

ANALYSIS OF AWARENESS OF NAGESIA TRIBES ABOUT THE BAUXITE MINING IN JHARKHAND

M.K.Joseph

Principal, St. Xevier's College, Latehar, Jharkhand

Abstract:

The whole Nagesia community knows about the bauxite mining and almost all know that the mining authority is Birla company in jharkhand state. This shows that even though the vast majority of them are illiterate, they know about the mining activities in that area. The frequent trips of the mining magnates and a survey of the area by the same people alerted the Nagesias. The few matriculates in the villages questioned the company men about the purpose of their operation. This led to the formation of the Pat Atragami Sangh to fight mining in an organised way. The organisation started calling regular meetings of the people in each village to create awareness among the people regarding the threat of mining. As a result the Nagesias are aware of the bauxite mining in jharkhand and about the people who are responsible for it. The major finding is this investigation is, the company did not consult the people before it began its operations in the area. The consent of the people was not taken before the survey and demarcation of the land for mining. Even though some people gave their consent it was acquired through foul means, exploiting the simplicity and ignorance of the people.

Introduction: In the process of exploitation of natural resources humans have forgotten that there has to be and equilibrium between the depletion of natural resources and their replenishment, between transformation of the natural habitat and the preservation of those elements in it which are needed for human well being [1]. This has led to a conflicting situation between the human interest and the preservation of nature. In order to ease this tension and conflict humans have to take precautionary methods before further attempting to exploit the natural resources. In India, the natural resources lie mostly where the tribals dwell.

All the respondents are aware of the bauxite mining project in the western plateau, Palamau, Bihar [2].

Table 1 : Awareness about Mining Authority

Mining authority	Frequency	Percentage
Birla Company	62	98.4
State Government	01	01.6
Total	63	100

All except one respondent said that the mining authority is the Birla Company. The lone respondent believed that it was the state government. Actually HINDALCO owned by the Birla Company is the mining authority.

Table 2 : Respondents' source of knowledge regarding mining.

Source of Knowledge	Frequency	Percentage
Birla Company	23	36.5
Common talk	20	31.8
Pat Agragami Sangh	20	31.7
Total	63	100

A substantial percentage of the respondents (36.5%) said that their source of knowledge was Birla Company. Birla Company is the right source of information to the above-mentioned group and from them the other two groups also came to know. In each case the information is correct. The second group came to know about the mining because people talk about it [3]. The third group came to know from the people's organisation called the Pat Agragami Sangh.

Table 3: Awareness about mining survey :

Awareness about survey	Frequency	Percentage
Aware	43	68.25
Not aware	20	31.75
Total	63	100

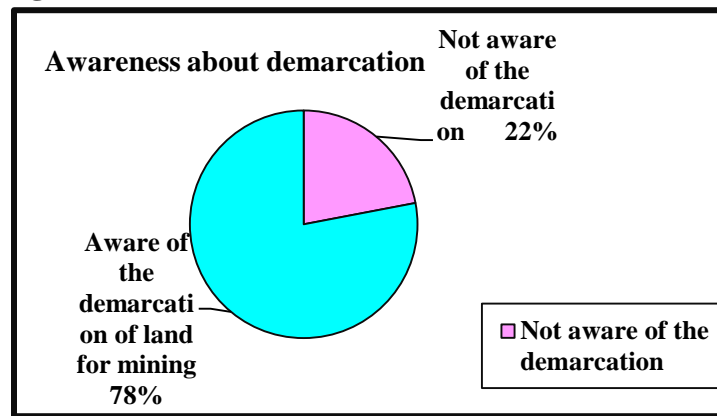
There was survey conducted by the Birla Company in the early 1980s, without the consent and knowledge of the Nagesia tribals. The company men camped in one of the villages in the western 'Pat' for a month and conducted a survey to find out whether bauxite was available in that area [4]. The company men did not reveal their identity at that time and also the purpose of the survey. They told the people that they were government officials come to check whether drinking water was available in that area so that they could dig tube wells for the people. There is a problem of drinking - water in that area [5]. The people depend on a few 'Jharnas' for drinking - water and therefore the people did not suspect the Birla men at that time.

