paid Rs.205 (US\$3) per day. But the company employs them according to labour needs, and they only get 2-4 days' work per week. Jarbeda's villagers could earn Rs.5,000 (approx. US\$83) per month from mining. Still, they prefer to live with nature, carrying on agriculture work.

This is brought out by 26 year-old Karantis Purty, who has been working in the Usha Martin Ltd's mines for the last seven years as a daily wage labourer. As he says, "If everyone works in the mines then who will do our agricultural work? Agriculture can feed us for generations but mining is for the time being only, so if we have to choose between these two, then of course, we'll bid for agriculture."

Jarbeda village was settled in 1977 during the Forest Movement. These Adivasis waged a long struggle against forceful displacement by the Forest Department in the 1980s. As we have seen, even after creation of Jharkhand in 2000, there is no difference in enforcement of Adivasi rights. The government has failed to provide basic services to the people. There are no schools, health centres or clean drinking water facilities.

Villagers are forced to go to Kiriburu, Jamada or Chhotanagra for medical treatment. Children who go to school have to travel 10 to 15 kilometers every day. Usha Martin Ltd provides health services only occasionally.

Jarbeda is one of the most interesting villages in India, where Adivasis do not have the concept of private property, still practising community rights over land, forest and water in this era of globalisation, where the market economy has forced most people to give up the concept of community ownership. There is no division of land and other resources among individuals in Jarbeda. Villagers cultivate land and collect from the forest according to their need.

The availability of iron ore has become a major threat to this village's continued existence, since the Jharkhand government has sanctioned a mining lease 202.35 hectares in size to Arcelor Mittal India Ltd.

The villagers are afraid of losing their livelihood sources, and seem determined to fight against Arcelor Mittal Company. Says 28 year-old Sukhlal Nag, "We'll not give our land to Mittal Company. Where would we go?"

There is a Deshawli in this forest. Deshawli is a place of worship, like a church, temple or mosque. Local Ho Adivasis locate their supreme God in this Deshawli, and worship him there. So if the Indian government issues forest and environment clearance to Mittal, this so-called development project will not only displace Adivasis but their God as well.

An Adivasi women in Tontogara, Ritu Champia, asks: "What kind of development is this, where there is no place for us and even for our God? This forest belongs to us. Why should we desert it?"

20 year old Patras is also determined to fight against the Mittal Company. He believes that their God will save the village. He says, "We will fight against the mining company and our God is also with us. He'll save us. Is Mittal Company more powerful than our God, so we should be scared of it? How can God be displaced? How can a company go against God?"

These are very interesting questions that local people have raised, but do they make any difference for the government and mining companies? Do these really care for the people? But does the company really bother about Adivasis' God?

Another interesting aspect is that this village has remained free of Naxalism, even though it is located in the liberated Zone of the CPI-Maoist. Consequently, these villagers are spared police atrocities. However, the forceful displacement of Adivasis can also push them to join the Naxal Movement for their survival. Villagers say that joining the Naxal Movement could be a final strategy to protect their livelihood resources.

Indeed, we have observed again and again that enforcement of unjust policies by the State is the main reason for the spread of the Naxal Movement. For instance, Arcelor Mittal India Ltd has been sanctioned a mining lease in Reserved Forest, while Adivasis are not yet given the forest rights they are entitled to under the Forest Rights Act 2006. They are even denied community rights over their forest. It is clear that they are deliberately denied these rights for the simple reason that the government is determined to hand over their land and forest to Mittal Company. Issuing forest and environmental clearance is likely to lead to designating these Adivasis as encroachers of forest land, alienating them from their ancestral territory and resources.

The government must also remember that Adivasis have rights to freedom of religion, similar to other communities. On this basis alone, they cannot be displaced from the forest. The Supreme Court of India in the case of *Orissa Mining Corporation Ltd versus Ministry of Environment and Forest* reiterated that “Religious freedom guaranteed to STs and the TFDs²⁹⁶ under Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution is intended to be a guide to a community of life and social demands.

