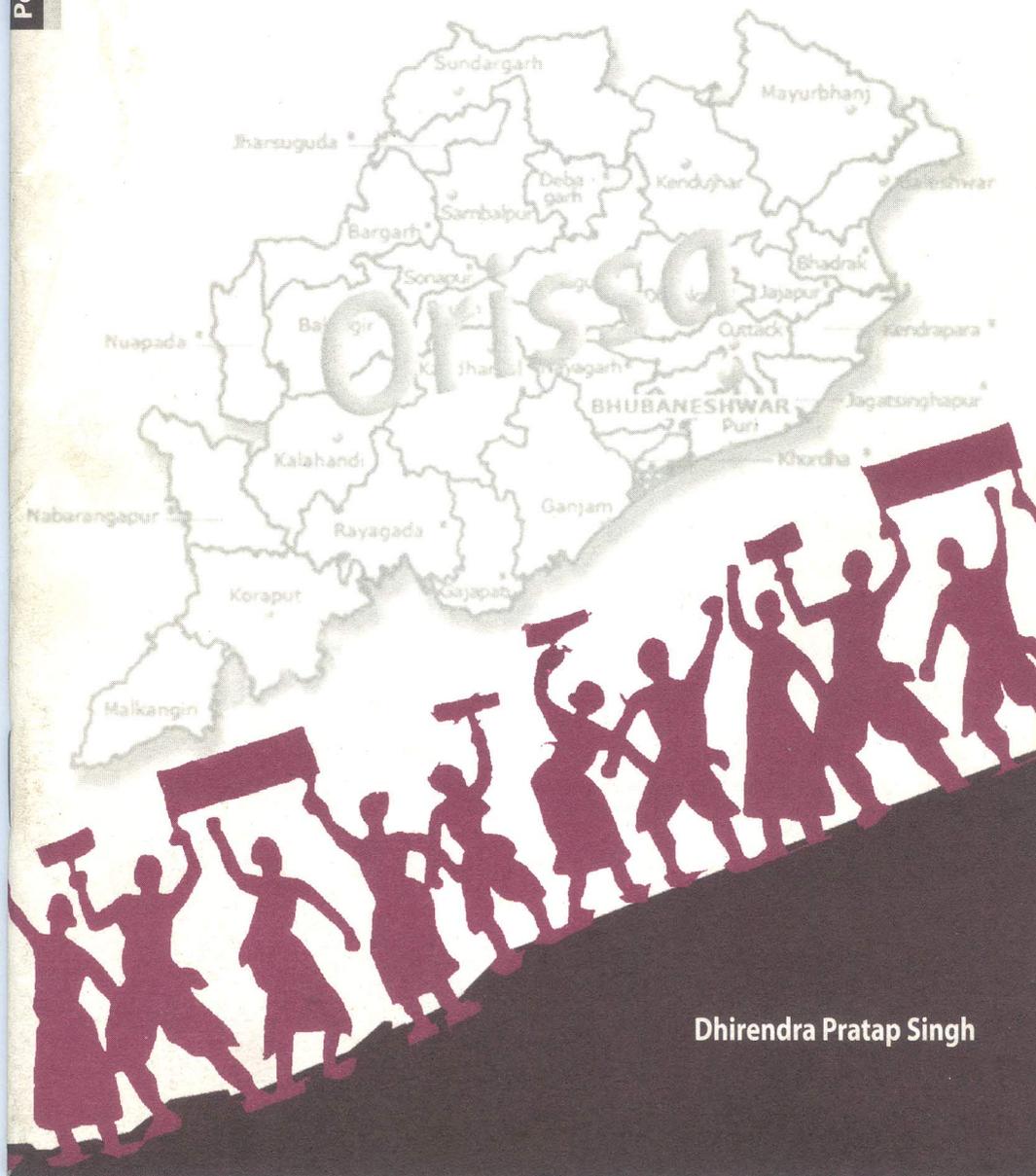


Popular Education Series

# People's struggles of Orissa

Lessons and Challenges



Dhirendra Pratap Singh

There was a time when the feudal lords and small kings were against industrialisation because they feared that it will weaken their dominance in their areas. Before independence, king of Kalahandi did not permit Orient Paper Mill to establish its plant in Kesinga which was in his state. This mill was then established in Sumbalpur because this area was directly governed by the Britishers. Similarly, Tata Company was set up in Tata Nagar which was proposed in Baripada because the king of Mayurbhunj did not permit the company to do so in his area.

Today, the conditions are entirely different. On the one side, common people are against the companies but the old feudal lords and kings are welcoming them. A member of Kalahandi's royal family is a sitting MP. He is not only supporting the establishment of Vedanta Company in Lanjigarh, but consistently advocating the need of such other companies.