Table 4 : Awareness of survey authority :

Awareness about survey authority	Frequency	Percentage
Aware about Birla	30	47.6
Aware about Government	05	08
Not aware	08	12.7
Not Applicable	20	31.7
Total	63	100

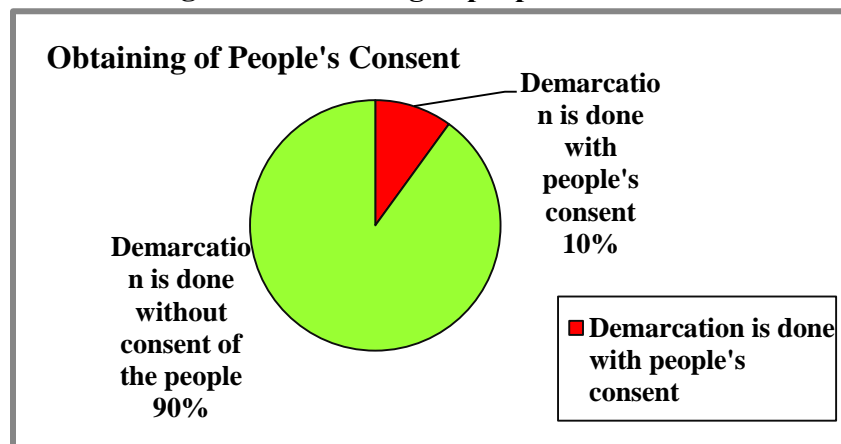
The significant finding here is that all those respondents who were aware of the mining survey were not aware of the survey authority or did not have the right information regarding the survey authority [6]. Only 47.6% of the total respondents have the correct knowledge regarding the survey authority. The majority of the respondents are either not aware of the mining authority or have incorrect knowledge concerning it [7].

Figure 1 : Awareness about demarcation of the Land:



The vast majority of the respondents (77.8%) were aware of the demarcation of the land for mining. They said that though many of them were not aware of the survey, yet they know about the demarcation because the Birla Company tried to start the mining in a number of places saying that they had acquired the mining lease from the government [8, 9]. The rest of the respondents did not know about the demarcation.

Figure 2: Obtaining of people’s consent :



The vast majority of respondents (90.5%) said that consent of the people was not taken before the demarcation of the land but forgery was used to obtain the lease [10, 11]. The Birla men disguised themselves as government officials come to execute government schemes in the villages – they distributed money, clothes and a pair of bullocks to some of the people and got

their signatures on plain white sheets. Later the Birla men used these signatures as proofs of consent. The signatories include dead men also. This was found as true by an inquiry conducted by the district administration [12]. A small minority of people said that the consent of the people was taken. Even those who said they were not aware of the mining survey said that the consent was not taken before the demarcation [13].

Table 5 : Respondents' fear of uprooting:

Uproot	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	56	88.9
No	06	09.5
No clear answer	01	01.6
Total	63	100

The vast majority of the respondents (88.9%) said that the mining would lead to their uprooting. They fear that once the mining starts they would be forced to leave their ancestral land and go to unknown places [14]. They also believe that land is life for them and if they lose their land, they lose their life [15]. A small minority disagreed with the majority opinion whereas one respondent could not give a clear answer.

Table 6 : Awareness about Uprooting authority :

Awareness about uprooting authority	Frequency	percentage
Birla	55	87.3
Government	01	01.6
No clear answer	01	01.6
No uprooting	06	09.5
Total	63	100

The vast majority (87.3%) said that the uprooting authority was Birla Company. For one respondent it was the government and another could not give a clear answer. For a small minority of 9.5% this question was not applicable as they did not consider that the mining would lead to their uprooting [16].