The above mentioned Articles guarantee them the right to practice and propagate not only matters of faith or belief, but all those rituals and observations which are regarded as integral part of their religion. Their right to worship the deity Niyam-Raja has, therefore, to be protected and preserved.”²⁹⁷ Despite such rulings, hundreds of Adivasis’ places of worship are being demolished in the name of economic growth, development and nationalism. Why doesn’t the State respect the rights of Adivasis?

The Indian State has always been selective in practicing democracy, especially where Adivasis are concerned. Whenever a religious place of the majority religion is to be demolished for ‘development’, there is always hue and cry. Thousands of temples illegally constructed on the roadside across the country are not demolished to make way for new projects or while extending roads, but Adivasi places of worship are never spared. The continued existence of Adivasis, their Gods and Tontogara village is under a severe threat. Will their rights be protected this time, or will their God’s abode be razed by the State in the name of the greater common good, as has been happening in the country for decades?

296. Scheduled Tribes and Traditional Forest Dwellers

297. The Supreme Court Judgement in the case of *Orissa Mining Corporation Ltd Vs Ministry of Environment and Forest*, 18 April 2013.

Concluding Remarks

“In fact, we have made the Adivasis into a backward group, to be looked down upon and pitied, removed from our march towards industrialisation and the fulfilment of corporate greed.”²⁹⁸

Mallika Sarabhai

Renowned Indian Classical Dancer

It was midsummer. The weather was too hot, making it tough to stay outside the police headquarters of Jharkhand. However, whether it is summer or winter, the temperature of the police headquarters is always hot, especially when these are located in the Red Corridor. I wanted to get back my passport, which was impounded by the Regional Passport Office, Ranchi, because of an adverse police report. So I went to talk with the Additional

298. Gladson Dungdung, *Whose country is it anyway?* Kolkata: Adivaani, 2013.

Director General of Police (ADGP) of the Special Branch. Once the official rituals were over, I entered into the ADGP's office.

While, we were discussing the matter, a young woman entered the office. This lady was none other than the Superintendent of Police for anti-Naxal Operations. The ADGP introduced me to her. He said, "Madam, this is Gladson Dungdung, the right hand of Jairam Ramesh, the Hon'ble Union Minister for Rural Development." "He is the man, who has been questioning our anti-Naxal operations," he added lightly. "Sir, I know him by name very well," the woman responded with a smile. What a wonderful introduction - a person against the police, but right hand of a Union Minister! After discussing matters with them, I left the office wondering about their perception.

Besides, the high ranking officers, there are many other people who keep coining me as the right hand of Jairam Ramesh, and some even go beyond this to portray me as one of the middle men of the Congress Party. The most interesting part is that, though I was coined as the right hand of Jairam Ramesh, yet he has a completely different idea about me. He believes that I am one of the sympathisers of the CPI-Maoist!

This is how people think about me within the government and the outside. Almost everybody in the city questions my identity, but there are only a few who really praise the work I do for the people. What I attempt is merely to establish the reality on the ground so that there would be change in the lives of the Adivasis of Saranda Forest and elsewhere too.

Historically, the Saranda Forest belongs to the Adivasis. They are the first settlers of the territory and they have undisputed symbiotic relationship with the forest. The British invasion resulted in alienation from their land, territory and resources,

which still continues to this day. However, the Adivasis' resistance to the denial of their ownership rights over their land, territory and resources has never ceased despite the State attempts to suppress them through police firing, brutal killings in so-called crossfire, torture, sexual exploitation of their women and false implication of innocent Adivasis as Naxals.

The Saranda Forest contains 25% of the iron ore deposit of the country. The government and mining companies generate approximately Rs.3000 crore (approx. US\$500 million) per annum from the forest but they have failed to provide health services, education facilities, drinking water, employment and adequate food to the Adivasis. Electricity, concrete houses and village pitch roads are still a distant dream for most of them. One can see the malnourished children, anaemic women with scanty clothes, villagers consuming highly iron contaminated water, most families having only one meal a day and youth straying for employment. Yet the Indian ruling elites are not ashamed of this. Indeed, the natural resources have become a curse for the Adivasis and a blessing for others, who enjoy the maximum benefit of the industrial development.

