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**Pain, Politics and Persistence:
The Power of Powerlessness**

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Pain, Politics and Persistence: The Power of Powerlessness

Ladheire mukti achhi, muktire santi achhi
-There is freedom in movement and peace in freedom.

-Chakradhar Alda*, 2007

ABSTRACT

The paper tries to understand the discourse and practice of different social movements (in Orissa) in generating an alternative social power that creates a space and hope for an alternative to development. In the process, the paper makes a critical assessment of the authoritative and destructive forces (power) of the state and market in killing and displacing the tribals and its resulting pain and suffering the tribals endure without losing sight of the attributes they give to their own actions of resistance and the emergent power the tribals persists not only to challenge tyranny but also to mitigate misery.

Keywords : development, displacement, tribal movement, pain, politics of the weak, alternative social power, Orissa

INTRODUCTION

Arturo Escobar's post-modern critique of development discourse (1988, 1992a, 1995) concludes that "underdevelopment" is produced in the discourse and practice of "development" where government, communities and individuals of "Third World" are seen as "underdeveloped" or placed under such conditions where they tend to see themselves as such. This produced "underdevelopment" is manifested in different life-spaces within the Third World as well. For preferential purposes, in India the tribals are seen as "the primitive", "the savaged", "the backward" and "the most underdeveloped"; even though they do not feel or see themselves as such; offering a highlighted assumption that the tribals are helpless and powerless. The colonial legacy created a space for the imposition of development interventions in tribal areas. Assuming a paternalistic charge, the State continues with its inherent imperialist model of development. Apprehending the role of the Government in championing the cause of downtrodden, *alternative state powers* started emerging with altruistic promises for the poor. And of late, imposing the principle of free-market economy on the tribals as panacea for all the miseries they face; the donor agencies and the multi-national companies (MNCs) whose main purpose is exploitation

of abundant natural and mineral resources are brought into the very heart-land of tribal areas even sometimes violating the constitutional mandates threatening their very survival and livelihood. What seems contentious is that the State, mediating the issue with the same mystic justification – where “development” is a myth, seeks the proliferation of not only the companies but also mass compliance.

On the other hand, the tribals “those who were dissatisfied with this state of affairs had to struggle for bits and pieces of freedom within it, in the hope that in the process a different reality could be constructed” (Escobar 1995: 5). Thus, it is not surprising to find a lot of protest movements among the tribals fighting a battle against the anti-poor “development” of the State and MNCs. The government clearly taking the sides of the corporate is bent upon using repressive measures, sometimes leading to massacre of tribals, to squash genuine people’s movements (Debaranjan 2008; Sarangi, Pradhan and Mohanty 2005).

Here proposing to understand the power of the powerlessness, and even claiming that the tribals, through people’s movements, generate an *alternative social power* to challenge the established structure of power may be viewed as naïve, glorified and even presumptuous. I invite you, however, to reflect on the discourse and practice of different tribal movements in Orissa – namely the anti-TATA mining movement in Kalinganagar of Jajpur district, anti-Utkal Alumina International Ltd. movement in Kashipur of Rayagada district, save Gandhamardan movement in Paikamala of Baragarh district, anti-land alienation movement in Raighar and Jharigam of Nabarangpur district and *Ol-Chiki* movement in Rairangpur of Mayurbhanj district – in creating a space and hope for an alternative to development. In the process, we will make a critical assessment of the authoritative and destructive forces (power) of the state and the market in killing and displacing the tribals and the resulting pain and suffering the tribals endure without loosing sight of the attributes they give to their own actions of resistance and the emergent power they count on.

In analyzing these questions the present paper makes a humble attempt a critical ethnography¹ of social movements in tribal Orissa with a blend of both theoretical and empirical evidences. The paper begins with an invitation to the recent incident of police firing in Kalinganagar followed by the immediate response of the tribals of Kalinganagar ‘not to be displaced’ and the rationale thereof. Further, it is argued that the issue of land becomes politicized in an environment of contested development. The paper proceeds analyzing how individual becomes a contested site and space for incorporation of social suffering and social memory within the domain of state politics and, in turn, how social suffering and memory

awaken the consciousness of tribals leading to production of knowledge, and resistance. The dynamics of this social consciousness helps the subalterns to regenerate an alternative social power for dealing with the unfavourable situations and learning, and forcing the government to learn, how they would like to be governed. It is argued further, in the final section of the paper, that the ultimate goal of all these social movements is not *resistance* but nearly always *survival* or *persistence*. And today the persistence is “not only against tyranny but also against misery” (Appadurai 2007: 34).

THE INCIDENT....

I reached Kalinganagar just a few days after the police firing. The tension in the area was still running high in the air. With the exception of a few local journalists, the entry to Kalinganagar site was highly restricted by the *andolanakaris* (the activists). I met Dr. Pratap Kumar Singh, a lecturer in Anthropology in Sukinda College and a local elite, who was staying in Duburi – the local market of Kalinganagar. He took me on his bike. After driving just two kilometers from Duburi we entered into the “no entry” zone of Kalinganagar. We reached Ambagadia, the village where the funeral fire of the martyrs had not cooled down. He introduced me to one of his students, Sony Jamuda, an eyewitness of the police firing. In our second meeting, Sony narrated the incident of police firing from her experience as follows:

“It was January 2, 2006. The day broke. The clock read 7.00 am. Some of our people have already consumed the rest of the available country liquor that they have prepared for the celebration of new the year. We were expecting something to happen as we were told by the leaders of Bisthapan Birodhi Jana Manch (BBJM) – the people’s forum against displacement – in a meeting yesterday that TATA Steel Company Ltd. (here after TATA) was going to start its construction of boundary wall at Champakoila village. We decided to oppose as we were not given our rights and dues. Some persons of nearby villages rushed to us to deliver the message about the arrival of company people in Champakoila. The news spread like wild fire. The reaction of the people was spontaneous. Many people rushed to the site. I along with my mother, Kuni, and friends, Baijayanti Jamuda and Rani Jamuda, reached the southern end of Champakoila football field. Gradually a huge crowd joined us with an equal strength of female folk. At the other end of the football field, I saw TATA Company contractors, accompanied by the top government officials of the district i.e. the District Collector (D.C.), the Superintendent of Police (S.P.) and the Additional District Magistrate (A.D.M.) with the protection of 27 platoons of strong armed police force². Six bulldozers and other heavy duty earth moving equipments started leveling our paddy fields.

On seeing the work in progress, we were wondering what to do.

Decidedly, a delegation met the government officials to question the illegal occupation of our private land even without paying proper compensation. But the D.C., the S.P. and other officials refused to listen anything. The ground leveling work continued. Realizing that our request for a dialogue with the government officials was turned down, we decided to directly request the TATA Company workers to stop the work. As we started moving towards the bulldozers defying the police in between, countless explosive land mines were burst. One Birsing Gope (27 years) of Chandia village became the first victim of the blast. Several others were injured. Further details of how the events happened, one knows not! This made our people enraged. There was violent clash between the armed police force and the adivasis. I was afraid, but I was keeping up resistance spirit remembering the words of our leaders who told us in our previous meetings that there would be no police firing.

It was around 11 O'clock. Lathi-charge, tear-gas shells, rubber bullets and actual bullet firing followed in quick succession. The firing was indiscriminating. A boy standing at a long distance in front of his house was hit by a bullet and died. Another bullet entered into the roof of a nearby house. Many people in and around the site sustained injuries. Many injured fell on the ground. Others tried to rescue them. While saving the injured, many of our people had also been hit at the back. Four persons died on the spot. The enraged police captured the injured Mukuta Bangira, aged 40 years and Bhagaban Soy, aged 25 years and they kicked them with their boots and killed them mercilessly. Our people started running back. As firing was still continuing many people laid on the ground. I again remembered the words of our leaders "if by chance there will be any firing, sleep and crawl". Thus, by crawling I crossed almost a kilometer, after which I rushed to Ambagadia, a nearby village. I was relieved to be safe and secure. My mother was also safe. In the meantime some of the severely wounded persons were rescued. Then, we started giving treatment to the rescued.

Later we found that police have taken to custody 8 injured. Six were reported to be dead and two were admitted in a hospital. One person died in the hospital. From that day we blocked Daitari-Paradeep road from both ends of Kalinganagar. We were waiting for the dead bodies (taken by the police) for cremation. Two days later the corpses were returned to us. We were shocked to see that both the hands of 6 corpses had been chopped off and the genitals of the four men and breast of one woman mutilated, for reasons unknown. I was thinking then, it is true that the injured were taken to hospital not for treatment but to be killed. Twelve tribals were killed (later rising to 14) and 48 were severely injured³. Also one police man was killed and four were injured".

This incident has been condemned, as reported by the media, in

unequivocal terms as “nothing short of a massacre” (*The Hindu*, 2006a: 16; JOHAR & JMACC 2006: 22), “pre-planned action” (Das 2006a: 16), “tragic incident” (Das 2006e: 13), “great tragedy” (Das 2006c: 14) and “Orissa had never witnessed such a large number of deaths in police firing since independence” (*The Hindu* 2006b: 12).

Kalinganagar is not the sole case. Similar cases and incidents have occurred earlier too in different parts of Orissa. Similarly in December 16, 2000, three tribals were killed in police firing in Maikanch village of Kashipur block in Rayagada where the tribals were protesting the establishment of a mining project by Utkala Alumina International Ltd. In 2001, five tribals were killed in police firing in Raighar in Nabarangpur district where the tribals were trying to retrieve their lands from the illegal encroachment of Bengali refugees.

Why were there such great tragedies? Why were the ordinary tribal people killed mercilessly? What did the people want and demand? What was the situation that forced the Government of Orissa to kill these people? What was the real intension of the Government behind the scene? These questions were bothering me. After a few days Dr. Paratap Kumar Singh introduced me to Mr. Hari Charan Hibru, a strong leader from Madhuban village and the President of Kalinganagar Surakshya Parisad – a forum that supports the company strongly. In early May 2006, I also met a badly injured victim of police firing, Mr. Chema Hembram (48) of Gadhapur who had just returned home after undergoing a three month long medical treatment. In response to the above questions both of them, along with many others, detailed me on their daily struggle for survival, as we will see in the following pages.

STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL: NO TO DISPLACEMENT

Hari Hibru in his extensive narration informed me that Kalinganagar came to be identified as “destination industry” since 1980s. Taking into consideration the increased demand for land from the corporate houses, the Government of Orissa seems to have decided to identify and acquire land in the area. The demarcation of land for this purpose began in 1984. People were consulted at no stage. Boring and soil testing were taken up. On enquiry, the people were told that it was a part of routine government survey. A corporate unit named as Industrial Development Corporation of Orissa (IDCO) was created. All lands were acquired in its name. Reportedly, an area of 10,000 acres of land have been acquired in 1991-92 and another 15,000 acres in 1995. A new phase of acquisition has begun in 2005 whose area is reported to be much larger (Sharma 2006: 16). By now Kalinganagar industrial complex consists of more than a dozen of big and small industries. Again it is TATA that signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on November 17, 2004 to establish its 6mtpa Mega Steel Plant Project in Kalinganagar industrial

complex. TATA was provided 2,500 acres⁴ of land in November, 2004 at the rate of Rs.3,35,000 per acre. It was this day of January 2, 2006 TATA was going to inaugurate the construction of its boundary wall at Champakoila, to begin with. Initially, the tribal people protested with humble submission:

*Where shall I go
Leaving this land
For which I am only a trustee
As a tribal, I am duty bound
To pass it on to the generation next!*⁵

This is precisely what Chema Hembram was arguing while he was explaining to me the causes of the movement. The resistance movement, as he recounted, is not for a peripheral cause. The first among all is the issue of *compensation*. Though the land has been acquired in early 1990s, the “beneficiaries”⁶ have not received the government-declared compensation till date. The ground realities of the issue are far more complex. The process in which compensation was given, the way the compensation money was pocketed by the “officers” and obviously the purpose for which the money was spent by the tribal were self-indulgent. In no time the land slipped away from the tribals’ hand, so also the slippery bank notes. Secondly, all oustees are not *beneficiaries* for the simple reason that all do not possess *patta* (land titles), albeit they are the owners of the land. To mention, there was no settlement after 1928, the first and last settlement done in the area during British rule.

Thus, most of the tribals do not possess *patta*. In other cases, the lands stand in the name of their forefathers, which in the meantime, have been partitioned amongst the successors. Some of the lands have also changed hands by way of sale, albeit informal. The ground situation is rather confusing. Again, as population increased, both by migration and natural growth, the number of holdings increased and new lands were also brought under cultivation. All these changes are unrecorded and deemed to be ‘unauthorized’. Further more, extensive areas were declared as ‘deemed reserve forests’ shortly after merger of princely States and formation of Orissa in 1954 without going through the determination of rights of the tribals and even preparation of record of actual possession of land by them. Extensive lands under the occupation of the tribals in the deemed reserve forests are unrecorded. While genuine holdings, mainly of the tribal, are unrecorded, collusive records have been prepared in the past two decades especially after the area was identified as ‘Destination Industry’. The influential people have got extensive lands recorded in their names on the basis of fake ‘*parchas*’ of the ‘*Ranee*’ (paper slips of the queen) and blatant tampering of official land records themselves. Therefore, the owner of the land without *patta* is

declared as “illegal encroacher” and hence, no compensation. Thirdly, as Chakradhar Hibru, the Secretary of the BBJM adds, “the government acted like a developer. It forced us to sell our land cheap and then made a whopping profit”. In an angry tone, he informed that the government purchased 2500 acres of land from the tribals in 1994 at the rate of Rs.37,000 per acre and sold the same to the TATA in 2004 for Rs.3,35,000 per acre making a huge profit⁷. This issue was on negotiation table. We were demanding a proper share of this money, whereas government has continued with an offer of an additional amount of a mere Rs.15,000 per acre which we refused.

The second major reason of the resistance movement, as Chema continues, is the issue of *livelihood*. To repeat again, though the government has acquired the land in early Nineties, the transfer was mostly on paper. But while acquiring land the government had promised us that the compensation for the land would be given with the commencement of the construction work. Thus, in the transitional phase we were ensured of jobs (as labourers) in the construction work and permanent positions later. We were assured that everything would be taken care of. But the promises of the company never saw practical realization. Only a few gained monetary compensation. Most of the *pattadars* (those having land titles) were in the list of “will get”. There was no question of compensation for “illegal encroachments” leave alone *Khuntkatidars*¹⁸ One decade passed. No company started. In the beginning of this transition period, people had neither land or compensation nor job. Seeing the land laying fallow, people started again cultivating their respective lands and continuing to so. “People continue to live there as the recent face-off between the police and locals demonstrate” – says an industry source also (Bhattacharya 2006). Thus, after twelve years, when government re-claims the land without making any provision of livelihood and compensation, the tribals resist.