This change can be understood very easily. Our government, which has become an active participant in the global liberalization- privatization process, is posing unhesitant against the interests of its own citizens. The role of a welfare state has changed. It has accepted the slavery of global capital. The old kings are now in supporting role of capital and state. People have now started to grasp the so called development modal by their own life experiences. It is the result of which, today the most down trodden and deprived society of Orissa has exposed the new faces of 'modern temples' of Nehru. This section has now clearly understood what these faces are thinking and hence they have out rightly rejected the companies and their mining activities.

-From this booklet

# **PEOPLE'S STRUGGLES OF ORISSA**

**Lessons and Challenges**

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For Limited Circulation only

Published in Public Interest by

**Popular Education and Action Centre (PEACE)**

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July, 2009

## PEOPLE'S STRUGGLES OF ORISSA

Need for a common struggle, roads apart!

- Established NGO's and political parties' hands in hand with the government and companies.
- Diversion of NGO's from "People's Agenda" to "Establishment Agenda".
- Misleading role of donor agencies and their attempt to divide the people's struggles with help of local NGO's by imposing their own agenda.

There was a time when in 1969, a general strike was called in Orissa demanding a steel plant as it was envisaged in reducing poverty in the state. In contrast, industries, mining etc. related projects of domestic and transnational companies are today being fiercely opposed in Orissa. The people who are being affected directly by the projects have an important role in this and many more people have come into their support and solidarity. Back four decades, people thought that steel plant would create new employment opportunities, would uplift the basic educational and health facilities and serve the cause of worker class. Today they feel that they will get ousted, what they have in their hands will be snatched off. They will be deprived of their hills, forests, land, water, habitat, villages and communities- they see a dark future and hence they are ready to fight until they die.

There was a time when the feudal lords and small kings were against industrialisation because they feared that it would weaken their dominance in their areas. Before independence, king of Kalahandi did not permit Orient Paper



Mill to establish its plant in Kesinga, which was in his state. This mill was then established in Sumbalpur as this area was governed directly by the British. Similarly, Tata Company was set up in Tata Nagar that was proposed in Baripada because the king of Mayurbhunj did not permit the company to do so in his area.

Today, the conditions are entirely different. On the one side, common people are against the companies but the old feudal lords and kings are welcoming them. A member of Kalahandi's royal family is a sitting MP. He is not only supporting the establishment of Vedanta Company in Lanjigarh, but consistently advocating the need for such other companies.

This change can be understood very easily. Our government, which has become an active participant in the global liberalization-privatization process, is posing unhesitant against the interests of its own citizens. The role of a welfare state has changed. It has accepted the slavery of global capital. The old kings are now in supporting role of capital and state. People have now started to grasp the so called development model by their own life experiences. It is the result of which, today the most downtrodden and deprived in the society of Orissa have exposed new faces of 'modern temples' of Nehru. This section has now clearly understood what these faces are thinking and hence they have outrightly rejected the companies and their mining activities.

Now the newspapers, intellectuals, political parties, NGO's, environmentalists and donor agencies all are trying to give a suitable direction to a society entangled between development and destruction. All of these have their own agenda and immediate plus long term goals. These forces are trying to come to terms with the affected so that they can direct them towards their own goals. On the other hand, there are some other forces and individuals who have raised hopes.



These forces are challenging the capital centric and profit centric development process. They are trying to mobilize the affected section of people, organize them against the outsiders and trying to open their eyes so that they identify the betrayers who are in disguise of their friends.

This complex situation is a serious challenge to the people's struggles in Orissa today. In a situation where the government is brutal against the movements, companies have started taming goons, judiciary is giving verdict for mining, and companies are blackmailing and misleading people through their own trusts, foundations and NGO's and the newspapers have no concern with the people's interests- this requires people's struggles to become more vigilant, careful and unite. Attempts are being made in this direction, but they are not well planned and systematic.

This is the reason why the movement against companies and mining in Orissa is not uniform everywhere. For example, in the western and central parts of the state, movement is not as strong as in the southern and coastal areas. Basically, land in the coastal areas of Orissa is very fertile. Here people simply lead their lives on agriculture, so they never get ready to get ousted from their land. The simple reason being that they have no better alternative than this. In southern parts, dense forests and mountains are the sources of livelihood for vast population. For example, we can see that the people here had collectively opposed the proposed port by Posco company and removed the barrier on Jatadhari Muhana. This was because due to water logging, the whole area would have submerged and the crops would have been destroyed if they had not done so. This area produces paddy, paan, fish and kewara flower which is a major source of livelihood for the local people. This collective struggle was fought under the banner of Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti and Jatadhar Bachao Andolan because water logging is affecting people's





income and livelihood. So, in the coastal areas, farmers are not ready to leave their land because they expect better living conditions where as in the south, people are not ready to leave their forests and hills that are major source of livelihood in this hunger struck area. We can see acute resistance in these areas. The basic question is the existence of people to live in mountains and forests. The main struggle is between this existence and company's profit which is dialectic in nature. Any middle path of concern will ultimately prove against the people struggling for their existence.