When I filed the complaint of gross human rights violations, a team of the National Human Rights Commission visited Saranda Forest to assess the situation. But the Commission failed to address the issues raised in the complaint because the head of the team was suffering from the 'favourism syndrome'. Most of the government institutions in the country fail because often actions are taken on the basis of power positions, relationships, prejudices, accessibilities and personal gains. If the perpetrator of a crime is powerful and he/she has connections with the ruling elites, there is no chance of getting justice for a poor person. Thus, the marginalised people are always denied justice and perpetrators enjoy the privileges.

During my last visit to Saranda Forest in April 2015, I was shocked to see the ground realities of the highly hyped Saranda Development Plan, which was propagated as the development model for the Naxal affected areas.

In December 2011, while launching the plan, the Union Minister Jairam Ramesh said that all 56 villages of Saranda Forest would be developed as model villages, and the same plan will be replicated in Naxal affected areas of Chhattisgarh and Odisha. Indeed, spending Rs.250.48 crore (approx. US\$41.7 million) for the development of merely 56 villages is a big deal. I had not seen such a similar generous government programme in my life time.

Unfortunately, the result is pathetic. The government has not even been able to build one out of the five planned residential schools and six watershed projects for these model villages. Similarly, out of ten planned IDCs, only one centre has come up at Digha but remains useless and out of eleven planned roads, only two roads were completed in more than three years. What more evidence does one need for assessing the success or failure of such a plan?

While travelling through these villages, no one would have the feeling of being in a model village. All the villages remain the same ordinary villages as we have across the country. The Saranda Development Plan has failed and the responsibility lies with the Indian bureaucracy, who has failed to implement it.

Perhaps, Indian bureaucrats pretend to believe that whatever they decide is best, which is why they never bother to talk to the beneficiaries before planning a programme for them. Consequently, we have not even had ten successful programmes in our country for the last six decades. This should hardly make us proud. For instance, pick up any programme like Indira

Awaz Yojna,²⁹⁹ Old Age Pension, MNREGA,³⁰⁰ Tribal Welfare Programmes or scholarships for poor students, and talk to government officials, media persons or beneficiaries. You will find that everyone has complaints about implementation, mostly concerning rampant corruption. But still the State fails to change how it operates. Basically, it is more cultural problem than the failure of delivery mechanism. Corruption, immorality and favouritism have become part and parcel of Indian culture.

In the case of the Saranda Development Plan, one could of course argue that it was never meant to succeed because the interest in furthering the interests of the mining companies was bigger than the interest in developing poor Adivasi villages. Evidently, a massive joint anti-Naxal operation was carried out in Saranda's western part, where 22 new mining leases had been sanctioned to mining companies.

In addition to this, the process of mining clearances of these companies was also going on in different stages in the Ministry of Environment and Forest. For instance, the Union Ministry of Environment and Forest gave clearance to Jindal Steel & Power Ltd for diversion of 512.4 hectares of forest for its iron ore mining project and diversion of 998.7 hectares of forest for iron and Manganese ore mining by JSW Steel Ltd.³⁰¹

Some of the mining companies have already started the ground work. For example, Tata Steel Ltd has conducted a survey of Ankua reserved area and the Jindal Steel & Power Ltd has also conducted a survey of its intended lease area. Similarly, the Electro Steel Casting Ltd and Rungta Mines Ltd conducted public hearing at Usaria village with the support of the district administration.

299. Indira Awaz Yojna is a housing scheme for the poor families.

300. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.

301. 'Jharkhand lost Rs.14,000 cr worth natural resources', Deccan Herald, 30 August 2014.

And while the government sanctions mining leases to the mining companies, it has failed to give the Adivasis in the same region their due rights under the Forest Rights Act 2006. Do we need any more evidence to prove the government's real intentions?