Another important issue is the problem of *resettlement and rehabilitation*. “Can you up-root a big tree and plant it in another place and will it grow again as usual? If yes, then we can accept that you can rehabilitate us by displacing!”⁹ – this is what Chakradhar Hibru meant while he was arguing “how can you rehabilitate us properly?” In Orissa, he knows, there is [was] no Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R) Policy as such. In case of TATA in Kalinganagar, the tribals are to be evicted forcefully not from their farmlands alone but from their homes as well. Further, there is no plan of immediate resettlement of any sort. In fact, TATA Steel is not the first industry to initiate such a painful eviction with no support of eviction. Evidently, the tribals of the area have learnt from the past histories of R&R in Kalinganagar itself that how they would be rehabilitated. For instance, as Chakradhar has kept records, the Nilachal Ispat Nigam Ltd (NINL) is the

biggest of existing industries that displaced 639 families of six villages in 1997. Before rehabilitating these families the State administration forcefully evicted these people by bulldozing the houses. Even the people were not allowed to take away their possessions (furniture, utensils and valuables and even food stuffs (rice and paddy). On protest, about 300 people were arrested and imprisoned charged with false cases. The polythene-roofed habitat of the displaced people in a swampy land worsened their plight specifically during the conditions of inclement weather. In sum, the resettlement was far from satisfactory. Alternatively, one could say that resettlement was never an issue of concern for them. Nobody has kept records about the other half of the oustees. Where are they? – nobody knows! “You see”, he asks, “the plight of the displaced tribals of the development projects like Rourkela Steel Plant, Hirakud and Indravati Hydro-electricity projects. Do you know how they are living? How many natives are there in Rourkela town now? Do you have statistics of the natives who left Rourkela and Kalinganagar (Nilachala case)? Can you say where they are?” He was further arguing that the ultimate consequence of this development-induced displacement is “a spiral of impoverishment” (Cernea 1991: 195) leading to landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalization, morbidity, food insecurity, loss of access to common property asset, and social disarticulation (cf. Cernea 1990, 1991, 1995). And hence, displacement of any kind – voluntary or compulsory – is a stressful experience (Scudder and Colson 1982, Asthna 1996: 1469).

As a consequence, the tribals of Kalinganagar say ‘NO’ to displacement. Neither they take displacement for granted nor do they want to loose their lands (cf. Patkar 1998). “WE will not allow OUR habitat - land, water and forest—that supports our life to be overrun by industrialists or the State”, runs their defiant declaration, “law or no law. ‘Paper is yours: Land is Ours!’ Change your law if necessary” (Sharma 2006: 91).

But it was evident from interactions with them that their interests were not seriously heeded to. Everything follows as per “the order from the top”. The popular Chief Minister of Orissa, Naveen Patnaik, re-elected for the second time, declared in the Assembly of Orissa on December 4, 2004 (as shown in the TV): “*No-one – I repeat no-one – will be allowed to stand in the way of Orissa’s industrial development and the people’s progress*” (quoted in Padel and Das 2006:14). Here the question arises: who defines and decides people’s progress? The Government of Orissa headed by Naveen Patnaik has staked much in a belief that rapid industrialization by exploiting State’s rich mineral resources will transform Orissa from poor to rich and will make its people better off. The slogan of people’s progress is a mere populism¹⁰. Thus, the agenda of people’s progress in Orissa today is left to the foreign

companies and financial institutions that unhesitatingly exploit Orissa's natural resources and oppress its people with a real and single motive – maximizing profit. Practically, Naveen's government, following the so-called pragmatic approach, has been inviting foreign companies and foreign capital for rapid industrialization (as clear from his statement). Then I was thinking: why industrialization?; for what?; for whom? etc.

As per popular perception of capitalist theory, Rajendra Sarangi, a sympathizer of Kalinganagar movement, illuminates me thus; industrialization is inevitable for production of goods for consumption, creation of employment and strategic national interest. Firstly, most of the industries today in Orissa (as same the case with to-be set TATA Company) are producing goods not for consumption within the State or the country, but mostly for export. Secondly, all the industries displace a lot of people not only from their habitat but also from their sources of livelihood. The number of people displaced would be ten times as much as jobs the company creates. Thus, they are taking away jobs rather than giving employment. Thirdly, is it not important to use the existing mineral resources for our own development rather than selling it for development of advanced countries? Are we sure that we are getting the right market price for our export of raw materials and products? Is it worthy in the national interest to exhaust the available natural resources (through sale) within a very short span of time? The answers to these questions may vary, but cost-benefit-analysis studies (e.g. Padel and Das 2005) show that our State and nation get nothing more than the fee of a broker. Besides the explicit advantages, there is a hidden agenda for maximization of profit and benefit of a few – the capitalists few.

As a research investigator into the Kalinganagar issue, I further raise a couple of queries. Why does the State, then, invite foreign capital and MNCs to tribal lands? Why is there a large scale of displacement, especially the marginalized sections? How government generally wins over people vis-à-vis ownership of land? Do all the concerned actors like State, MNC and the tribals perceive and value land equally? Is there a politics of land? The following section, thus, makes a critical assessment of the complexities over land and environment in a contested space of development juxtaposing the *political ecology* agenda for the Third World (Bryant 1992) with empirical evidences from my field.

SMELL OF LAND: THE POLITICIZED ENVIRONMENT

“For us ... the land is our life; a loving gift of [The Creator] to our race. We will die to defend it, even to the last drop of our blood” (Board and Cavanagh 1993: 34, cited in Alejo 2000: 15). This is what Bulka Miniaka and Alai Majhi¹¹ were trying to convey in their song dedicated to a sympathizer of the Kashipur movement (the author who has traveled a long to know from

them why they were fighting for. In a late dark-night Bulka Miniaka called a village meeting at *berenamunda*¹² where women of equal strength joined too creating a conducive atmosphere for me to learn from their experiences. I realized well from two long hours of discussion that the villagers would prefer to die rather than parting with their lands. In that dead silent night, the melody of the concluding song was reverberating on the close by hill:

*We will not leave our land,
We will not leave our dangar*¹³
*Oh brother, we will not vacate our village.
Let them shoot us on our chest,
Let them take our lives,
Oh brother, we will not leave our land*¹⁴.

This shows the passion of the tribal for his land and his decision not to be alienated from it. On the other hand, the government/state seizes the land whenever and wherever it is necessary using the powerful doctrine of “eminent domain”¹⁵. More often than not, the Government passes these lands to corporate houses that use it for “profit making”. Nobody bothers about the fate of the land owners who were dependent upon their lands for livelihood. Everything reads well with a mystic justification for the cause of “greater common good” (cf. Roy 2001). The Govt. laments, in the words of Indira Gandhi, “I am most unhappy that development projects displaced tribal people from their habitat, especially as project authorities do not always take care to properly rehabilitate the affected population. But sometimes there is no alternative and we have to go ahead in the larger interest...”¹⁶ The State sees people who happen to live in and around the sitting of a development project as hindrances to progress and growth, as those who “must make sacrifices for the development of the nation” (GOI 1985). The tribals not only have to sacrifice but also to suffer – even without basic amenities to survive. To recount Jawaharlal Nehru’s remark on the plight of the tribals to be displaced by the construction of Hirakud Dam, Orissa: “If you have to suffer, you have to suffer in the interest of the country”¹⁷.

Here it seems grabbing of land from the poor, especially the tribals, is inevitable for development projects for the “greater common interest”. Bhagaban Majhi, the President of Prakrutika Sampad Surakshya Parisada (PSSP) – Council for Protection of Natural Resources, was arguing with me: “What it really means when you say “greater common good”, “national interest” etc., if I am ruined! You are throwing away us from our land and livelihood means for the interest of the “foreigner”- the company. Then, is your nation constituted without us? Should not my interest be a part of your national interest?” In fact, what is clear, as it happens in most cases, is that grabbing of land or even *displacement is itself presented as development*. It

is this vision that justifies the critics labeling of the anti-poor development projects not only as anti-project and anti-development but anti-national (Kothari 1996: 1478). To summarise, there is, as Gadgil and Guha (1992) describes, a clash of conflict between political economy of profit and moral economy of provision. Staking from the side of displaced victims, one would argue for egalitarian political outlook and inclusive economic policies on the issue of land grabbing for a 'larger development cause'. It is easy to understand that an ethical rumination on the malafide sheds light on the elitist calculation on usurious money making, aside viewing it as a problem of ecological degradation and natural resource depletion. Nevertheless, it must be cued that former is given importance to set right the development malaise accruing from the destruction of natural resources including forests and land – the gainful community assets of the marginalized. (Bryant, Rigg and Scott 1993: 102).

The issue of environmental change is complex. The destinies of land, the flows of river, and the lives of the people are, at least today, much controlled and destined by the policies and practices of the influential national and multinational institutions, consequently challenging the existing social systems. The complexity of the issue, however, lies not only in the diversity of causes and consequences, but also in the heterogeneity of each actor involved and the discourses developed in the process of their interaction. Bryant warns that though this seems abstract, reductionism or simplism has to be avoided (1992: 13-14). It needs mention here that neither we can put all blame on institutions like State or/and market only for the environmental damage nor can canonize all the tribal people as ecological saints (cf. Lewis 1992). Our objective here is not to criticize the institutional mechanism for the abysmal plight of the ecology. Concomitantly we are also not siding the tribal as Samaritans of forests. The telling argument which we place is the imperative need for re-visiting the basic tenets of sustainable environment and the related issues including who were its guardians? Who (can) own and preserve them in a most effective way. A radical thinking of the sort helps in locating community friendly strategies aside pinning down concretely the grass root failure (Fardon 1990; Hobart 1993).

The tribals' perception of and passion for land varies, as our foregoing discussion appreciates, from the interests of the state and market over land. For Bulka Miniaka land is the *ayya* (the mother) that nourishes mankind through generations and hence, it is beyond his imagination to think of selling the land. He tells that land for a tribal is multidimensional in meaning and value. It is more than a spatial boundary, an abstract space. It is a geographical and political territory, an economic resource, a cultural and spiritual base. Marginalization, thus, means more than spatial/geographical transfer. The

displaced people not only realize a locational transfer but also feel insecure, dismantled, humiliated and negated in their whole way of life. The gravity of the case is visible from the instances where tribal people have shown peculiar emotional attachment to land. But, on the other hand, land is an economic asset for the State to utilize for mobilizing resources – mostly foreign capital – for the “national interest”. For a company land is a productive good to be exploited for huge returns. This clash of interest determines the fate of the land and people. Here, the power relations involved in the complexities of socio-economic impact and political ramification of environment change, however, is well elucidated in Bryant’s *political ecology* agenda for Third World studies (1992).

What does Bryant’s Third-World political ecology agenda mean? Put simply, Third-World political ecology that emerged as a research agenda only in 1980s attempts to understand the political sources, conditions and ramifications of environment change (Bryant 1992: 13). Blaikie and Brookfield (1987: 17) define thus:

The phrase ‘political ecology’ combines the concerns of ecology and a broadly define political economy. Together this encompasses the constantly shifting dialectic between society and land-based resources, and also within classes and groups within society itself.

Following a framework that “aims to unify but through an appreciation of plurality of purpose and flexibility in explanation” (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987: 25), Bryant explores the complexities of the *contextual sources*, *conflict over access* and *political ramification* in alteration of environment change. Bryant’s first critical area of enquiry, *contextual sources*, investigates state and market addressing state policies, inter-state relations and global capitalism. State politics, for example, are not developed in political or economic vacuum. Rather they are the products of many conflicting processes of competing actors including national and foreign government agencies, national and transnational corporations, funding agencies and even influential NGOs. No mention, even the policy content is much influenced by the powerful economic and political elites. Societal division and struggle and narrow interest of the State itself influence the policy content. The inter-state synergies exert influence on the environmental. Similarly market, understood in its multidimensionality, also contributes to environmental changes. Some of the transnational corporations – big or small –confining to the goals of profit maximization, corporate growth and market control end with ruining of environment (e.g. disposal of toxic waste) while others are more conscious of environment hazards.

The framework’s second area of enquiry, *conflict over access* – both *historical* and *contemporary dynamics*, further enriches our understanding

of politics of environment. Of its great usefulness for ethnography, this element in the framework is concerned with the constraints and opportunities faced by the subalterns in their struggle to protect their environment. An appreciation of the historical dynamics of the conflict over access, that helps in understanding contemporary struggle, is that many of the practices and discourses of independent states are mere continuance of old colonial era. Marginalized communities, especially the tribals, bear the testimony to the fact. Phillip Hirsch (1990: 56, cited Alejo 2000: 18-19) writes:

Historically marginal people have become defined as such largely as a product of the colonial and postcolonial organization of national space. A group is marginal only in relation to the center, thus, the imposition of few centers on peripheries, such as Jakarta on Irian Jaya or Kuala Lumpur on Sarawak, at once marginalizes people and the territory they occupy as a consequence of incorporation. Tribal groups not only live in marginal territory; they occupy marginal land.

The task of the ethnographer, then, is to find out the historical dimensions of the conflict that may predate colonial time under the guise of contemporary issue.

The third area of inquiry of Bryant's framework, the *political ramification* of environment change, explores the impact of environmental change – both *episodic* and *everyday* – on the socio-economic life and political process of the people, especially the marginalized. Episodic change includes flood, drought and similar disasters, while everyday change refers to soil erosion, salinization, deforestation and various types of pollution the impact of which takes long time to be noticed. Very often, both the cases result in social and ecological marginalization of the poor.

Along with Bryant's well known analysis of discourse of contextual actors like state and local elites, Peet and Watts (1993) attention to the *new directions* in political ecology for 1990s recognizes, unlike Bryant, the cultural aspects and production of meaning (cf. Escobar 1988, 1992a, 1992b). They see the movements not only as everyday forms of resistance, but also as cultural struggle for production of meaning, for an alternative way of life, and for an alternative development. Looking through these vintage points and appreciating Escobar's idea of cultural production of knowledge, I would like to argue in the following pages of ethnography, unfolding the complexities of the historical and contemporary dynamics of conflict, that the struggle over land and environment "moves toward a politics of the people, not just of the state; an economics of livelihood organizations, not just of global capitalists" (Alejo 2000: 21).

BEYOND POLITICAL MONOLITHISM: A FIELD DIARY

Going beyond the linear definition of the political ecology agenda, I submit an analysis on the discourse of various actors including the State, the company and the tribal.