The main political parties, donor agencies and NGO's are trying to make an impact on the struggling people by their campaign, workshops, seminars, statements, interviews etc. They are trying to lead these people on a middle path (which means inspiring people to take initiative for better compensation, development of the area, strict implementation of the environment laws and better rehabilitation) or they remind the affected of their poverty, backwardness, malaria, mosquitoes, starvation, illiteracy, draught and pandemics thus creating a contrast with the urban glitter and convincing them to leave their land and villages. They keep giving statements such as "company is inevitable" or "mining is inevitable", thus depressing their struggling spirit. This psychological warfare, on the one side luring them and on the other side depressing the struggling consciousness of the common man is a serious challenge to people's movements in Orissa.

Companies have adopted all means of luring the tribal and poor. They have constituted a team of agents. A large section of journalists, intellectuals, teachers and headmasters have taken side with the companies. Companies have their own goons and the government, officials and police are with them. Companies have built houses (colonies) in Kalinganagar and Lanjigarh for rehabilitating the tribals. They have also

announced ration and electricity for six months. They organize health camps, mega eye camps and cricket tournaments. They have opened Anganwadi centres in the villages of Lanjigarh. They have recruited unemployed youth of Jharkhand, Bihar, Hariyana and Uttar Pradesh as their goons, apart local criminals are also a part of it. Companies have given money to non-government committees for public service. The headmasters have banned meetings of college students also. The principal of government ITI in Bhawanipatna is also looking after the ITI set up by Vedanta.

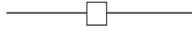
A look at the dailies reveals that leaving The Hindu and Dharitri (published from Bhubaneshwar), all the newspapers are favoring companies. Recently, Posco had organized a press conference in Seoul in Korea where various journalists from Bhubaneshwar were escorted by plane. Officials of Posco have approached the office of "Samaj", a major daily of Orissa.

The pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist mainstream media is now fully engaged in negligence of all social concerns. It is publicizing individualism and consumerism to its fullest capacity. The print and electronic form of mainstream media is taking pleasure in destroying the aesthetic sense, struggling spirit and reality perception of the common man. It is continuously engaged in forming consent over liberalization, globalization, privatization and marketisation and convincing people in favor of these processes. It has no space whatsoever for the pain, agony and dissent of common man. Exceptions could be seen as some small and local publications that are still dedicated to the cause of the people.

It seems that the nation-state has not only been privatized, but also corporatised and the government has stood up against its own citizens by using every repressive means to stop their movement, it is also murdering laws of the land and constitutional commitments. Not only this, public distribution system and electricity supply in the struggling villages have



also been cut down. Government is contemplating on imposing collective financial penalty over these villages. The schools in these villages have been arbitrarily transformed into the police camps. They are being closed for months. In these movement centric villages, all the welfare schemes of government have been stalled. It seems that government is high handedly trying to deprive the people of their basic right of citizenship also, who are using their constitutional right to dissent.



## PEOPLES' MOVEMENTS OF ORISSA AND ROLE OF MAIN POLITICAL PARTIES

The role of Congress, BJP and BJD in Orissa's peoples' struggles is same. In the context of economic policy, industrial policy, agricultural policy and geo-commercialization, the consent amongst these parties is evident. These parties and their leaders support companies and mining. In public meetings, they have repeatedly requested to the common people to support these company's business in the name of development. They have termed those people as being anti development who have opposed these schemes. They give logic that the people who are provoking tribals not to leave their villages, homes, forests and land are basically of the view that status quo must be maintained and tribals must not progress. These parties and their governments are hastily signing MOU's with the companies in large numbers. They are trying to implement these as soon as possible for which they are ready to adopt any way for repressing peoples' movements forcefully. These governments have not only used police and other armed forces against 'anti development people' but taken refuge of draconian laws and fake cases. They have given full permission to the companies to tame goons. The centre and states both do not want to face any kind of resistance.

Some local leaders and workers of these political parties are engaged honestly with the movement in many places, but this is only at the individual level. The comrades here say that the members of these political parties pose themselves as the part of movement until and unless they are not obliged by companies. Comrades told us that a former union minister Bhakt Charan Das facilitated in passing a railway line from





Langigarh to Junagarh which was done for freight facility to Vedanta. Now, he has started a campaign named 'Green Kalahandi' and opposing Vedanta.

It seems that when the Congress party leader Bhakt Charan Das realized that local people are opposing Vedanta and they are committed to protect Niyamgiri, he was also bound to stand against the company. This is a very positive aspect of people's movement that puts pressure on a politician to change his stand.