Table 7 : Land loss

Total land loss	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	56	88.9
No	06	09.5
No clear answer	01	01.6
Total	63	100

The vast majority said that parting away with part of the land would lead to total land loss. One respondent could not answer the question saying no one could predict about the future [17]. For a small minority there would not be total land loss. Figures six and seven also show something similar.

Compensation: The significant finding is that there is no clear policy for compensation. The Nagesias know that the company is offering some money as compensation. The vast majority does not know how much money is offered as compensation per acre of land [18]. There is a small but significant number of people forsee this aspect as a ploy of the company to cheat the people. This they say is to manipulate the ignorance and simplicity of the people. As a whole the people are aware of the foul means used by the company to acquire lease. The company claims that its moto is development of the area and the people. It is not talking about uprooting or displacement. The company is asking only part of the peoples' land for mining. The Nagesias perceive it as a ploy of the company to divert the attention from the real issue by not talking about uprooting but talking about the development of the area. The Nagsias are aware of the bauxite mining project and the problems the people face. A very small minority directly or indirectly supports the mining. The Nagesias believe that these people were bought by the company as the Nagesias as a group were opposing the mining [19]. They also say that the company has adopted the policy of divide and rule. Among the Nagesias there is a significant number of people who are educated and highly aware of the seriousness of the issue. They are in the forefront of the resistance struggle.

Ideology: The Nagesias, except a very small minority are not willing to give their land. Among the highly aware group, there is a small but significant number of people who perceive and alternate solution to the present problem. They think that the people can do the mining by themselves. They also argue that the government should encourage the local people to do the mining if it wants to develop the area. This has two advantages. First, it will help the people to develop their area. Second, the natural resources could be exploited for the benefit of the people and the nation. It would keep the alien forces out of their land [20]. They also say that since the Tribal Self-rule Act is passed with the 83rd constitutional amendment, they are legally empowered to take their own decisions regarding the mining and development of the area. All the Nagesias who are opposing the mining project have either directly or indirectly participated in the resistance activities. They believe that land means life for them. It is their primal duty to protect their ancestral land. Their life is closely connected to land, jungle and nature. They believe that once their land and jungle is destroyed, they have not place on which to dwell. They will become a nomadic people [21]. The tribal culture and identity is sacred to them. Hence they say, the protest against the bauxite mining is not only for their survival but also to protect tribal culture and identity. The people who are more aware of the various dimensions of the mining are actively involved in orgtanising the protest meetings, rallies and dharnas.

They also lead the people in their resistance. The highly aware group has more reasons to protest and more fears. They fear the breakdown of the egalitarian community life of the Nagesias. The present stable and peaceful social life will be destroyed. They fear they will be exploited by the alien forces who have access to money and power. The traditional worship place will be defiled and destroyed. This could invite the anger of the spirits. They also fear that the advent of the non-tribals will result in the entry of non-tribal spirits which they fear are more powerful and malevolent than their spirits. They also fear that the tribal womenfolk will be exploited by the non-tribals as is happening in the neighbouring mining areas [22]. They fear that the tribal girls can be easily lured by money and false promises of marriage. As a result there are unwed mothers and increasing number of abortions among the tribal womenfolk of neighbouring mining areas.

Resistance: The significant finding is that the people are vehemently protesting against the bauxite mining. The Birla Company did make several efforts to start the mining but due to strong opposition and resistance from the people, it had to retreat from the area soon after the mining operations began. The people have adopted various strategies such as organizing village meetings in every village to create awareness[23]. The village meetings are attended by everybody in the village. They also organise rallies at the block level. They blocked the road to prevent the entry of any vehicle. They twice conducted dharna at the mining site. The people sat on a hunger strike to get the attention of the district administration and the press. The highly-aware group is more active and involved in all the activities. The mining is stopped due to the resistance and people see it as their victory at least temporarily. The major finding is that the leadership of the resistance is in the hands of the local Nagesias [24].