To appreciate State/Government as a monolithic entity is erroneous. The State, to begin with, has undergone a sea change. The politics of 1980s and before is far different from the politics of 1990s and after. For preferential purposes, let's consider the politics of industrialization in Orissa in a diachronic frame. Before Eighties there was hardly preference for industrialization especially in Orissa. In late 1980s, when the idea of industrialization cropped up, it was mostly the ruling party who was appreciating and facilitating for its nurturance. It had to stand the severe criticisms and protests from the opposition parties. Moreover, the opposition party was directly in support of the people, though it was again a political game for political gain. Outwardly, this moral support was a vital catalyst for the people, at least who were resisting the ruling party's anti-poor development industrialization, to fight and win. The success of the *Gandhamardan Bachao Andolan* – save Gandhamardan movement– in the present Bargarh district of Orissa is a fair example (see below).

More crucial is the politicians' vendetta. Take "Patnaik politics" in Orissa for instance. The Congress party leader, J. B. Patnaik, as Chief Minister of Orissa, cleared large tracts of farmland at Gopalpur in late 1990s to make away for a mega steel plant that never came up. Now he is the same man who is spearheading Kalinganagar agitation as an opposition leader. On the other hand, Naveen Patnaik, when in Opposition, was against large-scale displacement in the bauxite-rich tribal heartlands of Koraput and Rayagada for setting up of aluminum plants. Now, the same man, in power, is backing the aluminum companies and even the TATA directly. "It is hard to believe that he is the same Chief Minister who in his first five-year term did so much for the impoverished tribals"¹⁸ – wonders Achyut Das, the Director of Kashipur based NGO, Agragamee – and who is doing so much now for impoverishing tribals. All the more, the Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, while expressing his grief at the death of a policeman, failed even to mention the fact that 12 tribals lost their lives in firing in Kalinganagar. Also he defended the actions of the police by accusing the people as responsible for the incident (JOHAR & JMACC 2006: 21). The District Collector, Mr. Saswata Mishra, who was present on the spot of accident, also accused the people condemning that the local tribal people brought-in the trouble-makers from outside. Complexity arises when he, after being suspended, makes another statement that it is the Government who is responsible for the incident as the people should have been evicted and rehabilitated properly before beginning the construction works for the Company (ibid).

Vividly one cannot make much meaning of the political game between the opposition and the ruling parties specifically in the context of industrialization. It seems, at least in regards to industrialization again, they go hand-in-hand. No wonder, the present ruling UPA Government is inviting free-market for exploiting natural resources. It is an understatement to mention that neither the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh nor the Chief Minister of Orissa Mr. Naveen Patnaik felt necessary to visit Kalinganagar. But interestingly Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, the UPA Chairman and the Congress President, visited the massacre ground of Kalinganagar just after a week of the incident on January 11, 2006. “I am here to share the grief of the families of those who were brutally killed. I feel their anguish. They are heartbroken. We will see to it that justice is done” – Sonia told to the media persons after interacting with the family members of the victims (Das 2006c: 14). Mercifully, she granted relief and ex-gratia of Rs. 5 lakh each to the families of the tribals killed in the firing and Rs. 20,000/- to each injured. That’s all. In fact, she neither questioned the actions of the Company and the State government in killing the people nor paid any attention to the basic demand of the people, not to be displaced. TATA is going ahead with its construction work, people are being displaced and road blockade still continues even after a year!¹⁹

Secondly, the calculative move of TATA Company creates conflicting situations in Kalinganagar. Clearly, the threat to forced displacement and loss of livelihood has gathered momentum to strong resistance. As long back as 1996, the tribal people of Kalinganagar have successfully stopped the establishment of a steel plant by Bhusan Steel in the same site (Das and Das 2006: 65). Knowing it well, TATA Steel signed MoU with Government of Orissa on November 17, 2004 to establish its mega steel plant project in the same site. It is as recently as May 09, 2005 there was a great melee to stop the *bhumipuja* of Maharastra Seamless Steel Ltd. In that day, there was a lathi-charge injuring many people and people, in retaliation, burnt the police jeep. The situation remained tense for a month due to continuous and often dead night police raid. The brunt of the police never spared women and children. They were treated roughly and at least 25 women were arrested. The people – including women, children and old – took refuge in deep forest, consequently two small children²⁰ died unattended on May 11, 2005 and two men²¹ were beaten severely by the police who died later (cf. Pradhan 2006).

TATA Company itself had experienced such kind of tussles many times since January 2005. The real break for the great tragedy came on October 7, 2005 when the Company started to construct its boundary wall at Dholpathar village. People opposed with initial request: “allow us to harvest our paddy

crop” and “give us the full compensation”. That afternoon the police fired six rounds of tear gas and started a lathi-charge to drive away people who were on protest. On October 25, 2005 the tribal leader Rabindra Jarika, the Secretary of BBJM, was arrested while returning after attending a left-supported convention in Bhubaneswar, the capital of Orissa. Many such protest melees had been encountered one after another till the date of ‘great tragedy’. Even on January 1, 2006 people had gathered to decide what to be done and how to negotiate with the Company and the Government. To repeat TATA Company had knowledge that the tense situation in Kalinganagar was running high in the air. Instead of that, the TATA Company started construction work at Champakoila, consequently leading to the tragic end of police firing.

Even after the martyrdom of 14 tribals, the Company never learnt anything from the situation. After the incident the Company has appointed what they call “Motivator” or “Communicator” to “convince” the people to cooperate for the establishment of Company. Motivators also exaggerate the fake promises of the Company further more making the innocent tribals confused. The tribals (Kashipur and Kalinganagar) informed me that the companies were distributing money to a selected few tribals for celebrating feast who in turn would “convince” their native friends in favour of the company. “They are coming to us as friends. They invite some of us for feast. There we are served with good food and drinks. They take some snapshots. And later they boast saying that they have equal strength of supporters” – Rabindra Jarika told me in a personal interview. The Company even creates rift among the tribals by supporting, even bribing, a few elites with mere dole-provision (e.g. giving mobile to youths). This results in dividing the community and creating a space for class-conflict. Some of the elites and educated tribals of Kalinganagar support TATA that makes them dream that it will give everything they need – job, money, prestige and prosperity. Rajkishore Kalundia of Gadhapur, for example, holds a Master’s degree in sociology. While staying in village, he was working as a contractor in Jindal, another company in Kalinganagar. Later TATA Company convinced him that it would give him a better job provided he would be a DP (displaced person). Thus, Rajkishore left village to be a DP and he was given a plot of 10 decimal of land in Trijanga Rehabilitation Colony. But to his expectation, he is yet to get a good job in TATA, though now he is getting Rs. 2500/- only from the same company working as a non-formal “motivator” without any formal appointment.

The Government employees, fearing lay off, refrain from the public support for the cause. Though I came across a lot of educated tribals of Kalinganagar engaged in the government services, I hardly found any of

them in direct association with the movement. Government employees like Narayan Tiu (Jailor, Choudwar Jail) of Gobarghati never wants to disclose his name and identity as he was reporting to me about the hidden transcript of the “magnificent TATA”. Similarly, Hinduram Soren (teacher) of Dholapathar and Ratnakar Soy (teacher) of Gobarghati requested me not to publish the matter they were discussing with me. The fear of retrenchment and the attendant problems is high, as I see, in their articulations about the company. This was a fear for them but a truth for some others. Then, I was thinking about the fate of Laxman Majhi (teacher), Maharaja Majhi (teacher) and Krushna Saunta (class-iv employee) of Kucheipadar village who were suspended from their jobs only because initially they were supporting the anti-UAIL movement in Kashipur. Therefore, the threat of forced eviction and loss of livelihood forces the ordinary tribal people to protest and fight.

An intricate question to be recounted at this critical juncture is one of the ancestral ownership of land. Kalinganagar tribals claim themselves as *Khuntkatidar* – who have cleared the forest and have been cultivating the land since the time of British Raj. It is in 1928 settlement, the first and last, that government provided land titles (*patta*) to some of the owner, and while others did not even bother to demand for a *patta* with a strong assumption that it was their ancestral land and nobody had the right to take it away. “During later settlements people of the neighbouring villages standing as close as 5-6km to Kalinganagar recorded their land and were given *patta*, where as Kalinganagar was left behind intentionally because it was mostly dominated by tribals. But we the tribals have developed these lands by clearing thick forest and have been cultivating the land since our forefathers” – sighs Narayan Hembram, an old man of 77 years of Rayanal village. “Now government strongly refuses to recognize this ancestral ownership of land. Ownership without *patta* is an illegal encroachment – Government threatens us”.

The tribals themselves, however, are not free from conflicts. It starts with the location of the actors, where do they stand – whether in support of company or the movement. As stated earlier some, especially the elites, guided by personal interest support the company. For example, the opposition leader of BBJM, Haricharan Hibru of village Madhuban, wishes that his sons will get jobs in TATA Company. “TATA is providing huge money for all the displaced families for their all-round development”, he argues, “I wonder why people fail to appreciate and accept it”. Also there are people in Kalinganagar who support Haricharan Hibru’s logic. While Hari Hibru’s group demands for re-evaluation of land, hike in compensation price etc., Rabindra Jarika’s group strictly says ‘No to displacement’. Rabi Jarika never even wishes to have a dialogue for rehabilitation and compensation. “We do not want to be displaced at all. Then where is the question for a dialogue for rehabilitation

and compensation” – says Rabindra Jarika emphatically.

The conflict over dominant leadership is dangerous. Each of the two leaders – Rabi Jarika and Hari Hibru – feel that everything good happened under their respective leadership. Ideological difference and the clash of power-ego leading to separation of the leaders make the conflict more critical. Then, one tries to pull down the other. It was August 17, 2006. The road blockade was continuing. Without the knowledge of the situation, a truck loaded with cement entered into the no-entry zone of Kalinganagar. The people of the BBJM seized the truck. In that night, as Rabi says, the people of Hari Hibru burnt the truck to put the BBJM in trouble. Similarly, Krushna Saunta, the former President of the PSSP, admits that in early 2001 when he was driven out of his village (Kucheipadar) being questioned about his loyalty and honesty to the assigned post of Presidentship, he openly supported the company (UAIL). It is due to his vibrant support, as he tells proudly, that the company could succeed to start its construction work that had been postponed by the movement for last nine years. Now both Hari and Krushna, being part and parcel of the company, are trying to convince people in favour of the companies while the BBJM and PSSP have been mobilizing the tribals to keep on fighting to save their habitat and natural resources.

There is conflict amongst leaders and between elites and ordinary people; alongside there is also conflict among the ordinary tribal people to gain place in the priority list of benefits. For example, a house in rehabilitation colony, favour from the leaders, etc. Apparently tension regarding the issue of crop harvest is also at peak in Kalinganagar. The point of contestation is; who should harvest the crop – those who are living in the villages or the owner (a displaced person) who is staying in the rehabilitation colony? In many such cases the supporters of Bisthapan Birodhi Jana Mancha (BBJM) have seized the paddy crops of those people who have left the village for rehabilitation camps. Violent conflict and fights are common between the BBJM and the people who are accepting compensation and leaving for the R&R colonies. In such cases even the BBJM never allow the later group of people to dismantle their houses and shift from native villages to R&R colonies. For instance, Manika Soren and Laxman Deogaon, both from Sanachandia, and Dhaneswar Jamuda of Gadhapur alleged that the BBJM ostracised them and forcefully captured their land along with the standing crops when they wanted to get the company’s favour. Later they had no other option other than leaving the village for rehabilitation colony. Especially, Dhaneswar Jamuda was not allowed to dismantle his house to take possession of the household construction material leave alone the standing trees in his courtyard. The conflicts and complexities of this kind are a legion in a contested environment like Kalinganagar and Kashipur.

The political complexity over land in Kashipur is a legend by itself. Instead of dealing with the nitty-gritty, let me cite two instances. In 1980s, Kashipur block of Rayagada district was earmarked as a very underdeveloped area for immediate development intervention. It happened so. After the visit of the then Prime Minister of India, a multimillion development project administered by the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) combined with Orissa Tribal Development Programme (OTDP) arrived in Kashipur in April 1988. IFAD spent Rs.66 crore and further a sum of Rs. 40 crore was spent by Integrated Tribal Development Approach (ITDA) where all the government schemes and special schemes joined (Sarangi 2002: 3241). Of course some of the good NGOs were also working in the area during the same period. But the irony is that according to the government estimates the numbers of BPL families in the block have increased from 15,471 in 1992 to 24,582 in 1997 (ibid). Again in 1990s the area was selected for corporate intervention. As early as 1992 Kashipur was identified as bauxite resource for establishing a mining project by Utkal Alumina International Ltd. (UAIL). Amidst all these interventions what is surprising is that hunger death continues as a regular yearly phenomenon in the area. For example, in Kashipur, 60 people died in 1999, 40 in 2000, 44 in 2001 (Sarangi 2002: 3240, 3239), about 200 in 2007 (author's fieldwork), though the explanation linked to diverse causes and ambiguous reasons. The state government refuted the incident of hunger death stating, as the medical report shows, that the victims had eaten 'poisonous food' like "mango kernels, tamarind seed power, mushrooms, pumpkin leaves" (ibid). Whatever may be the reasons, it is true that the tribals have been the victims of death, and to me the most important reason is food shortage. It was difficult for me to examine the cause of chronic food shortage given the "effective" public intervention. (cf. Tordella 2003). "Had people allowed mining/industry this (death) would not have happened"- the local MLA of the then ruling BJD Govt. claimed after 2001 hunger death (Sarangi 2002: 3241). It needs mention here that in 2001 four people died of hunger death in Bilamal, the adopted model village of the Company (UAIL). But still today all political parties along with some of the local elites (especially non-tribals) have been shouting "industry is the solution"! But I would emphasise that keeping the area and its people "underdeveloped" is a premeditated political will of the government to prove that the land in the area is unproductive, and hence, corporate intervention is necessary. Sankar Muduli, an educated tribal boy of Bagrijhola, a village adjacent to the boundary wall of UAIL argues:

There is no starvation death in our area. We have seen people dying of starvation death in bus stands and railway stations in cities. We do not have such situation here. But there are poor people in our area. The officers and the leaders were exploiting us earlier. Now those people are spreading

the rumor of 'starvation deaths'. By this it will be easy for the company to enter. But we have already understood the diplomacy. In cities, many people are dying of food shortage amidst a number of rich men. They are doing nothing there. Why they are rushing to our areas? The leaders, officers and Ministers are playing the drama only in greed of Company's money (KJLM 2003: 40).²²

Another crucial issue of politics over land in Kashipur is descheduling of the Jhodia Paraja tribals of Kashipur as Other Backward Caste (OBC). In early 2001, Sumani Jhodia²³ tells, due to the strategic persuasion of some powerful, rich and influential illegal encroachers of land, the State Government declared the Jhodia tribals as OBC (see Jhodia et.al. 2002: 11-12). As a consequence, it became very easy for the illegal encroachers to ascertain their ownership by transferring the lands of Jhodias to their names by legal means, as against the existing rule – no land of a tribal shall be transferred to other higher castes/communities by means of sale and purchase. Dudheswar Jhodia, a former leader of PSSP, cites the example of Krushna Mohapatra – the all powerful man and a landlord of Kashipur. The forefathers of Krushna Mohapatra had immigrated to Kashipur pretty long time back. Dudheswar knows that Krushna's father was very poor and was earning his livelihood working as a mere cycle fitter. But Krushna Mohapatra benefited a lot from the IFAD work in Kashipur. Since then he went on grabbing land from the tribals in the area. Later becoming a powerful elite in the area, he had a vital role in instigating the state government to deschedule the Jhodias as OBC and hence he succeeded legally transforming some of the Jhodia lands to his name. But during 2000-01, the people through PSSP succeeded in recovering about 50-60 acres of lands he had encroached, albeit he continues possessing some of them today. By means of this new rule, Dudheswar continues, it will be very easy for the company to acquire lands of Jhodia Parajas for its project.