Former Union Minister and Congress party leader Bhakt Charan Das has been active in the land movement of Gaya (Bihar) as a member of Sangharsh Vahini for years. Disagreeing with a comment, he says 'being active in a political party, I could not spare much time in the Niyamgiri movement, but people become active when I reach there. There is no NGO intervention in Green Kalahandi, our comrades are not salable, and the tribals have returned rice given by the company on my call. Company is not getting support. Mining could not be started till date in Niyamgiri due to Green Kalahandi movement. My critics are traitors and salable, they do not have any mass base". He said that 'when Medha Patekar reached there, she talked of rehabilitation rather than movement. Let me tell you that Green Kalahandi movement is non-negotiable and very lively.' Das says, 'NGO's are earning money. The company created pressure on me through my friends (officers and politicians) to part ways with the movement. I was offered crores of money, promised higher posts in party and government. After that I was intimidated for my life and it was said that the Maoists have done this, but Maoists rejected this. I lodged an FIR against company. Everyone knows that this movement is there because of me, but what can I do if some petty selfish people are suspicious. I have been a worker of Sangharsh Vahini, coordinated the movements by begging for funds from people. I am a Gandhian- do not believe in violence

- I am all the same, I was a revolutionary, as I am today.'

The local leaders of people's struggles says that there are so many politicians in Orissa who have double standards. These leaders comment in the newspapers and misuse their statements to blackmail companies and earn money with the help of journalists. National and state leaders of these parties usually shed fake tears after any police firing happens but they never discuss on these issues in assembly or parliament.

The Left front, which was supporting UPA has also never included these issues in its agenda, neither raised these issues in parliament. Whereas various left parties including CPI is active in the people's struggles of Orissa and playing a important role. CPI is much more active than any other party but it had also not included the issue in its national or state agenda. It's a different thing that the party General Secretary A.B. Bardhan visited Orissa in relation to peoples' movements only. The Editor of Samdrishti Sudhir Patnayak clearly said that CPM has nothing to do with peoples' movements of Orissa. CPI(ML) and CPI(Maoist) have their presence in some struggles. Many people who were related to Kishan Patnaik, Samajwadi Jan Parishad, comrades of Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini are also contributing in many struggles throughout the state. Prafull Samant Ray, head of Lok Shakti Abhiyan says, "there are many peoples' struggles going on in the state where no faction of CPI(ML) is involved. These are local peoples' struggles and their main strength lies in the local people having support of Gandhian and Socialist individuals and organizations, like Samajwadi Jan Parishad and Lok Shakti Abhiyan etc. CPI(Maoist) has no direct involvement in any struggle. They only came out after Kalinganagar police firing and started opposing mining and industrialisation. They are outside the popular movement, but have always supported the cause and issues. Police, party in power and a large section of media is involved in the publicity that Maoists are directly





involved in these struggles. Orissa's peoples' struggles are democratic and non-violent till date, whereas police has killed 3 people in Kashipur, 5 in Raigarha and 14 in Kalinganagar. Goons and mercenaries hired by companies have killed one activist in Kashipur and the other who was with anti-Posco movement. In spite of these violent attacks on activists in Orissa, people have taken the non-violent path. Only a single policeman was killed by a mob in Kalinganagar when police opened fire on the movement and killed 12 activists".

An activist was of the view that some people see this so called development as the second industrial revolution and they think that after this gets over, the worker class will triumph in this world and create its own government.

Debate on "development" is on high in the state. Political parties, specially in power avoid to express their clear cut stand on this development or maintain silence to express consent with the ongoing process. Congress, BJP and their allies are of the same view, but as soon as they are no more in power, they start a virtual fight with the opposition.

Vanguards of peoples' struggles in Orissa are generally not opposed to industrialisation. They think that the industrial production must be in line with the requirement of the country's population- not for increasing profit of any domestic or foreign company. They raise questions, like how much steel is needed for 1 billion population? Secondly, they consider establishment of industries on agricultural land as inappropriate. Thirdly, they say that natural assets can be used only by creating a balance between human being and nature. This must be done in line with the demand- not for profit and trade. The larger question is that whether the character of this development is complete and all encompassing in itself or only for a few? Can it be termed as development that makes riches for a few and deprives, displaces larger population?

Leaders and members of political parties were initially unaware of the results and long term consequences of the so called development, as was seen in the anti-Balco movement in Gandmardan when all the political parties were considering mining and Balco company's production as appropriate in Gandmardan. They saw this as industrialisation, so they did not oppose the company's plan in the start. Today, they are better aware of the consequences of such projects, although they are either in support or are silent.