History suggests that the failure of the State, exploitation of poor and injustice inflicted on the marginalised people have paved the way for the emergence of the Naxal Movement in India. Unfortunately, the Naxal Movement has also failed in achieving its prime objective of delivering justice to the people. It seems that the Naxal Movement has been passing through a very critical phase.

Today, there is a big difference between theory and practice of the Naxal Movement at the grassroots. For instance, the CPI-Maoist claims it is fighting a war on behalf of the Adivasis against the State and the capitalists, but at the same time, it is protecting the mining companies in Saranda Forest by taking big amounts of money as levy. It looks similar to a private security agency, which provides security to the corporate houses and gets paid for the service.

Apart from this, there are many reported cases of killing of innocent Adivasis, having sexual relationships with Adivasi girls at gunpoint and exploiting the villagers. Evidently, the Naxal Movement has added more problems to the lives of Adivasis instead of soothing their pain, suffering and sorrow.

The Naxal Movement has also made it easy for the State to coin all the 'Democratic Movements' as Naxal Movement and suppress them. Dissent voices are suppressed by both sides. At the end, in the war between the State and the CPI-Maoist, the Adivasis are the losers. They are losing their land, territory, resources, lives and livelihood. These who gain are the corporate houses, politicians, bureaucrats, middlemen and

contractors. Though the State claims to be re-establishing peace and good governance by cleansing the CPI-Maoist from the Red Corridor of India, the case of Saranda Forest proves that the State's war against the CPI-Maoist is not about bringing peace and good governance in the conflict zones but rather a war for grabbing the natural resources and handing those over to the corporate houses in the name of economic growth, progress and development.

The corporate model of development, which the Indian State has been promoting for decades, is not only eliminating the Adivasis, it has also become the main cause of destruction of forest and biodiversity. Today, the Adivasis do not expect much from the Indian State but what they are saying is that they will not accept further alienation from their natural resources.

The State has not only sold out their lands, forests, water, hills and minerals but even their God was sold to the mining companies. Adivasis question this development model, asking that what kind of development is this, where there is no place for them and even for their God? How can someone sell their lands, forests, water, hills and minerals without their consent? How can their God be sold to the mining companies? They can not even imagine about it?

But is the Indian State ready to listen to them? Of course not, that's why the present Indian government is reluctant to enforce the constitutional and legal provisions made to safeguard Adivasi rights, or is even removing them. The Land Acquisition Ordinance promulgated in 2015 by the BJP led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is one of such worst examples of this.

There is an urgent need to rethink and include all rights holders and stakeholders in making a roadmap for India's development.

At the same time, all the finance institutions, including the World Bank, European Commission and many other institutions and donor agencies, who provide funds and support to the Indian government's development and economic growth initiatives, must rethink their support. The same goes for those investing in the mining industry. They must all ensure compliance with international law and standards and respect the rights of the Adivasis while doing business. They must act with due diligence and ensure that their money is not contributing to the destruction of the livelihoods and lives of India's Adivasis but rather facilitates their economic growth, enhances their standard of living and empowers them. The aim of development must be to bring happiness on every face not tears in every eye.

About the Author

Gladson Dungdung is a Human Rights Activist, Author, Researcher, Public Speaker and Motivator. He comes from the Kharia Adivasi community of the Indian state of Jharkhand. He is the author of *Whose country is it anyway?* and *Ulgulan Ka Sauda*, and co-author of *Crossfire*, *Vikas Ke Kabargah* and *Jharkhand main Asmita Sangharsh*. He has edited *Nagri Ka Nagara* and *Jharkhand Human Rights Report, 2001-2011*. He has also written more than 200 articles focused on human rights issues, Adivasi rights, displacement, politics and social change, published by daily newspapers, magazines, journals and news web portals.

He served as an honorary member in the Assessment and Monitoring Authority under the Planning Commission of India (government of India) from May 2011 to April 2013, and was awarded the Samata Ratan Award, 2014, for his extraordinary work for the Adivasi communities of India. His key themes have been those addressed in this book: gross human rights violations in India's Red Corridor, and the well-being of Adivasis who live in Saranda Forest.