The inter-personal and inter-communal conflict over land is complex as evident from Raighar issue. Since early 1960s, attempts had been made to settle some of the refugees of East Bengal (East Pakistan, now Bangladesh) in Dandakaranya Reserve Forest in Raighar, Jharigam and Umerkote areas of Nabarangpur District (Elahi 1981). These brought-in Bengali refugees were settled provided with 7 acres of land (by clearing reserve forest) – mostly dry land. But Prasanjit Dhali, a Bengali refugee of village 23 No. Anchala in Jharigam block informed me that the staple food of the Bengalis were rice, which they could hardly cultivate in their own dry lands given by the government. Thus, the Bengalis established inter-personal relationships with the local tribals like the Gond, Bhotra, Kondh etc. with a motive to get some land from the later. Gradually the Bengalis with all their wits captured the lands from these local tribals. Later, these Bengali refuses started exploiting

the local tribals openly with support from local bureaucrats. The tribals of the area approached the government for help but nothing happened as the Bengalis had already purchased the local bureaucrats and petty government officials. Of late (during 1995-2003), therefore, the local tribals organised themselves and fought with the Bengalis and finally succeeded in retrieving some of their lands from the illegal encroachment of the Bengalis.

The preceding pages of this section tell us that the politics of the powerful – the state, market and local landlords – dominates over the life-world of the powerless – the tribals. The tribals, however weak may be, through their indigenous strategies of resistance and survival generate the politics of the weak (see later). A critical engagement with everyday life ethnography, however, needs analysis not only of localized politics but also of internalized feelings. Here we need to discuss not only about the politicized environment or contested landscape but also about embodying memories and energizing spirits. We would need to measure not only the damage or gains in industrializing the countryside, but also feel the impact on the life-world, the change in routines, the resulting freedoms and boredom in urbanized settings, the bodily suffering and the moral reorientation of the people affected. No less important is the conspiring forces that promote social suffering are to be identified. A bridging connection between ruin or development with social suffering or healing, with everyday forms of resistance or celebration of existence needs to be established. It also needs to understand by what mechanisms do embodied individual experience treated as social suffering (cf. Das 1995). I wonder then, how does this pain and suffering affect the life-world of the indigenous people? Do they passively receive suffering as destined? Whether pain and suffering destroy the capacity of the tribals to voice (as argued by Scarry 1985, cf. Farmer 1998: 280)? Or it strengthens body, ‘creates a moral community out of those who have suffered’ (Das 1995: 176) and produces knowledge that prepares the people for a better life/better future? Is there probability of the voice of the voiceless to be heard and honoured within the existing framework of deconstructive practice? (cf. Das 1995). Addressing some of these questions, in the following pages, however, I reproduce the internalized feelings of the subjects of my study followed by a theoretical discussion on social suffering.

STRENGTHENING BODY: LIVING WITH PAIN AND BEYOND

The suffering of the people starts no sooner the Company arrives in the area. Much before the actual commencement of the project, the news of company’s arrival in the area traumatize the tribals. He is sure by now that he will be alienated from his native home, land and relatives. His land will be taken away by the company, his house will be dismantled and his land, mountain and the forest will be destroyed. The very thought of where he will go and

how he will survive kills him day and night.

As soon as the Company (TATA in Kalinganagar and UAIL in Kashipur) got their provisional clearances from the Government of Orissa (GOO), they started their works. But the people were never taken into confidence, perhaps they were not considered as worthy of a dialogue, ever since the GOO decided to transform this backward forest tribal tract into an industrial hub of Orissa. The people's reaction to the early ventures, which came in the first phase, therefore, was spontaneous largely guided by survival instinct. The government stand has been totally legalistic form the high pedestal reminiscent of colonial era. The lands have been acquired according to the archaic law taking no note of the changes above and the reality below. Those who had the titles were eligible for compensation. They could be considered for rehabilitation, that too as a grace and not as their right. Those who have no titles have to make way. They could at best expect some token doles. The resistance was dealt with no concern for the questions raised; rather the State administration stood with the company to suppress the people by force. The people are, however, realizing now, taking a lesson from their own early experience and also from others' experiences like Rourkela Steel Plant through word of mouth, that *they have no future*. The instinctive survival spirit is now in full bloom in the area amongst the affected and even others. It is an unalienable natural right of every human being. The people, in exercise of this right, are not prepared to leave their land, law or no law. Therefore, they resist the progress of company work once and again but very often they have been suppressed by brutal *lathi* charge, imprisonment, firing etc.

The police firing and killing of tribal people in Kalinganagar and Kashipur is the result of the State remaining totally unconcerned about the people's side, their fears and aspirations. What is worse is that the State has refused to learn from the past experiences in Rourkela, Kashipur and even in Kalinganagar itself.

Most of the deceased of the great tragedy were heads and/or caretakers of the family. As the tribal families are nuclear in type, most of the families are now leading desperate lives without the bread earner of the house. It is now the wife or a minor male child who is shouldering the responsibility of the family. In Kalinganagar, Rama Gagarai, for example, is survived by his young wife, Sukumari in her early 30s and five children – the eldest being 12 years and the youngest 1 year old. Without any landed property, it is quite difficult for her, as she tells from a sick bed (she was suffering from fever while I visited), to feed six mouths daily with Rs. 25/- that she earns as a day-wage labourer in the village. It is really difficult, she sighs, to get work daily in the village and manage such a big family without any

assistance from outside. “No sooner my husband died our struggle for food started. Though we had no land, my husband was earning some bags of paddy by share cropping. He was also earning money working as a casual labourer. Without him I was feeling desperate. The villagers of Gadhapur and Bisthapan Birodhi Jana Manch who is spearheading the movement provided us food for two weeks. Just after three days of my husband’s death, I got fever from which I never recovered for a long time. Nobody came for my help, not even the BBJM. I thought that I was going to die here without food and medicine. I was then thinking of my children that they would be orphan without me. How will they survive? My eldest son, Narayan, was going regularly to Rabi Jarika and Chakradhar Hibru [respectively the Secretary and the President of the BBJM) for asking rice. Once Chakradhar told to my son, “you are consuming rice too fast and we cannot provide you so much”. I felt ashamed of begging food. In the meantime the company people reached me and gave me medicine free of cost. And gradually they tried to convince me to accept the compensation. They convinced me that I would also get a job. Though initially I was a hesitant to leave my village, but I had no other go. In the meantime, many of our village people also left. I decided to accept the money declared for the death of my husband. But I was not allowed to do that also. The BBJM warned and even threatened me not to accept the compensation. But ultimately, the severity of the situation dragged me to the company’s transit camp. Company provided me everything at the earliest. Accompanied by the TATA officials, I met the Collector and then everything became easy. I was paid the compensation price and a job in Danagadi PHC. I was also provided with a security as I feared retaliation from the BBJM. I am fine now”.

Sukumari suffered and escaped. But I saw Sumi Badara, the widow of Bana Badara, who is still struggling to feed a five-member family by selling rice-beer. Of the 13 deceased, the families of Landu Jarika, Rama Jamuda, Janga Jarika, Bana Badara, Rama Gagarai, Rangalal Mudeya, Ati Jamuda, Mukuta Bangira etc. are living in desperate conditions. Many of the children of the deceased family are forced now to discontinue their studies. More tragic is the life of those victims who survived, but injured. Some of them became handicapped for ever. Chema Hembram, aged 50 years of village Gadhapur, had sustained two bullets – one on a knee and other on a hand. He survived after three months of severe treatment; yet the limbs are dysfunctional now. He is hardly able to do any work. He told me that Gurubari, his wife, was now managing the house by working as a wage labourer in Jindal Company and Madhusudan, his 13 year old son, was toiling his best to manage the agriculture which was disturbing his studies to a larger extent. With tears in eyes, he says, “It is not worth living now. Along with domestic chores, Gurubari is toiling hard for earning bread for

the five stomachs. Madhusudan is breaking his backbone to plough the field disrupting his study. I am a burden to them now. Even I am not getting the handicapped pension”.

Life is miserable for Birsing Gope – the first victim of the police firing at Kalinganagar. One afternoon in late July 2007, reaching village Chandia I located a dilapidated hut of Birsing where I met his wife, Lalita, and mother-in-law, Bela Gope (who belongs to Bengapatia, a neighbouring village of Kalinganagar). In her late advanced pregnancy, Lalita pathetically stated, “It is really unbearable to manage a four-five-member house by selling rice-beer in weekly market and earning just Rs.100-150 in a week”. In the meantime Birsing came hopping with the help of aluminum crutches. “As a migrant labour from Singbhum area of the present Jharkhnad state”, Birsing Gope describes, “I came to the village Chandia in 1998 and stayed in one of my relative’s house. I earned my livelihood by working in Nilachala Ispat Nigam Ltd as a day-wage labourer. Staying for a long time in Chandia, I got closely connected with the movement. In police firing, I lost the only means of livelihood I had, my body and labour. You see, I became completely handicapped. Not able to walk on my own, leave alone work. By selling *handia* (rice-beer), Lalita is earning Rs.100 per week and that is how we are surviving. Even some times we are starving. We do not have a house of our own, though the leaders of the BBJM have promised to build one for us. You see, we are living in this wretched house – one room, broken walls, leaking roof – and half of it is shared by cattle of the house owner. The owner also is specific about us vacating the house soon. Within next two weeks, Lalita is going to deliver. I am worried where will we live and where will she deliver the baby. I feel, I have to drop Lalita and my two children in Jharkhand. I am handicapped and not worth for a paisa now. All the more I am a burden to my wife and mother-in-law and I have to depend on their earnings. I cannot provide them anything, even physical protection as a husband. I have to beg others for food and many other things I need. What dignity I have? You cannot regain dignity once you loose it. You can earn money once and again, but not prestige and dignity”.

Similarly, Subarna Jhodia of Kashipur, for example, who lost her husband Abhilas Jhodia in December 2000 police-firing, has many wounded woes to tell. She, then in her early 20s, was left desperate in her advance pregnancy along with another two very small children. She toiled hard to work in the field and forest to feed three mouths. Ananta Kumar Giri observes:

The experience of Subarna, Abhilash’s wife, and his children is different. When I went to Abhilash’s house along with some young people of the village, Subarna was not at home. She had gone to a

distant forest, even at this advanced stage of pregnancy, to collect fire wood which she would sell for her livelihood. Abhilash's father who was holding his young grandson told us: 'In the night it is difficult. The young boy is asking when would his father come home?' and when I was able to meet with Subarna, she was silent as a statue. Words and tears have run their course in her life and her vacant eyes embody a different experience of struggle compared to the leaders in the village for whom Abhilash has quickly become somebody whose martyrdom has given new energy to the movement (2005: 357).

That is how she could manage to survive till today. During my stay in her village, Maikanch, she became a close friend of mine. The more and more I asked about her life, the more and more abstract she became. One evening in course of beginning a conversation with me, she said painfully, "What can I tell you? What do I have now? I lost the only possession I had, my husband. There is nobody now who would care me or on whose shoulder I can rest my head to cry. Sometimes I cry a lot and console myself. You know, now-a-days I am not feeling appetite at night. Thus, I have dropped taking dinner".

The most disheartening feature of the Kalinganagar episode was the State politics over the dead bodies. As noted earlier, the hands and private parts of the deceased had been chopped off for reasons unknown! None of the demands of the people were taken into consideration. The state Govt. has been extremely cautious in dealing with the situation. It is needless to mention that cash compensation has been the easiest gesture of the rulers. It is started with Rs.1 lakh by the Govt. of Orissa, raised to Rs.5 lakh for the dead and Rs.50,000 for injured by the state government with an additional same amount by the Govt. of India. The relief offers of the State have been turned down by the BBJM. The relief given by the Congress (Rs.1 lakh for the dead and Rs.25,000 for the injured) and Lok Sewak Mandal, (Rs.25,000 for each dead), however, has been accepted. The Collector and the Superintendent of Police of Jajpur who were present during the massacre have been transferred. A judiciary investigation has been ordered. A Ministerial Committee has been formed headed by Bishwabhusan Harichandan, the Industry and Revenue Minister, to study re-settlement and rehabilitation and to submit the report within a month. "We will adopt a comprehensive policy for re-settlement and rehabilitation, of the project affected people and it will be a progressive one"- said Mr. Harichandan (Das 2006d: 13).

The force of the movement was so strong that within a couple of months the Resettlement and Rehabilitation Policy, 2006 (see GOO 2006, 2007) was tabled in the Orissa Assembly and declared, mostly in a belief that it would silence the protestors (Das 2006f). Generally it is commented that the

declared R&R policy is the best and unique in its nature not only in Orissa but also in India! A special R&R Policy has been declared for Kalinganagar that one can find in the Govt. of Orissa website even (see GOO 2005a). The promise it makes is alluring. But what about the ground reality, especially of implementation?