Activists of Orissa's peoples' struggles are of the view that political parties have refused to look into the interrelation between "development plans" and "process of deprivation" and have turned their heads off the common man.

This is despite the political impact of some successful movements in Orissa like Anti-Balco (Gandmardan) and Gopalpur movement which is visible. Anti-Balco leader Bhawani Hota was elected as MP. Gopalpur movement leader Narayan Reddy was elected MLA. If we see the neighboring state West Bengal, it can be easily understood that the movements in Singur and Nandigram have weakened the mass base of CPM.



## PEOPLES' STRUGGLES IN ORISSA AND ROLE OF NGO'S

One senior person who is working in the social sector in Orissa told us that NGO's have no role in the ongoing people's struggles of Orissa, hence there is no point discussing them. His statement is very objective, but NGO's never get tired of claiming their contribution in the people's struggles. This is why it is very necessary to understand and evaluate their role in the context of people's struggles.

It will be interesting to note how the 'voluntary organizations' that started their work as a catalyst in the social transformation themselves transform into 'non-government organizations', then 'pro-government organizations' and finally 'development organizations'. Starting their journey from commitment towards social change, how these organizations became a part of system management, how these catalysts turned into project implementation experts? In Orissa, social organizations and campaigns found their identity in the seventies. The cyclone of 1972 proved a launching pad for these organizations and they earned respect in the aftermath of devastation broad by cyclone by their constructive work. The organizations which were vanguards of earning respect for social campaigns were namely United Artists Association (UAA), Friends Association for Rural Reconstruction (FARR), CYSD, Gram Vikas, Antyodaya Chetna Mandal, PREM and Agragami.

In the eighties funding agencies came in India and hence started a competition for funding which had negative effect. It became imperative for everyone to turn to Orissa in their project selection process as it was suitable as per the norms of 'backwardness'. Funding agencies started searching for the workers and created their structure in a hurry.



This was the time when an organization 'Pradan' funded by Ford Foundation took initiative to inject 'professionalism' in the social sector. It started recruiting youths trained in management and technology institutions into rural NGO's. This effect was more or less on every NGO in Orissa.

It can be said that the natural development process of social sector in Orissa was barred by these kind of interventions and gradually its character became Funding Centered.

This meant that the organizations ranking and position became based on their capacity to get projects, implement them, and the size and vividness of projects. Individuals who had the capacity to get heavy funds for the organizations became respectable and special invitees. Mentor organizations suitably fulfilled their role in nurturing in smaller once on their norms. They were keen to expand their operations.

Some comrades are of the view that bigger organizations inspired smaller once to do the same things what they were doing. They succeeded in this because they had the professional skill to approach donor agencies. Today these organization have nothing to do with the issues like forests, water, land ownership and tribal identity. As a result they don't have any clear understanding about country's political situation and hence their role. This is why instead of initiating on the basic questions, these organizations are taking more interest in issues like social forestry, AIDS, SHG, micro credit, water shed, gender, identity, water management etc. Organizations have now started claiming in those sectors where they have no prior experience.

PREM provided financial assistance to Chilka movement whereas Agragami initiated the movement against Utkal Alumna. Today, these major organizations have left the basic



issues and are inspiring Orissa's social organizations to work on the effects rather than cause. This has resulted into professionals getting priority over committed activists in social sector organizations.

This implies that most of the organizations are with good (?) work done by the governments, good (?) system and good (?) rights. Now these organizations treading path of their seniors are engaged in literacy, sanitation, health, environment, HIV/AIDS campaigns. They have a readymade solution to rehabilitation policy and development package in their traveler bags. With the help of donors, they are planning to go to Kshipur, Lanjigarh, Kalinganagar, Jagatsinghpur, Khanddhar Mines, Dhinkia-Nauganv- Garh Kujang Gram Panchayats for the welfare (?) of tribals.



Today the situation seems as if these major organizations that started with the slogan of peoples' proprietary are knowingly or unknowingly engaged in expanding the agenda and policies of World Bank, DFID etc. on their terms and conditions. One such organization has done a survey and prepared a report which prescribes due diligence process to companies as to how to tackle with peoples' resistance and perform welfare activities for the displaced. Head of this organization told us that he has done this survey for the companies and government so that they can realise their duties towards the displaced. He says that it will be incorrect to infer from this that they are supportive of irrational, destructive and insensitive plans, projects, policies and laws.

Comrades working with peoples' movements in Orissa are of the view that this opportunism, project centered approach and aberration has come from those major institutions that started social sector work in the state. These organizations instead of correcting others, aligned their thought with pro-establishment policies and inspired others to chart this way. Despite, some small organizations are honestly committed

towards peoples' struggles in some pockets and playing their role directly or indirectly.