Perception of People's Strength: The major finding is, the Nagesias perceive that they have the strength to resist the mining. It comes from their organisation and the unity of the people. Barring a few houses in two villages the Nagesias of the twenty-two villages are united in their protest against the bauxite mining [25]. They believe that their organisation with the help of voluntary organisation as is able to resist the bauxite mining.

Voluntary organisations and Political Parties: The major finding is that the people are not alone in their struggle. They are ably supported by Bharat Jan Andholan, Kisan Mazdoor Sangattan, Jan Sangharsh Samiti, the Catholic Church and the Communist Party of India. The voluntary organisations help the people through awareness programmes mainly through meetings. They help them to organise rallies and dharnas. They also help them through legal actions. The significant finding is that the voluntary organisations play supportive roles, helping the local leaders to take their own decisions. The combined efforts of the people as well as voluntary organisations enthused the confidence of the people [27].

Response of the District and Block Administration: The people think that the local block administration is siding with the company. The local block development officer and officer in-charge of police visited the mining area and requested the people to allow the mining for their own development [28]. The people shot back at them with a simple question: whose development? They insist that the development should aim at the development of the local area. In the name of development they do not want to be thrown out of their home land [29].

Future Plan of Action: The Nagesias are prepared for any further action to prevent the mining. The major finding is that the people would continue the awareness programmes, dharnas and rallies whenever needed. They also plan court action to challenge the lease. Their slogan is “Jaan Denge Zamin Nahi” “We part with our life not with our land”. This sums up the feelings and determination of the Nagesias. Their slogan is, *Jaan denge zamin nahai*, we part with our life not with our land. This sums up the feelings and determination of the people [30].

Recommendations to the State Government:

1. The proposed bauxite mining will result in the uprooting of the people from their ancestral land. It also will result in deforestation of the area. Hence the government should either cancel the lease or make adequate arrangements to ensure the safety of the people and the environment.
2. The present paradigm of development is not acceptable to the Nagesia tribals. Let a new and reasonable paradigm of development be devised which will enhance the quality of life of the people and initiate people’s participation.
3. According to the eighty-sixth constitutional amendment, the Gram Sabha of the tribals has the right to take the decision regarding mining. The government should respect the constitution and leave the matter to be decided by the Gram Sabha.

Recommendations to the Birla Company:

1. The Birla Company should approach the Gram Sabha of the Nagesia tribals before attempting any mining activities in their area.
2. The company must stop the foul means of getting people’s support for mining. It must stop the divide and rule policy and in its place initiate dialogue with the people.
3. It must initiate people’s participation in the process of development.

Recommendations to voluntary organisations:

1. The voluntary organisations could play a vital role by becoming a link between the people and the company.
2. The unique feature of the struggle is the life-and-death problem of the people. Voluntary organisations could work for fruitful settlement of the problem by playing the role of mediator.

3. Voluntary organisations could strengthen the local leadership by continuing their support to the people, helping them and assisting them in legal matters.

Conclusion: It is true that the nation needs development and progress and therefore it has to exploit the mineral and other wealth of the country but it should not be at the cost of the people. The present paradigm of development in tribal habitats necessarily entails uprooting of the tribal population from their own land. The alienation of tribal land and resources by non-tribal affluents is unjust. It is done in the name of development. In many cases it is the poor and the illiterate tribals who have been made victims of the developmental activities, and progress, and in the process have become expendable commodities as in the cases of the Narmada project, Koyalkaro project, Chandil Dam as well as various mining projects in Chhotanagpur area. Land is life for the tribals and if it is taken away from them, their life is taken –according to an old saying among the tribals. The Nagesias have no other means of survival except cultivation as the researcher has found out. Hence their logic is valid: if they lose their land, they lose their life. The tribal world-view as the researcher has mentioned in the first chapter is holistic. Human beings are in a harmonious relationship with the Supreme Being, the spirits, and nature. The present problem of bauxite mining threatens to destroy the existing harmonious relationship. The Nagesias are not prepared to adjust to any situation that threatens their tribal identity, culture and make them a nomadic people once again. There are similar mining projects in the near by districts. Sixty-five percent of the respondents said that they did have some knowledge of bauxite mining in the neighbouring locality, but 35% had no such knowledge.