In the meanwhile, the construction of the TATA project was halted for a while but the company continued in convincing the people to accept the compensation and R&R package. Thus, a year after the police firing, the tribal people, mainly the company supporters, agreed to accept the compensation and the R&R package. Of the total 1500 families to be displaced, almost 600 have accepted the R&R package. With a prior appointment I met Mr. Rajesh Chintak, the Additional Managing Director (AMD) of Tata Steel Project in Kalinganagar, who was proud to say, “We are implementing here the best R&R Policy of the country. We want to make Kalinganagar *the model* of the R&R Policy. All the DPs are the part of the Tata Steel *Parivar* [family]”. In fact I found everywhere – from Jajpur Road to Kalinganagar – the Tata Steel sign boards reading “*Ama TATA Steel Parivar, Sukhi Parivar*”- our TATA steel family, happy family. I felt enigmatic of the slogan. With all my enthusiasm, then, I visited all the TATA camps – Danagadi I & II, Gobaraghati (all transit camps), Trijanga and Sansailo (both rehabilitation colonies). In all camps, the big entrance gate bearing the name of the camp, and of course the TATA Steel logo and the slogan – “*Ama TATA Steel Parivar, Sukhi Parivar*”, was giving me an impression of happy lives inside. One day, I was just walking through the entrance gate of Danagadi-I transit camp bypassing two security men standing at the two poles. “Hello, hello...” – I saw one of the security men calling me behind. “Yes, please tell me” – I replied. “We do not know you. Why are you going inside? Whom do you want to meet?” – the other security man asked me straight. I gave my identity as a student and explained them about my research. Though they realised that I need to talk to some of the DPs, they replied, “Sir, we do not have the permission to allow anybody inside other than the DPs of this camp. Many people are coming and writing many different stories”. I was struck as to how anybody can write something bad about the “happy families”. They allowed me, however, inside the camp only when I uttered the name of my friend whom they know as a “Senior Officer” of TATA Steel Project in Kalinganagar. I saw the whole camp surrounded by a wire-fence. Very close to the only entrance gate, there stands a small plastic-net-fenced children’ park (approximately by 15’×10’) with some swings and other playing material. “*Ama TATA Steel Parivar, Sukhi Parivar*” has been written as a brand name here and there – on the walls of the houses, water tanks, bath rooms, the tin sheets standing as wall of the non-formal school etc. Finally I succeeded to talk to a DP, Paragana Hembram, with his two wives and a small child. Paragana was

unhappy to tell me, “How can we live in a 10’×10’ room. I am not telling my problem only. Where the parents will sleep those who have many small children? How can I accommodate my guest? From this transit camp Biren and Lalsing Sundhi returned back to their village, Baligotha, when they faced a lot of problems here – food shortage, no shed for their cattle etc. We have to inform the security men always about where we are going and for what. All our guests will be checked and asked many things that they do not like even. The company will hardly provide extra ration for the guests.”

But the people like Fakir Champia, a DP in Trijanga Rehab Colony (originally from village Belahuri), seem contemplative on many serious issues. He is much worried about the future of the four minor sons who are now not eligible to be DPs, and hence no home-stead plot, no house and no job. He told, “Anyhow they will work somewhere and can earn their livelihood. But where will they live? Where will they build their houses? I am worried that some of my sons may have to migrate somewhere else. Then, my family will be disintegrated. I do not know what I will do.” Further amidst his praises for TATA Company he expressed, “We were living in thatched houses in village and managing with kerosene lamps at night. They promised us to give concrete house, *pucca* road, electrification, tap water, and job. Yes, they have given. I do not blame them. But now they are telling us to be the consumers and pay the electricity bill. I told them that we were living by the ration you were giving and then how could we give now. I agreed to bear the cost of the electricity once we would get the job and earn. I am also worried that the promised period for providing ration is coming to an end. But company never came up till now and we are not given jobs. Then if they stop providing ration how will we survive? We have left our farm lands and other means of livelihood available in village and we are hardly able to do business or other kinds of activities available here”.

The DPs of Kashipur have many wounded tell to narrate. “On 7 July 2004, they called a public hearing meeting in the Collector’s office, Rayagada, not in our village, for public opinion poll for the Company. Ministers, MLAs, *Sarapanchs*, *Samitisabhyas*, Ward members, village heads, company officers, communicators and motivators were invited to the meeting. I would like to mention that the actual land owners were not allowed to sit there. The meeting started with telecasting a “screen” [documentary] showing the life of the tribals before and after company. In the first half of the “screen”, they showed our male’s almost bare naked body with a dirty and torn loin cloth and our women wearing also a dirty and torn *saree*. They never forgot our children to display them naked. They also telecasted us eating *tanku-pej* and *ghurdisag*²⁴ and living in dirty and dark [means without electricity] and broken thatched houses, and so on. The other half

of the “screen” showing our life after company was romantic. They put on full-pant, T-shirt and boots to our men and clean and bright-white *saree* to women. Also panoramic views of the tribals working in the company along with their *pucca* houses, electric-lamps, street lights, tap water etc. were highlighted” – Bhagaban Majhi told me pointing to the yellow *pucca* houses of Nuapada, the R&R colony of the UAIL. In an afternoon, I visited the Nuapada colony located at the foothills of a mountain giving shelter to around 98 DP families from Ramibeda (42 tribal families) and Dimundi (56 families). I was happy to see the so-called “poor” tribals living in a beautiful settlement – *picchu* roads running in between yellow *pucca* houses standing in lines facing each other, separate bathroom for each family at the back of the main house, iron gates at the entrance of each family, street light poles heading mercury bulbs and over head water tanks standing at the flag end to supply water to the whole colony and the school at the entrance of the village, though my Kondha friend, Rama Majhi, who was with me told that he had not seen the school open.

My fantasies of a “good life” in colony underwent a change when I met Umesh Majhi at the entrance hall of his house. Besides the entrance hall where we were sitting, he showed me his single bed room, a small kitchen and a toilet standing at five hands away from the back door of his house. He was complaining about the poor construction of the house, the cracked roof and walls, the almost broken doors and windows, frequent power-cut and irregular water supply. He feared that anybody can snatch away his house at any time as he was not given *patta* for his allotted 10 decimal homestead land. He was much worried about his livelihood as he was not yet given the promised job. Thus, he is running a petty shop (a shelf-filled material containing biscuits, *biri*, tobacco and a few grocery items) at the entrance hall of the house. He described the life in colony in his one line saying, “*kuli gale randha, na hele mulakanda* - [you can] cook if [you] get a wage, otherwise [you have to survive with] sweet potato²⁵”.

After a year, in 2007, I met another DP, Gobara Majhi of the same colony who told “Company took our land by force and broke our houses with bull-dozer in mid-night. They promised us job and all round prosperity. As we had no other way, we came here. They never gave us the job. Now we depend mostly on the day-wage labour in the company. The day company stops the work, we will starve. Thus we have staged strikes in different times. In last August 2007, we sat on *dharana* for about 10 days demanding permanent jobs in the company. We also threatened the company telling that if not taken care, we would then join PSSP to fight against the company. Finally they gave each of us a piece of paper and we do not know what is written on it. But I got a job in the Sidhartha Constructions Pvt. Ltd and getting Rs.2100/- per month”. Gobara showed me his “Appointment Letter”

where it was written “Gobara Majhi ... is appointed as a wage labourer @ Rs. 70/- per day in Sidharth Constructions Pvt. Ltd.²⁶ from August 20, 2007 provided he satisfies the following conditions...and he can be terminated from job under the following conditions”. I find, in brief, that “all the internationally accepted principles regarding involuntary displacement have been wantonly and openly violated and transgressed by the authorities and the corporate bodies” (Bandyopadhyay 2004: 411).

These kinds of subjective sufferings as we saw are not confined to the victims alone. These sufferings today are shared not only by the community fellows, but also by the fellows from translocal and transnational spaces. For instance, going beyond geographical boundary and crossing over 700km and more the tribals of Kashipur join hands with the tribals of Kalinganagar and vice versa. Even the tribals of different parts of the country, mostly those fighting for the same cause, extend their kind hearted support and they stand by each other at the time of need viz. for organizing meetings, strike, *dharana*, *bandha* and even attacking the company and its supporters. Also these movements have been supported by political leaders, social activists, leaders of civil society, people’s organization and other dignitaries. Importantly, the association of social activists like Sunderlal Bahuguna, Medha Patkar, Arundhati Roy, to name a few, has inspired and strengthened these people’s movements. There are also “Solidarity Groups” in India and abroad supporting these kinds of movements. Thus, this co-sharing creates what is called “moral community” consisting of people suffering from the same kinds of pain and fighting for the same cause. Thus, the tribals of Kalinganagar and Kashipur have taken vow not to vacate land for industries any more. The recent killing has strengthened their resolve to fight against administrative error, displacement and rehabilitation, loss of livelihoods and dignity. “They have killed our men, for setting up a steel plant. We are now ready to die, but will not part with our land and homes” – said Upin Jamuda, the father of the deceased Ati Jamuda of Chandia. (Das 2006b: 16). “We will not give an inch of land for industrialization any more. We have lost many lives. Many of our people became handicaps for ever. If the Government wants to establish companies here, let them kill all of us first” – said Rabindra Jarika, the Secretary of the BBJM. Even the reaction of Bhagaban Majhi is the same. Also this is the common reaction of the people of Kalinganagar and Kashipur.

This moral community not only provides moral support to the movement but also energizes the people to fight back the company. Also this helps in production of knowledge, mostly through words of mouth. The associations of the tribals of Kalinganagar and Kashipur with other different movements, activists and great dignitaries have made them aware

and conscious about the State, MNCs and their intentions and above all their own rights and dues. Bhagaban Majhi admits:

Earlier we have accepted the Government as our *mai-bap* (parents). We were thinking that the Government will take care of us from birth to death. But today, we know, the Government is only for the leaders and traders, not for us. Through these movements, we could see now the real characters of the leaders, officers, Ministers etc. Now we do understand, had there no movement, their exploitation, cheating and torture would have continued as usual (KJLM 2003: 28)²⁷.

In this way the social suffering of the tribals of Kalinganagar and Kashipur shared in their day-to-day life has produced knowledge about the State, market, civil society and their roles and intentions, and about their own dues and rights as well. This knowledge has broadened their horizon of the consciousness that endures them towards resistance and persistence.

TRANSFORMING PAIN

In any structural violence, as our foregoing discussion shows, the first thing that gets affected is the “body”. It becomes the contested site of violence. The somatic body of man immediately becomes a semiotic object on which the actions of the violence are to be inscribed (cf. Das 1995). In her much cited scholarly work, Veena Das (1995) presents a modern ethnography of critical events which is sensitive to both world historical process as well as the inner life of individual. Whether it is the violence during partition of India in 1947, Bhopal industrial gas tragedy in 1984 or *Sati* (Roop Kanwar case) in Rajasthan in 1987, as Veena Das explores, the victim’s body becomes a contested site not only among communities (ch.5), for community and State (ch.3), but also for bureaucracy, judiciary and medical discourses (ch.6). Here, she argues, the victims are not only more likely to suffer, they are also more likely to have their suffering and voice silenced (cf. Farmer 1998: 280). Veena Das writes “The more suffering was talked about, the more it was used to extinguish the sufferer” (1995: 174). Incisive of Das’ discourse on social suffering, I admit that the killings and police repressions in Kalinganagar and Kashipur, no doubt, have produced the experience of social and bodily suffering, suffering not merely of marginalization or corporal pain but also dismemberment, of displacement and homelessness, of joblessness and food shortage, of shortened lives and death without weeping (Scheper-Hughes 1992). But, extending Das’ argument, our discussion appreciates that social suffering was neither able to silence the voice of the victims nor extinguish them. It gives the victims the space to explore the means and strategies to *cope* in an inhospitable life-world.

Here Kleinman and Kleinman help us to understand “how political

oppression, torture, atrocity and the turmoil of societal breakdown, which have intensified manifestly in our times, are remembered? How do political processes of terror (and resistance) cross over from public space to traumatize (or reanimate) inner space and then cross back as collective experience?" (p.711). While there are no definitive answers to these questions, as they acknowledge, they do offer a set ideas.

The first set is *subjective suffering* and *social suffering* that occurs in everyday life of social experience. With a staunch critique of dichotomization of social life into individual and collective poles Kleinman and Kleinman (1994: 712) argue:

Bodies and selves are axes in the social flow around which social psychological and sociosomatic process aggregate. These processes transport metaphor from symbol system via event to relationships; they bring meaning into the body-self. Subjective complaint and collective complaint thereby merge, and social reaction and personal reaction unite. So defined, social experience interrelates social suffering and subjective suffering not as different entities but as an interactive process.

Analyzing the social memory of Chinese indigenous people's bodily suffering during Chinese cultural revolution Kleinman and Kleinman claim "bodily memory, biography and social history merged" (1994: 714). Here the corporal body pain creates an interpersonal space where the bodily pain is expressed, experienced and shared. Thus, each shared complaint of bodily suffering serves as "moral commentary", first of the local world and ultimately the society in general as well. Expressing bodily pains, and even experiencing them, can therefore take a form of resistance (cf. Scott 1985). And these experiences of pain, it goes without saying, are forms of mediation of social process leading to an interpretation and merging of subjectivity and social world (Kleinman and Kleinman 1994: 717). It seems particularly strong in the memory of social suffering.

The second set of ideas, Kleinman and Kleinman provide, is *moral capital* and *vital energy*. Here they refer to the social interconnectedness in everyday life that provides a kind of "moral capital". And their moral capital utilized in a proper way energizes the body as well as the network with "vital energy" (p.713). Can these energies be potent sources of social change? Kleinman and Kleinman with a positive note conclude: "Perhaps transformations that begin in reveries, dreams, painful bodies, and alienating trances, that protect the inner world of the person and the family, that keep social memory alive while they engender the forgetting of the most self-defeating of images, that criticize and resist the oppression of persons.... do expand through cultural-political process into world transformations"

(1994: 721). Again, going beyond Kleinman and Kleinman's description of somatization²⁸ (1986), Nancy Scheper-Hughes talks about 'Somatic Culture' (1992: 184). By somatic culture she means the socio-cultural life of the sugarcane workers of Brazil which privileges the body as a medium of communication – both as metaphor and metonym – of relationships, of politics and even spirituality (1992: 185-86, 231-32).

At this point, Veena Das argues that the embodied individual body pain shared in a moral community is treated as a social suffering that helps the victim to awaken his/her consciousness and represent, constructing the pain as the medium, the historical wrong done to a person (Das 1995: 176, cf. Kleinman and Kleinman 1994, Kleinman et.al 1998, Bourdieu et.al. 1999). But it is not always as black and white as Das argues. As my empirical exploration shows, no doubt the social suffering awakens critical consciousness that leads to production of knowledge, and resistance. But it is not *the* only truth. Though the social suffering of victimization continues/ lives in the memory lane of the victim as well as the community for a long time, or forever may be, but we cannot say always that the wounds of victimization will deepen. It depends upon many factors and conditions. As we saw some of the victims and their surviving family members of the police firing in Kalinganagar and Kashipur, along with the other DPs, Sukumari Gagarai, Subarna Jhodia etc., to name a few, for instance, have accepted the compensation and the Company against which they were fighting and have lost their lives. Here, two forces work. First, the prevailing vulnerable conditions compel the victims to survive by availing the help even from the very forces responsibly for their suffering. Second, the life-threatening forces of the state and market in the form of police repression, firing, killing, imprisonment etc. work maliciously to erase the social memory of the victims to accept the offender. For example, Dudheswar Jhodia – a former strong leader of PSSP – got into a hidden treaty with the company and became neutral and hence he was able to avoid the imprisonment for the dozen of criminal cases pending against him.