These organizations, which started their work as a catalyst of social change, were suppressed by the state, are now being seen as pro-establishment by the revolutionary groups. Their correct evaluation needs an insight into the genuine reasons for this aberration. This is an entirely different subject as to why these organizations chose the slavery of donor agencies, politicians, officers, Chief Minister and Governor or why they were bound to do so?

The effect can be seen in the applications given to DFID by the NGO's for funding which has crossed the mark of one thousand. Although DFID and World Bank had started furnishing funds from the 80's for "economic betterment", but recently we can see an upsurge in it. DFID has prepared the blueprint of PACS program for Orissa.

Today most of the organizations are unable to understand their role due to their insufficient analysis of the objective situation. It seems as if they are acting Don Quixote on a dark stage and do not know who is being hit and who is saved. They are not even capable of furnishing their responsibilities in the "Green Room". In most cases, it seems that they are ready to do anything for funds. They are ready to accept any terms. They are bound to continue the glittery infrastructure that they have built in years. The change in lifestyles of people related to these organizations also plays an important role. The outsider organizations in social sector have now openly aligned to governmental programs, have become the management committees of the governments and got indulged in the good (?) work done by it.

These organizations have knowingly or unknowingly played a role in weakening the peoples' movements. For example, these organizations send "grass root" workers and





sensitive members of the communities abroad at various platforms which weaken their relation with their communities and most of the times; these workers get expelled from their communities.

If we see this trend in the context of women's organizations, organizations have weakened the women's initiatives by connecting them with the self help groups. A senior women activist of Kalahandi says that this is a conspiracy against women's movements. Although the organizations succeed in increasing their stature through this, but the community initiative weakens and the community worker gets isolated. The same situation came in Lanjigarh when a donor agency send the tribal leader Kumti Manjhi to London saying that he is being taken in a international conference against displacement. Kumti Manjhi was surprised to see Anil Aggarwal, owner of Vedanta in that meeting. it can be easily imagined how Kumti Manjhi would have faced his community on coming back?

Similarly, many organizations furnish crucial information through their studies and surveys to donor agencies on the basis of which they devise their future strategy of intervention in the market. An example of this category is the survey and study done by an organization based in Bhubaneshwar was facilitating World Bank, DFID etc.

Many organizations have brought out pamphlets, booklets, documents, websites for providing information, but they have always avoided a larger responsibility of creating a perspective. Some of them have done it in a manner which is deadly and destructive for the larger populace.

Discussion with some comrades reveals that solidarity between these organizations is a far sought thing, they have been indulged in mutual character assassination and are loosing their credibility.

There has been a flood of movements on paper led by organizations that are skilled in new technology. One more point of contention is that movement is being run by someone else and some other party takes credit. This has generated unfaith and suspicion.

People even say that the donor organization like Action Aid has a negative role here. People engaged in people's struggles have realized this and have forced this organization to pack up from Kalingnagar, Jagatsinghpur and Lanjigarh. They say that this organization is still dreaming of an intervention in these movements just on the basis of local NGO's and Delhi based some intellectuals. A comrade involved in anti Vedanta struggle in Lanjigarh says that Action Aid and its in-charge have misused Kalahandi Sachetan Nagrik Manch which was formed to support the movement. Some people related with this organization, some organizations and some claiming to be the sympathizers of movement are trying to strike their presence in the movement and encash it by reports statements pamphlets and petitions. Neither they have any commitment nor any perspective. They are only experts of language, documents and information technology always keen to provide service to anyone. When serving someone they never ask who is going to benefit from it.

The above picture reveals that organizations have become directionless. They don't have any thinking about people's movement. Some people are opportunist and some other depressed and frustrated, but one common trait can be found in both that they have left their original cause.

As a result we can see strange pictures of people's movement in Orissa. The head of an important organization in Bhubaneshwar was once active in the Gandmardan movement. Now, he is working on the designs of agricultural equipments. Similarly, a worker of a Kalinganagar based NGO said that the biggest problem in this area is of roads and





toilets. Some youth in the Santpur village of Kalahandi said that their NGO considers corruption as the biggest issue.

Today, when hunger, livelihood, displacement, migration, protection of water, forest and land, loot by domestic and foreign companies, slavery of government capital, repression of people's movement etc. are the issues in priority, it must be asked as to how and where these organizations will end up?

Many comrades in Lanjigarh and anti Posco movement think that there is no point expecting from the NGO's. Neither you can change their thinking, nor is their role any more positive.

One comrade engaged in an NGO said, "Our condition is very bad. Company regards us as the comrades in the movement, but movement considers us as the agent of government and company. We are in worst condition and will die like stray dogs". This statement very easily shows the condition of NGO's in peoples' movements of Orissa.