References:

1. Dalton E.T.(1872) Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal R.D. Press, 11/B Chowringhee Terrace, Calcutta.
2. Desai A. R. (ed) (1987) Agrarian Struggles After Independence.
3. Ekka. W. (1984) The Nagesia of Chattisgarh: Danda A.K. Anthropological survey of India Government of India, Calcutta.
4. Fernades W. (1989) Development, Displacement and (ed) Rehabilitation, ISI, Delhi.
5. Alexander K.C (1991): Tribals Rehabilitation And Jahgirdar M.P. Development, Rawat Prasad R. R. Publications, Jaipur, India.
6. Bhowmik P.K. (1981): Some Aspects of Indian Anthropology, Institute of social Research and Allied Anthropology, Calcutta.
7. Hasnain N. (1991) Tribal India Today, Harnam Publications, New Delhi.

8. Joshi B.L. (1982) Displacement and Rehabilitation: A study of Dam Affected Rural community,
9. Primal Prakashan, Aurangabad.
10. Fernades W. (1993) The Indegenous Question: (ed) Search for and Identity, ISI, Delhi.
11. Fuchs S. (1963) Land Scarcity and Land Hunger Among some Aboriginal Tribes Of Western Central India, NewDelhi.
12. Gupta R. (1981) The Tribal unrest and Forest Management in Bihar, IIM, Ahmedabad.
13. Mathur L.P. (1988) Resistance Movement of Tribals of India, Himanushu. Publications, Udaipur, Rajasthan.
14. O'Malley L.S.S. (1907) The first District Gazetteer of Palamau.
15. Prabhu P. (1982) Transcience and Transition in Suresh V. social Institutions, the warli. Experience, ISISD, Madras.
16. Prasad N. (1961) Land and people of Tribal Bihar: Bihar Tribal Institute government of India, Ranchi.
17. Poitevin D.V.D (1981) Roots of a Peasant Movement Weid Rural community Development Association, Shubhada-Saraswati, Pune.
18. Russel and Hiralal (1916) The Castes and Tribes of Central Provinces of India, Vol. 4, London.
19. Roy Burman P.K. (1971) National Movement Among Tribals: Secular Democracy Annual Number, vol. 4, Delhi.
20. Risley H.H. (1891) The tribes and castes of Bengal. Ethnographic Glossary vol. it Firma Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta.
21. Roy Chowdhary P.C. (1961) Bihar District Gazetteers, Palamau, Secretarait Press, Bihar.
22. Sinha S.P. (1993) Conflict and Tension in Tribal Society, concept Publishing Company, New Delhi.

23. Sharma S. (1994) Tribal Identity and Modern World UN, University Press, Tokyo.
24. Roy Burman P.K. (1979) Challenges and Responses in Rao M.S.A Tribal India, Manohar, New Delhi.
25. Singh K.S.(1994) People of India, The Scheduled Tribes, Vol. III, Oxford University Press, Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta.
26. Sharma B.D. (1997) Tide Turned, The Makings of Tribal Self-Rule in the First Central Law Sahayog, New Delhi.
27. Ranjan Lal. R. (1992) Land Grab, Birla Style. The 1992, September Illustrated Weekly of India 19-25 PP. 7-9.
28. Prabhu P. (1996) Tribal Movements: Resistance to Resurgence, Towards People Centred Development, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.
29. Thukral E.G. (1993) Big dams, Displaced People (ed) Sage Publication India Ltd. New Delhi.
30. Pathy J. (1996) Contemporary Struggles of the Tribal Peoples of India. Towards People centred Development, Tata Institute of Social Science, Mumbai.