What can we conceptualise from these complexities and contradictions? From our preceding discussion, we can conclude that the tribals, on the one hand, are not powerless and, on the other, they have learnt the art of overcoming the state of powerlessness. And that is how the social suffering produces critical consciousness leading to, what I would like call, *the politics of the weak*.

THE POLITICS OF THE WEAK

It is to be noted from the above narrative that resistance is much more than collective individual action²⁹. Thus to confine the analysis to behaviour/ action alone is to miss much of the point. James Scott (1985) argues that

the “everyday forms of resistance”, powerfully called “the weapons of the weak” though make no headline “are often the most significant and the most effective over the long run” (Scott 1985: xvi). Through these techniques of everyday forms of resistance, the subordinates not only try to eke out their subsistence but also make their political presence felt (ibid: xvii). Much of the criticism of Scott, however, seems to focus much on the efficacy of such weapons of the weak – “foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson sabotage and so on” (xvi). But Scott’s phenomenological and ethno-methodological approach goes beyond the political weight of such forms of behavior, which many fail to recognize. James Scott, therefore, explains: “in as much as I seek to understand the resistance of thinking, social being, I can hardly fail to ignore their consciousness – the meaning they give to their acts” (p. 38).

These little meanings assigned to little actions of little people must not be ignored as “trivial or inconsequential” for how else can we understand the big and organised rebellions without having adequate knowledge about their shared values and ‘offstage’ talk? “How can we understand everyday forms of resistance without reference to the intentions, ideas and the language of those human beings who practice it’ (ibid). Thus, a critical analysis of the thoughts or social consciousness, along with actions/behavior of the subordinate classes is important yet for another reason. It may clarify us to understand to what extent “elites are able to impose their own image of a just social order, not simply on the behavior of non-elites, but on their consciousness as well” (p.38-39).

In clear terms, the issue is one of exploitation of the subordinates, the coercive force of which lies at the disposal of the elites and/or the state. Therefore, it is virtually impossible for the subordinates to express openly their discontentment. The only thing apparent is their acquiescence. This state of affairs leads to two different interpretations. One, the exploited group, premised on hegemonic ideology (see below), may accept the situation as normal and, even as a justifiable part of the social order. Second, this explanation of passivity assumes at least a fatalistic acceptance of that social order and perhaps even an active complicity. Both of these, what Marxists call, are “mystification” or “false-consciousness” (Scott 1985:39).

This mystification or false-consciousness rests on the process of ideological domination what is powerfully phrased by Antonio Gramsci as *hegemony* (Gramsci 1971). The central idea behind it is the assumption that “elites dominate not only the physical means of production but the symbolic means of production as well” (Scott 1985: 39,315). Beyond the material sphere, the elites also control the “ideological sectors” of society – culture, religion, education, media – and thereby obtain consent for their rule. “By

creating and disseminating a universe of discourse and the concepts to go with it, by defining the standards of what is true, beautiful, moral, fair and legitimate, they build a symbolic climate that prevents subordinate classes from thinking their way free. In fact, for Gramsci, the proletariat is more enslaved at the level of ideas than at the level of behavior” (Scott 1985:39).

The implication of the idea, hegemony, for my purpose here, is that the dominant rule is effective not so much by sanction and coercion of the elite classes as much by the consent and passive compliance of the subordinate classes. This hegemony exactly how far voluntary and complete is not very clear, as critics argue, even on close reading of Gramsci³⁰. Sometimes he seems to argue that hegemony involves an active belief in the legitimacy and superiority of the elite class; and at other times he implies that the acceptance of hegemony is more passive act the subordinate class assumes a fatalistic acceptance of the given social order. Drawing a clear distinction between thought and action Gramsci (1971:326-27,419) argues: “The concrete action of workers who defend their material interests may, for example, suggest a radical consciousness but, at the level of ideas – the level at which hegemony operates – that incipient radical consciousness is undermined by the substratum of values and perceptions socially determined from above” (Scott 1985:316).

The pervasiveness of this ideological hegemony implies that as individuals the poor seem powerless to overcome the intellectual and moral subordination. Then the subordinates with their raising radical consciousness assume the recognition of people as agents. The people act according to their understanding and vision of who they are and what they want. The people as agents, as an external agency, demystify existing long and arduous process of hegemony. This external agency, even in the form of revolutionary party, provides the subordinates with “conceptual apparatus” and “critical consciousness”. It is crucial to understand that only such party can challenge the bourgeoisie hegemony and replace it with its own hegemony rightly called “counter hegemony”³¹ (Scott 1985: 396) where the so-called subalterns no longer conform to the established order of power. And the new hegemony is not, Gramsci insists, a consequence of revolution, but rather a pre-condition of an authentic revolution” (Scott 1985:316). To summarise Scott:

Contrary to the views of Gramsci and his numerous academic disciplines, the rural poor do not suffer from “false consciousness” and are not “mystified” by the hegemonic ideologies promoted by the dominant class and its intellectual and political agents. The peasants are perfectly aware of what is happening to them, but they also recognize the limits of their ability to resist openly without jeopardizing the

precarious livelihoods that are viable to them and without inviting the repressive power of local elites and the state. The peasants behave quite rationally in term of their limited political, economic and symbolic resources and opportunities (Esman 1987: 311).

This critical consciousness is the base of what Partha Chatterjee calls, *political society* – a concept distinct from civil society (Chatterjee 2004: 38). Under the given structure of the state appropriated by the constitutions and laws, he explains, “all of society is civil society, everyone is a citizen with equal rights and therefore to be regarded as a member of civil society” (ibid). Through political processes, the Govt. agencies interact with members of civil society as individuals or as members of associations. But all the individuals are not constitutionally “rights-bearing citizens”. For example, the transgressors who live in illegal encroached land, make illegal use of water or electricity without paying fee, travel without tickets in public transport etc. Therefore, they are not truly members of civil society and the state also never recognizes them as such. It does not mean that they are beyond the reach of the state or excluded from the political arena. As populations within the territorial jurisdiction of the state, the people are to be both cared and controlled by government agencies. This state of affairs binds these people in a certain political relationship with the state that does not always conform to what is envisioned in the constitution. Yet there is no doubt these are political relations. It has been argued that there lies difference and split in the domain of politics of the elites and the subalterns (see Guha 1982: 1-8). The conceptual tool of political society helps to understand this form of entanglement of elite with subaltern politics. Through these political societies the subalterns going beyond the domain of state politics establish their own politics, politics of the governed, what Partha Chatterjee calls “popular politics”. By popular politics he challenges us to understand “how can the particular claims of marginal population groups, often grounded in violations of the law be made consistent with the pursuit of equal citizenship and civic virtues” (2004:64). He further writes “in this way the people are learning, and forcing the governors to learn, how they would prefer to be governed” (p.78)

This is relatively close to what Michel Foucault calls *governmentality* or *governmental rationality* (1991). The central thesis of the concept of governmentality, for my purpose here, is to understand and describe how modern forms of power and regulation achieve their full effects not by forcing the tribals towards State-mandated goals but by turning them into accomplices (cf. Agrawal 2006). The very individuality that is supposed to be constrained by exercise of power by the state, as Foucault argues, may actually be its effect. In this sense, the analysis of modern govt. helps us to

understand the profound transformation in mechanisms of power (Foucault 1978). The critical thrust of my enquiry comes from Arturo Escobar who challenges us to see how marginalized generate what I call the politics of the weak – “a new way of doing politics and a new way of sociability” for a “construction of a different social power” (Escobar 1992b: 81, cited in Alejo 2000: 35). This leads to a critical reflection on management of the adversities by the marginalised and the radical political development thereof, confronting the established structures of power.

From this we generate more questions. How do the marginalized manage to face the challenges in an adverse situation? How do they generate new politics, even standing out of the domain of State politics? How these popular politics generate a new kind of social power? And what are its consequences? Let us in this context return to *Gandhamardan bachao andolan* to appreciate how the weapons of the weak generate politics of and for the governed and how do they give a new direction to the discourse of governmentality.

GANDHAMARDAN BACHAO ANDOLAN

The people’s movement against bauxite mining from Gandhamardan Hills of Western Orissa by Bharat Aluminum Company (BALCO) is popularly known as *Gandhamardan bachao andolan* – save Gandhamardan movement.

Gandhamardan Hill ranges are geographically located in the western Orissa bordering to Chhatisgarh. It stretches up to 90 km in a locational cross-section of Padmapur subdivision of Baragarh district, Patnagarh subdivision of Balangir district and Nuapada district. In mid-August 2006, I reached Paikamal – a village of Padmapur subdivision standing at the foothills of Gandhamardan and the centre of the BALCO project. I was excited to climb Gandhamardan and visit Nrushingnath Temple, just one kilometer away from the Paikamal village. In an early morning I was accompanied by two activists – Rabisankar and Gupteswar Kuanr – to Nrusingnath. On the way, Rabisankar went on narrating the significance of Gandhamardan. The great epic Ramayana bears its name as a natural resort of rare medicines. According to the report of Dr. G. Panigrahi, a reputed scientist of Indian Botanical Survey, prepared in 1965, there were more than 225 varieties of rare medicines in Gandhamardan, some of which are not found any where in the world. Of its 156 springs, there are 22 small and big perennial streams flow from it that have created Anga river in Baragarh and Suktel river in Bolangir. Like Nrushingnath Temple here, the other famous religious centre, Harishankar Temple, in Patnagarh subdivision is located on the other side of the mountain. The most important thing is that almost 50, 000 people living around the hills depend upon it directly or indirectly for their livelihood and survival. In the meanwhile, on reaching the premises

of Nrusingnath temple, I saw a number herbal medicine huts (read shops) evidently owned by the tribals of the place. The presence of Nrusingnath temple at the foothills of evergreen Gandhamardan was scenic. The passing of Kapildhar spring through Nrusingnath temple was further beholding. I was enjoying the floral and faunal richness of the hill while climbing the Gandhamardan through the footpaths, and sometimes on the road constructed by BALCO (to the proposed plant site) to Kapildhar waterfall.

The beautiful hill ranges are also enriched with bauxite mineral. In 1971 Govt. of India declared about the storage of bauxite in this hill. In 1976, BALCO applied for lease for bauxite mining and it was granted in 1981. The company was given 983 hectares of land for 90 years in lease for bauxite mining. In 1983, after getting provisional clearance from Department of Environment, Govt. of India, the company laid its foundation stone in May 13, 1983. And the establishment of infrastructure progressed fast.

I was trying to assess the progress of the project seeing the abandoned houses, colonies, offices, water tanks, ranges of flats, clubs and rust-eaten motor vehicles while passing from Paikamal *bazaar* to Nrusingnath Temple. Hill top, the spot for the mining plant, has been connected with wide road. Rabisankar also told me that already 540 tons of bauxite ore had been mined and sent away. The construction of proposed 26km railway from Manbhang village to Lakhana railway station of Kalahandi was in rapid progress. The company work was progressing fast with around 1000 employees. According to the estimation of the company Rs.32 crores of money had already been spent. The general people in the area were afraid and bewildered. Everybody believed that definitely the company was going to destroy Gandhamardan. At such a critical juncture the spirited entry added energy to the anti-company activities

Lingaraj³² describes that initially they had no hope that people's movement will stand against the will of the company and succeed. But from the day one there were symbolic protests. On the inaugural day of May 13, 1983, in the official meeting itself pamphlets bearing the names of the important persons of the area were circulated with a message that those people would commit suicide if the BALCO mining project did not stop taking into consideration of the adverse effects on environment and people. Secondly, the then Chief Minister and the Union Minister of Mines while returning from the meeting, the students of Padmapur college threw stones at their vehicles in protest of BALCO project. Some of the students were arrested. Taking into consideration these minor incidences, it was not believed that the local people will fight against the company in an organized way. On the other hand, the ruling party and the BALCO officers were relieved that the project work would go on smoothly.

In the meantime the construction of road, railway, ropeway; building of office and staff quarters; establishment of crosser plant etc. went on without any hindrance. The village Paikamal, the center of the project, gradually turned to be a small town. The fear of loosing livelihood, the issue of environment protection and above all the religious sentiments attached with Gandhamardan brought people together on a platform. The voice of dissatisfaction and protest of the local people got momentum. In 1985, the people organized a crusade move against the same. Later on some of the members of Viswa Hindu Parisad (VHP) and other intelligentsia and lawyer of the area lodged a case in High Court against the company questioning the security and safety of Nrusinghnath Temple. Initially a stay order was given. Finally the High Court allowed the company for mining with some conditions. The High Court appointed a Committee headed by Mahendra Rout, the former Vice-Chancellor of Utkal University. The Committee reported that the mining project of BALCO would have no adverse impact on environment and lives of the people (Lingaraj 1997: 3). Yet, assuming that the protest movement was religious, the company granted a sum of Rs. 4 lakhs for preservation and beautification of the temple. Two other important incidents happened during this time. First, mysterious theft of the Nrusingh idol on April 20, 1984 and second, falling down of *Garudastambha* and crack on the temple wall and roof due to constant blasting work of the company. The underlying religious sentiment led to people's agitations on a massive scale. Madhuban, a natural orchard, was submerged in a small dam constructed for providing water to the BALCO colonies, though in the beginning it was told to the people that the dam was meant for irrigation. This added to the dissatisfaction of the people.