This is the reason why none of the established NGO has any role visible in the struggles of Kashipur, Lanjiharh, Kalinganagar and anti-Posco movement etc. If any role was there in the past, it is no more today. Some grassroot local NGO's can be seen around the movements at times. Movements and affected communities today look at these organizations with suspicion and unfaith.

There are many reasons for this thinking about NGO's and donor agencies. In Lanjigarh below the Niyamgiri mountains, Action Aid has publicized that it is leading the anti-Vedanta movement. In the last one decade of Kashipur movement, "Aragami" was the leading force and it never allowed any other organization to get involved. "Aragami" is today not a part of the movement, but it has neither supported the company ever. It's leader Achyut Das is a respectable personality in the region even today and this organization has

experienced the state's brunt in the past. Action Aid also tried to intrude into anti-Posco movement. Its workers were found distributing rehabilitation pamphlets at the site. Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti says that it compelled Action Aid to flee. Similarly, people say that Gram Vikas Samiti intruded into the Gopalpur movement and took money from Tata, but was unable to influence people. This organization has also secured funds from BHP Billiton of Australia which is known for pushing government to give permission for mining, whereas it talks against mining. In Kalinganagar, movements say that the local NGO's have taken money from Tata and trying to weaken the movement. They are publicising that if so many industries in the industrial area of Kalinganagar were not opposed, why movement is going on only against Tata. In Kalinganagar, organisations like Khabo, Palli Vikas and Palli Shri are working for Tata after taking money from Tata and government. An organisation named NISW (Gondia- Distt. Dhenkanal) is carrying out Tata's schemes and donor agencies' programs. Tata Rural development agency has a major role in this. Similarly, Palli Shri with the support of Chilka development agency is trying to weaken the Chilka movement by getting funds from RCJFGE (Japan). These are few examples that reveal NGO's negative role in Orissa's peoples' movements.

Thus, if people have a negative thinking about NGO's, then only few of them working honestly can not make much difference. People working in NGO's must take an insight and see the reality. They must answer the questions raised by common man. In Orissa, NGO's are not capable of doing so. As a result, all the NGO's have been branded which is affecting those organisations also that are committed and sensitive towards peoples' struggles.

Sandhya of Kalahandi Mahila Sangh says that women and poor people have been taking part in the organisations' campaigns in large numbers, but the campaign coordinators





have never given them a chance to lead.

In place of enhancing the women's movements, organisations have NGOised the whole movement. Debates and initiatives on livelihood and hunger were transformed into debates on micro credit, development, gender, income generation and identity in a planned manner. Sandhya was of the view that this change was not for women and poor, but in line with the needs of the organisation. Initially, literate as well as illiterate women worked in the organisations, but now only highly educated professional women are there. These women could not understand the pains of a common woman and are insensitive towards them. They are completely focused on their career.

Women have a vital role in successful peoples' movements. Sumni Jhoria and Mukta Jhoria became members of State Planning Commission, although they were illiterate. They refused to take award as it was company sponsored. These women were also advisors to Adivasi Vikas Parishad of Orissa government during Biju Patnaik's regime. Government had given the responsibility of ban on liquor to women's organization "Amga". People who played a vital role in the emancipation of women and tribals got their organisations registered, became heads of organisations and started securing funds. They started compromising for securing projects. They started projects on petty issues and turned their back towards the movements. Women activists were not provided any platform. Some were taken into projects, others left on their fate. Thus, organisations isolated the main force behind movements by their own act. Sandhya seems to be right because almost every organisation has the same story today and donor agencies also employ professionals having bookish knowledge who have neither any commitment and perspective, nor any prior experience of peoples' initiative.

In brief, it can be said that there has been a paradigm shift

in the Orissa's organisations from "peoples' agenda" to "establishment agenda". Most of the organizations have accepted lip service and become project centric. Those who have not, are facing crisis like Ankuran and Agragami. Organisations like Ekta Parishad have started praising party in power and its CM, no matter if they come from the fascist communal gang, as if the poor face no threat from communal and fascist forces.

Most of the organisations could not understand the all engulfing capacity of the capital due to which they are non-decisive. They have neither rationale to face the challenge, nor they intend to do so. As a result, they have omitted the issues of land, forest and water because these issues ask for open challenge, are at the gunpoint of capital and the power does not like any resistance on these issues. This capital has not only sold the sovereignty of this country for the sake of pleasing its lords, but is engaged in repeating Kashipur, Kalinganagar, Gurgaon and Noida against the interests of its people. Organisations do not have any capability to face these challenges. Only popular movements can do this that is well connected and concerned with radical struggles.



## CURRENT STATE OF PEOPLE'S STRUGGLES IN ORISSA

Orissa's peoples' struggles have credit for the success of anti-Balco Gandmardan, Chilka and Gopalpur movements, but preparations are on to hand over Gandmardan to Vedanta and open a marketing complex in Chilka lake whereas land in Gopalpur is still vacant. To maintain the success earned in these movements is a great challenge for the Orissa's peoples' movements.