It is in this critical juncture, being inspired by some of the environmentalists Mr. Prasanna Kumar Sahu³³, as he says, then working as a clerk in Sambalpur University, visited the Gandhamardan area to assess whether a strong people's movement against BALCO was possible. He found to his surprise that even after all those incidents, Sambalpur MLA and former State Minister of Mines, Dr. Krupasindhu Bhoi, was so powerful in the area that people hardly dared to open their mouths against BALCO. Keeping all these in mind, a NSS team of Sambalpur University consisting of 200 students headed by Prof. Artabandhu Mishra, Dept. of Life Science and guided by Mr. Prasanna Sahu came to the area to assess "how much fire is there under the ash" – Prof. Mishra told me. The students were accommodated as family members in different houses in different villages. They studied the people regarding what they thought of the BALCO issue. In the entire area only three persons who rejected BALCO were Ghasiram Mallick of Manabhang village, propagator of Sarvodaya Mandal, Madan Mohan Sahu and founder of Gurukula Ashram, Jnananandaji Saraswati. However, at the end of the camp

one thing came out very clearly that “people were quite aware of the losses they were facing and going to face in future due to BALCO project and had enough knowledge about what was going to happen in near future. But they were bewildered, afraid and helpless due to lack of organizational awareness and support”³⁴ (Lingaraj 1997: 3-4). After the camp most of the students went back to university and confined themselves to academic routines, while a few stayed back in the field organizing people for the movement. Finally in August 19, 1985, Gandhamardan Surakshya Yuba Parisada was formed in Baidapali village consisting of only 19 members with Niranjana Bidrohi as its President and Mr. Prasanna Sahu as Chief Advisor. Other members who played important roles in this organization were Asutosh Patnaik, Bhabanisankar Nial and Lingaraj Azad from Kalahandi, and native leaders like Goutam Biswal, Khageswar Sahu, Diamond Bhoi, Hadu Sahu et.al. Two most important leaders who played vital roles in carrying forward the movement were Mr. Prasanna Sahu and Mr. Bhabanisankar Hota. While Mr. Sahu organized and guided the movement in the ground level, Mr. Hota as a chief spokesperson to the media organized ideological support from outside the area.

As the movement got momentum the ruling Congress party and the company supporters continued torturing the people who supported the movement or voiced against the company. One day, even Sri Jnananandaji Saraswati, the founder of Gurukula Ashram, Paikamal, was beaten so heavily and tonsured by force by Mr. Samsundar Bhoi, the brother of Mr. Krupasindhu Bhoi that he fell ill and was admitted in Burla hospital for treatment for more than a month. This agitated the locale and since then Mr. Krupasindhu Bhoi became infamous as BALCO *Asur* (demon).

It needs to be appreciated here that Mr. Sahu had enough knowledge and intelligence to understand the religious sentiment of the people. He wrote many dramas and poetries in local dialect and simple language, of which *Gandhagiri* and *Musikadalan* got wide appreciation. A drama committee was formed with the help of the local people and these dramas were staged in different villages. The central objective of the dramas was to create awareness among the people to fight against BALCO *Asur* and to save the God, the Gandhamardan. The illiterate and simple folk of the area got the message well.

However, as Lingaraj was narrating his experiences, all these incidents made people courageous. In the process, the environmentalist of Chipko movement, Sunderlal Bahuguna came to Gandhamardan area for a week on request during February 6-12, 1986. His visit generated tremendous enthusiasm amongst the people. He delivered speech in almost 40 different villages. The first mass movement started in his presence on 12th February.

None of the BALCO vehicles were allowed into the project site. On the first day of the movement, 38 people were arrested and on the second day 48 under arrest. Of these arrested, 44 were women. The movement continued for 10 days. But after two days the number of persons arrested was so high that no one was sent to the jail as there was problem of accommodation in the jail. One notable event was that on being arrested a freedom fighter named Alekha Patra denied to come in bail and finally he was released after 78 days.

Prior to Sunderlal Bahuguna's visit to the area none of the News Papers (except *The Pragatibadi*, published from Bhubaneswar) had published editorials. Gradually the movement got support from the people all over the country. In Delhi 'Gandhamardan Jana Paribesh Surakshya Parisada' was formed and a memorandum bearing the signature of 88 Professors of Universities and academic organizations was given to the President of India. In this signature campaign Prof. Manoranjan Mohanty, Hrusikeshu Panda of Institute of Economic Growth and advocate Kishore Chandra Patel have taken lead roles. Then *The Times of India* and other local News Papers published editorial in support of the movement. After the movement got momentum in Delhi, the then Chief Commissioner Mr. T.N. Shesan, Department of Forest and Environment, submitted a report to the Government of India that the BALCO mining project would turn the Gandhamardan into a desert and the fifty thousand people who depend on the forest would face adverse consequences (Lingaraj 1997: 2).

The Government of India again appointed another high powered committee headed by B.D. Nag Choudhury. The Committee first visited the area on October 28, 1986. On this day more than twenty thousand people had gathered to establish their voice against BALCO. The year 1987 was very challenging for the movement supporters. In 1988 the BALCO issue stood as a political question. This movement created an anti-ruling party feeling. 1989 was the year for Legislative Assembly election. The ruling Congress party was worried. A Home Committee was set up that finally recommended for rejection of BALCO. The pressure of the movement and the expectation to win the next election forced ruling party to reject the BALCO lease. The impact of the movement was very clearly visible from the next two elections i.e. the Assembly Election of 1989 and the Parliament election of 1990. In both these elections the ruling Congress party was defeated and the Opposition Janata Party came to power. Biju Patnaik was elected as Chief Minister. It was believed that BALCO issue would rise no more. But unfortunately Biju Patnaik changed his position and started again negotiating with BALCO. It created a commotion among the general people. In March 1991, a cycle rally was organized from Gandhamardan to Bhubaneswar in which almost 300 people joined. Biju Patnaik addressing the agitators declared that there

would be no more BALCO in Gandhamardan. Again during Congress rule in 1997, Continental Resources Ltd of Canada was given lease for bauxite mining. Again people got agitated. Finally the Company itself withdrew its lease. However, it is clear that any political party in power is pronouncing ‘Gandhamardan *phatao*’ (blast Gandhamardan) and the same leader in Opposition Party is telling ‘Gandhamardan *bachao*’ (save Gandhamardan). Dharendra Mohanty, the present Convener of the Gandhamardan Surakshya Yuba Parisad, concludes, “To keep alive our movement, every year we have been celebrating *Barsika diwas* (annual day) on 1st January, *Pratistha diwas* (establishment day of the movement) on 19th August and BALCO *Asur* day (burning the effigy of BALCO *Asur*) on the eve of Ramanavami. However, the people of this area are *aware* that no company can stand here any more.” From the aforementioned discussion we understand that the weapons of the week enable not only concientization of the tribals but also made the Government learn how the weak would like to be governed.

STRUGGLE FOR PERSISTENCE: OF DIGNITY AND RECOGNITION

The emphasis of Dharendra Mohanty on awareness made me reflect on the dynamics of the tribal awakening (cf. critical consciousness of Freire 1990) not only in Baragarh but also in Kalinganagar, Kashipur and Raigarh. Whether it is retrieving land from the illegal encroachment of Bengali refugees in Raigarh, not allowing Company (UAIL) to come up for last 15 years in Kashipur or forcing the government of Orissa to formulate and implement one R&R Policy in Kalinganagar – in all these cases the goal of these tribals is not *resistance* but merely *existence*. But today gaining critical consciousness, the tribals as what Ingold calls “person” (1986) not only struggles for survival but also fights for justice and dignity. This is part of what Nancy Fraser calls struggle for *redistribution* and *recognition* (1995: 73). In this struggle often it is recognition which gets the primacy ignoring the issue of distribution. But even the struggle for recognition often ends up in a superficial formation of identity. This challenges us to contemplate on recognition, as “recognition is not group-specific identity but the status of individual group members as full partners in social interaction” (Fraser 2000:113). Here, Gyanendra Pandey (2006) argues that the struggles waged by the oppressed and subordinates for last two centuries or more, is struggle for “recognition of difference”, not as “recognition as equals”. Here the thrust of my analysis is to explore how the competing demands for social justice and the language of equal rights on the one hand and the “recognition of difference” on the other have awakened the tribal “person” to strive for another twisted demand – to be *equal but different*. In this context, an analysis of *Ol-Chiki* movement would appreciate the struggle of the Santals’ demand for equal rights of citizenship and distribution along with taking pride in their own tribalness.

Santali Language (Ol-Chiki) Movement:

Tribal communities – their culture and language, are endangered species. The dominant communities in the West wish to see them melt and fuse their identities and be identified within the dominant group. In India we want them to join the so called mainstream. Both the theories result in discrimination of tribal culture and identity. It is this discrimination that inbreeds the ‘superior’ and ‘subordinate’ complexities. Hence it allows no space for the minority (tribals) to be recognized at par with the majority (others). And this creates a deep longing for the minority groups to struggle and establish their own identity and to be treated on par with rest of the society.

The Santali language (*Ol-Chiki*) movement in Mayurbhanj districts of Orissa is a fair example. It is Pandit Raghunath Murmu of Dandbose, a small village near Rairangpur town in Mayurbhanj, who for the first time thought of inventing script for Santali language. While serving as the headmaster of Badamtaliya Model School he invented a script for Santali language called *Ol-Chiki* in late 1920s. Sachidananda Das, the then Superintendent of Education of the state, went on a surprise inspection found that Pt. Murmu was having a hand press behind him and he came to know about the script then. Following his suggestion, the hand press and the script were displayed in the state exhibition in February 1939. Later on, it was brought to the kind notice of the then Maharaja Sir Pratap Chandra Bhanj Deo, who after a long discussion being convinced about the suitability of the script proclaimed that his government would have no objection if the people adopted the script to read and write their spoken language. And also remarked, “success of the invention lies only in its application” (Hemram et. al. 1972: 9).

Three years later Pt. Murmu was transferred to Rairangpur high school on promotion, but soon he resigned from the same in 1946 and devoted all his time for propagation of *Ol-Chiki* in Santal dominated states of India. He published novels, books and journals in *Ol-chiki* script. Many organizations were started. One among them was Adivasi Cultural Association formed in 1954. The semi-political affiliation of the organization slowed down the propagation of *Ol-Chiki* script. Finally one purely non-political organization named Adivasi Socio-Educational and Cultural Association (ASECA) was formed in 1964 and got its registration in June of 1964. It is now functioning in Orissa, Bihar, WB, Assam, Jharkhand and other parts of the country.

After Pt. Murmu, ASECA and its followers have been carrying forward the movement. In 1980s one among the leaders, Mr. Chhulai Soren, the present President of ASECA, Mayurbhanj (Orissa) wrote, describing the rationale and suitability of *Ol-Chiki*, to the then Prime Minister of India (Indira Gandhi), Chief Ministers of West Bengal, Orissa, Assam and

Bihar for recognition and adoption of Adivasi Ol-Script (Ol-Chiki) for Santali language. Since the time of Pt. Murmu till the present day the most important demands of the movement were to include Santali language in the 8th Schedule of the constitution of India and to introduce Ol-Chiki script from Primary School to University level. Further more, the Santals now demand that their mother tongue should be the medium of instruction in academic institutions. In response to the demand, the Govt. of Orissa, Dept. of Education has passed a resolution on February 25, 1991 for introduction of Santali language in Primary level in the districts of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Sundargarh. The same has been implemented in 30 schools (20 in Mayurbhanj, 5 in Keonjhar and 5 in Sundargarh) in an experimental basis from May 1992. The experiment failed. The report of the expert committee set up by the Govt. of Orissa for studying the impact on introduction of Ol-Chiki script in 30 schools of Orissa concludes that the parents “are found to believe in competition and tuition. They are more in favour of learning Oriya and English. Learning their own language and script is secondary for them” (GOO 2001: 13).

Later, All Orissa Ol-Chiki Student Union (AOOSU) was formed at Rairangpur on January 10, 1999 with an objective to strengthen the agitation for getting recognition of Ol-Chiki and its implementation in the educational system of Government of Orissa. From time to time organizing rally and dharna, the AOOSU demanded for implementation of Ol-Chiki in DPEP Programme. And finally it was in October 29, 2002 an Expert Committee was set up by the Dept. of School and Mass Education, Govt. of Orissa for use of Ol-Chiki script in Mayurbhanj district of Orissa. The Expert Committee after careful observation submitted its report on November 12, 2005 that concludes (GOO 2005b: 26-27):

- “Santal language should be used as medium of instruction at the primary level(Class I – V). Attempt must be made to bridge the distance between mother tongue (MT)- Santali and regional language/ school language (RL)- Oriya
- “Bilingual transaction model need to be experimented. In the first year 80% time should be used to teach reading and writing of Santali and 20% time should be used for spoken Oriya. In the final Primary year the time is to be reversed. 80% time should be used for speaking, reading and writing of Oriya and 20% time for reading and writing for Santali. Time in the in-between years should be adjusted 40-60, 50-50, and 60-40%
- “Use of Ol-Chiki script to study Santali language be made optional”

Getting positive feedbacks from the Expert Committee, the Govt. Of Orissa declared in April 2006 that Ol-Chiki would be introduced in 100 schools in an experimental basis. The programme is under progress.

In the meanwhile Govt. of India was pleased to include Ol-Chiki in the 8th Schedule of the constitution of India on December 22, 2003. Since then some universities like Sidhu Kanhu University, Ranchi University and some colleges have started imparting teaching Santali language as one of the MIL subjects. ASECA, Mayurbhanj, is providing BA and MA Degree certificate courses in Ol-Chiki. In some of the universities and colleges it is taught as an optional subject up to BA and MA Degree. Central Government has been pleased to allow writing Ol-Chiki as an MIL subject in UPSC examination. The movement is still in roll. The Santals today demand for:

- Teaching Santali students in Ol-Chiki in all schools.
- Creation of special department for Ol-Chiki in colleges and Universities.
- North Orissa University to be named after Pt. Raghunath Murmu.
- Establishment of Sahitya Academy for Ol-Chiki in Orissa.
- Establishment of statue of Pt. Murmu in front of the Assembly of Orissa.
- Inclusion of Ol-Chiki as an optional subject in Orissa Public Service Commission and so on.

I was still wondering, why a separate script (Ol-Chiki) for Santali language is needed? Soren (1980), Norman Zide (1996), Murmu and Hansdah (ND) have described the rationality, suitability and novelty of Ol-Chiki for writing Santali language. They argue that the problems of correctly representing Santali language in Indic script, viz. Oriya, Hindi, Bengali, Assami and Roman script (English) are manifold. Linguistically, to retain the beauty, specialty, peculiarity, originality and sweetness of Santali language, there is need to use a script that can represent all sounds of Santali language accurately and must be naturally appealing to all Santals, and it is definitely the Ol-Chiki script that fulfils these requirements.

Apart from linguistic problems, Chhutai Soren, the President of ASECA, clarified my doubts further saying that there were practical reasons too. After the independence of India, the Santals of Orissa, Bihar, West Bengal and Assam started using Oriya, Devnagari, Bengali and Assami scripts respectively and consequently they also started writing Santali in those scripts. The Santals living in different states and writing in their

respective regional languages failed to understand and communicate each other. Hence, the geographical boundary stood as a barrier for their unity, identity and integration, albeit they possess the same language, culture and tradition. In this context, advocating for use of a common script for Santali language Mr. C.T. Besra of Dumka, Bihar, reproaches the miscreants who for political gain are on the move to overthrow this cause writes: “our friends forget that our Santal brothers are also in Bengal, Assam and Orissa. If we are made to write in Hindi character, they would have to translate the same thing into Bengali, Assami and Oriya respectively and as such we the great solid community will be divided into different zones of language” (Hemram, et.al. 1972: 9).

Secondly, the use of different scripts for writing Santali has effectively marred the progress of Santali language in several fields such as philosophy, history, religion, science, novel, prose, poetry etc. While there exist considerable materials for Santali in Roman script, mostly confined to academic people only, common Santals have no appreciation for the same. The fact that there exists almost no creative literature in Santali using Roman script shows that it has not been able to penetrate to the common Santal. The problem of further deformation of Santali language comes from the fact that different scripts are being used for the same languages. In this process, the style and formation of words used for dominant languages influence the writing of Santali language and this phenomenon further distorts the Santali language. After invention of *Ol-chiki* script, the Santali literature has been enriched by the publication of different books, journals, novels, short stories, poetries, songs, religious sermons, books on Santal society and culture, primary books for learning *Ol-Chiki*, books for learning primary mathematics, Santali grammars, books on great adivasi leaders etc.

However, the inventor’s main interest was to bring together the Santals living in different States by providing them a single communicative language. The hidden agenda, as Chhutai Soren acknowledges, was to bring about a single state by incorporating districts from neighbouring States. At least this is what some of the other leaders claim. Lastly, and most importantly, the language movement of Santal is a struggle for recognition and identity. As Muniram Baskey, a man who worked with Pt. Raghunath Murmu and Jaipal Singh for the development of *Ol-Chiki*, succinctly writes: “An important question which must be considered seriously is the work of making Adivasi race conscious. This believe can be done by the acceptance of a new Script altogether which will give them an individual identity” (ibid).

I wonder then, how far the success of Santali language movement has strengthened the Santal identity and ethnicity and formal recognition of *Ol-Chiki* made an ordinary Santal to think at par with rest of the society. To my

query Karu Marandi replied, “I am very proud now to identify myself as a Santal, which I was hesitant to do earlier. Earlier I was avoiding speaking in *Ol-Chiki* even to my Santal friends in the presence of others, especially a non-tribal. I am happy now to converse in *Ol-Chiki* as I have my own language like yours”. Damayanti Besra, a Lecturer in the Dept. of Oriya, MPC College, Baripada, recounts her experience in the college. One day she was talking to some of her Santali students in Oriya language outside the classroom. To her surprise, one of her students requested her saying, “Madam, we are not Oriyas. Would you mind to talk to us in our mother tongue, *Ol-Chiki*?” Later, Damayanti Besra started teaching her children *Ol-Chiki* and speaking in her mother tongue (*Ol-Chiki*) at home. She further tells me that the Santals are now taking pride not only in their language and identity but also in different manifestations of their culture. The Santals are energetic enough to revive their past customs, traditions and culture. I was also happy to see a number of book stores and audio-video shops exclusively dealing with Santali books, music and video cassettes in Raigangpur and Mayurbhanj towns. Thus, the *Ol-Chiki* movement is a persistent attempt to regain identity, ethnicity and recognition as “Identity politics is now celebrated as the arena of culture and political resistance within society and is often viewed as indicative of a move to a new type of postmodern or late modern society” (Hetherington 1998: 22, cited in Singh 2001: 194).

THE POWER OF POWERLESSNESS

In studying social movements, the anthropologists’ endeavor to deconstruct the discourse of the powerful while giving voice to the struggles of the weak is problematic. Nancy Scheper-Hughes writes: “Either one attributes great explanatory power to the fact of oppression (but in so doing one can reduce the subjectivity and agency of subjects to a discourse on victimization) or one can try to locate the everyday forms of resistance in the mundane tactics and practices of the oppressed, the weapons of the weak... Here one runs the risk of romanticizing human suffering or trivializing its effects on the human spirit, consciousness, and will” (1992: 533). Scheper-Hughes succeeds to avoid this trap which she comes across in the pessimism of Paulo Freire and the optimism of Frantz Fanon. She comments: “If Paulo Freire erred in his unidimensional view of *Nordestino* peasants as mere objects of the rich and powerful so that their knowledge and experience of themselves as self-reflexive humans was all but destroyed, Frantz Fanon erred in his belief that the victims of colonialist oppression could remain string throughout their torment and emerge altogether unscathed from cultural and economic enslavement, with their subjectivity and culture intact” (ibid). From her experience with the Brazilian sugarcane workers she puts forward a middle path that does not underestimate the “destructive signature of poverty and

oppression on the individual and the social bodies” but “acknowledges the creative, if often contradictory, means the people...use to stay alive and even to thrive with wit and their wits intact” (ibid).

I adopted this approach. I recognize that, like the *moradores* friends of Schepher-Hughes, the goal of my subjects is not exactly *resistance* but more fundamentally *existence* or *persistence*. As Scott succinctly puts in: “Their persistence attempts to “nibble away” may backfire, they may marginally alleviate exploitation, they may force a renegotiation of the limits of appropriation, they may change the course of subsequent development, and they may more rarely help bring the system down. These are possible consequences. Their intention, by contrast, is nearly always survival and persistence” (1985: 301).

Following this approach, our foregoing discussion appreciates that the dynamics of tribal awakening has touched a new horizon. There is a newly awakened social consciousness among the tribals. The tribals of Kalinganagar, for instance, had carried on a peaceful campaign demanding adequate compensation till May 2005 when they faced a major police operation against their protest to hand over the land to Maharastra Seamless Company. Later on taking a step ahead, the tribals of Kalinganagar opposed all efforts of land acquisition in the area and finally faced the bullets of the Orissa police in January 2006. After this incident of Kalinganagar, the people in the area have decided to stand against any industrialization project in Orissa involving displacement. The movement against industrialization and displacement today is not confined within the geographical boundary of Orissa. Even it had been connected with different people’s movement against displacement in different part of Orissa as well as in other parts of the country such as Jharkhand, Bihar, Chhatisgarh, Narmada valley etc. And the issues of industrialization and displacement have been articulated in terms of the global-driven development discourse and practice.

Particularly, tribals of Kalinganagar succeeded in forcing the Government and TATA to reevaluate and hike the price of their land and rate of compensation and also importantly a very good R&R policy was endorsed for their benefit. Even after the shift and rehabilitation of 600 families, TATA is not able to start its construction work as the anti-TATA movement is still in force. The fate of UAIL in Kashipur is more critical. UAIL came to the area in 1992. All its efforts to “convince” the tribals in veined. Kashipur is the only place where the leaders of all political party came together under the banner of *Sarvadaliya* Committee not only to support the company but also to campaign for it. This *Sarvadaliya* Committee was insulted and beaten by the local tribals. As a result, there was police firing in 2000 killing some tribals and injuring some others. Though the tribals became afraid initially,

but immediately they strongly united to fight against the company and the state not only against the tyranny of the state-company combine but only to save their livelihood. In 2004, unabated police repression including flag marching in villages, late night raid on the PSSP activists, threatening the ordinary people to kill and arrest if they do not surrender to the company, arresting some of the tribals from bathing *ghats*, markets, roads etc. was the last strategy of the state-company combine to “teach the tribals a lesson”. Public hearing meeting was organized in the District Collector’s office (more than 60 km away from the villages those are fighting), not in villages. Formally abiding by the mandates of PESA Act (1996), they got the consent of the tribals by forcing them to sit in *Pallisabha* on gun-points that people rightly comment as “Police Sabha”. Of course a few tribals surrendered to the company, many are imprisoned, but it would be wrong to presume that they have given up their struggle to retain their land and livelihood. Rather, the anti-company movement of the local tribals is marching stridently getting national and transnational supports. That is why even after 15 years since its inception, the company is still unable to convince the tribals and start its construction work as they strictly say “NO” to company. Through Gandhamardan Bachao Andolan the tribals learnt, and forced the Government to learn, how they would like to be governed. The tribals of Raighar retrieved their land from the illegal encroachment of Bengali refuses challenging the power of the local elites, the dominant community and the state. The Santals, to their pride, could establish their identity as ‘equal but different’ by forcing the Government for recognition and inclusion of Santali language (Ol-Chiki) in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution of India and imparting education to the Santal students in their mother tongue. And in the context of these besieged lives, I find the persistence of tribal’s struggle not only challenging the tyranny but also mitigating their own miseries is powerful enough “to celebrate with them, joyfully and hopefully, if always tentatively” (Scheper-Hughes 1992: 533).

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NOTES

- * Chakradhar Alda is a tribal leader of Nagarika Surakshya Manch, Kaliapani, Sukinda, working in association with the Bisthapan Birodhi Jana Manch of Kalinganagar. The quote

is from his speech at Duburi Hata Padia, Duburi, Jajpur on July 27, 2007.

- 1 Following the route of critical ethnography, the present paper levels charges against the state sponsored development initiative. Drawing heavily upon empirical support, the paper critically notes that the development initiative is not merely to the disadvantage of the tribal society but has lost its native lure.
- 2 According to local reports 27 platoons and 14 platoons according to the police themselves.
- 3 The village people report the number of persons injured in the firing is 48 but the Government list includes only 18 of them.
- 4 Rajesh Chintak, the Additional Managing Director of TATA Steel Project in Kalinganagar told me that TATA was provided with 3500 acres of land, not 2500 acres.
- 5 Bhattacharya, Debashis 2006. "All for a plot of land". *The Telegraph*, January 15
- 6 According to the government only those oustees are considered as beneficiaries who have lost their recorded lands.
- 7 A study by JOHAR & JMACC (2006: 13) shows that government earned a net profit of Rs.71,52,00,000 at the same time giving the TATA Company a savings of Rs. 87, 000, 000 as estimated over the market price of the land in between Rs.5,00,000 to Rs.7,00,000 per acre.
- 8 Literally means those who developed land from wild forest by cutting stumps. It is a title given under the British Raj to Munda and Ho tribes of this area as the first settlers who had community ownership right over forest and its natural resources.
- 9 B.D. Sharma, speech in Lohia Academy in Bhubaneswar on September 13, 2006. This was the question asked to B.D. Sharma by a tribal in Chhatishgarh.
- 10 Thanks to Mr. Rajendra Sarangi, a leader of CPI (ML) New Democracy, Orissa, who made me aware of the 'populism' and 'practice' of Naveen Patnaik's politics. Populism means popular principles not to be implemented but to be propagated verbally like "garibi hatao" and supporting the industrialist is the practice that further impoverishes the poor.
- 11 Two tribal leaders of a very remote village, Barigaon, of Koraput district. They strongly support Kashipur movement.
- 12 In Kondha language it refers to a place where a number of big flat stones arranged in a fashion of a raised platform where the village council sits for deciding any matter.
- 13 Literally means mountain. But here they refer to lands for shifting cultivation.
- 14 It is a big song they generally sing during their village meeting, campaign and rallies against the company. A stanza of the song is reproduced here. My translation.
- 15 The doctrine of eminent domain confers the right of the State over land and related resources within its territory. It has the right to take private property for a "public purpose". It has been described as "the highest and most exact idea of property remaining in the Govt., or in the aggregate body of the people in their sovereign capacity" For a more detailed explanation see Black's Law Dictionary (6th edition) 1990: 523.
- 16 Letter from Indira Gandhi to Baba Amte. August 30, 1984. Cited in Kothari 1996: 1476.
- 17 *The Bombay Chronicle*, April 12, 1948; cited in C.V.I. Sharma (ed.) 1989. *Modern Temples of India: Selected Speeches of Jawaharlal Nehru at Irrigation and Power Projects*, Central Board of irrigation and Power, pp.48-49 and Kothari 1996: 1478.

- 18 Quoted in Debashis Bhattacharya 2006, *The Telegraph*, January 15, 2006
- 19 Even amidst it the CM of Orissa distributing “Best IT excellence award” for “corporate excellence”. The road blocked was lifted after fourteen months on March 09, 2007.
- 20 Two children of Gadhapur namely Rahul, aged 2 years, S/o Debendra Kalundia and Jema, aged 1 year, D/o Paragana Kalundia died of hunger and thirst as their mothers were unable to take them to forest because of a sudden police raid. Both of the children belong to a joint family. They were left on the verandah while sleeping. On return both of them were found dead.
- 21 Soren Mamsay aged 32 years of Chandia and Goradi Gaipai aged 60 years of Gobarghati died of thirst and hunger.
- 22 My translation.
- 23 Sumani Jhodia is a woman leader of Kashipur movement from the village Siriguda. Biju Patnaik, the former the Chief Minister of Orissa, appointed her as his Tribal Advisor. The present Chief Minister of Orissa, Naveen Patnaik, nominated her as a tribal woman with outstanding abilities for “Stree Sakti Puraskar”.
- 24 *Tanku-pej* is a gruel prepared out of mango kernels and *ghurdisag* is a kind of greens available during rainy season. Mostly the tribals consume these items during chronic food shortage period.
- 25 Here sweet potato is a metaphoric reference to “nothingness” and starvation.
- 26 A private construction company that has taken tender for some construction work for the UAIL.
- 27 My translation.
- 28 ‘Somatization’, as Kleinman and Kleinman understood, is a ‘generally maladaptive and fairly primitive defense mechanism involving the deployment of the body in the production or exaggeration of symptoms as a way of expressing negative or hostile feelings’ (Scheper-Hughes 1992: 185).
- 29 It is collective in the sense that individual/family order is painlessly forsaken for the common interest in the real sense of the term, not paralleling with narrow political connotation.
- 30 For an excellent critique on the score see Joseph Femia 1975.
- 31 See below. For more discussion on counter hegemony see Gramsci 1971: 178, 334.
- 32 Lingaraj Pradhan now known as Lingaraj is the President of Samajbadi Jana Parisada. He had strong believe on the ideology of Kishan Patnaik who was involved in Gandhamardan movement. This induced Lingaraj to join the movement in February 1986. He is now staying in Baragarh.
- 33 Now he is popularly known as Swami Somabesji Saraswati and heading Prabhu Bhakti Ashram in Ghutuka Tikira, Sambalpur. On my visit, he was kind and generous enough to invite me to stay with him for a night making all provisions available and to discuss his experiences in Gandhamardan movement in detail. He also made a call to Prof. Artabandhu Mishra of Sambalpur University for an appointment for me. For all these, I am very much thankful to him.
- 34 My translation.

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