It has been more than a decade of Kashipur movement. In the past state repression had weaken it, but movement is still continued and the company could not resume its work. Jagdish Pradhan of Sahbhagi Vikas Abhiyan says that he had written an article on mining project in Kashipur back in 1993. Then the local people and MLA were also unaware of it. Initially, some Ghandhians, Kishan Patnayak and Agragami initiated the movement which was lead by local tribals. They demanded complete information, compensation and spending a major portion of companies profit on local development. Till then there was no opposition to mining project. It started only when outsiders and others came in. Today, the role of leftist revolutionaries is the most important in this movement. Pradhan says that there are many people in Kashipur who keep on demanding compensation and when they get it, maintain silence. But, people involved in Kashipur movement deny this.

Prafull Samant Ray told us that in the last two years boundary wall of the factory and police station were constructed but mining has not took off. Although there is some depression in the movement but there is huge participation of local people in it.



Most recently people oppose the proposed construction of company and construction work is stalled since last five-six months. Nikunj and Vijay Panda of Orissa Bachao Abhiyan tell us that BJD and Congress held a joint rally in support of the company after police firing in December 2000. This resulted in the local tribals breaking their relationship with their relatives who were close to these parties. Today, we can see clear cut opposing lobbies in Kashipur. Various forces are trying to stop the movement because Kashipur and Gandmardan movements are the most important in Orissa. Unity, awareness and solidarity of local people has indeed proved successful in facing any conspiracy against the movement. Revolutionaries like Bhagwan Manjhi and Dev Ranjan Saroj are standing firm footed in the movement.

The weakest link in the Niyamgiri movement against Vedanta (Sterlite) is that the plant is ready and they have started production by taking Bauxite from outside. Now, the struggle is focused on mining in Niyamgiri. The Supreme Court has given permission for it. This is a very poor and backward area where 78% tribals are living below poverty line. Hunger is their main problem. Company has set up a plant here because the best quality Bauxite is found in the mountains of Lanjigarh. For water and electricity requirements of Vedanta plant, a thermal plant is proposed in Indravati area which has sufficient water available. Congress had promised starting Lanjigarh project at the time of election. Bhakt Charan Das had facilitated the Lanjigarh-Junagarh railway line and this project was passed in Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government. Niyamgiri Suraksha Samiti, Bhumi Suraksha Samiti, Sachetan Nagrik Manch, Green Kalahandi etc. are engaged in this movement in their own method. Activists have been lathicharged and arrested by the police. The company's goons have also attacked activists and leaders of the movements. Movement is on against Bauxite mining in Niyamgiri. Samajwadi Jan Parishad, Lingraj Azad, Rajkishor and Prem etc had started this





movement in which Lingraj Azad has an important role. After the Supreme Court's verdict movement has become fears. Leftists, Socialists, Sarvodaya and some sections of Congress and BJD are also a part of it. Individuals like Dai Singh Manjhi, Kumti Manjhi, Satya Narayan Mahar, Siddharth Nayak, Rajendra Bhartiya, Lila, Jitu, Chandramani Mahanand, Girdhari and Arjun Chandi are playing an action role. Many radical activists look at Green Kalahandi initiative of Bhakt Charan Das with suspicion. Although the movements leaders are not united but local people are. In this movement, some NGO's and donor agencies have also been present, mainly Parivartan, FARR and New Hope claim as the ones.

One thing is not clear in the context of this movement. In this area Gandmardan movement had become a successful modal which had taken shape around 1984-1985. Around 1987 SJP people also became active. When Kishan Patnayak came into movement it became fears and Balco company had to go back. Now, the movement of Chatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini was also present in this area, as well as Gandmardan activists were there. In 2001 SJP initiated to form Niyamgiri Suraksha Samiti. In its first meeting a thousand people were present, so it may be asked as to how Vedanta plant was constructed without any resistance? After all since the formation of Green Kalahandi of Bhakt Charan Das, why the movement divided? What was the reason behind a tribal asking for TA/DA when he went into meetings? How Kumti Manjhi reach London? Why Bhakt Charan Das was not asked for and why not the whole case made public? How come the Action Aid enter into the movement about which Sudhir Patnayak, Editor of Samdrishti had said that 'it is itself confused and engaged in the process of encashment'? What was the reason behind the strategic mistake and idealist thinking of welcoming everyone, whether it be NGO, funding agency, company, political parties supporting the project and its leaders? The people who are part of this movement have

differences among them on NGO's, political parties and Green Kalahandi, but they are most concern about the unity and integrity of movement.

In Saktha village of Raigarha district, the movement called for a public meeting in which representatives of two political parties indulged in character assassination of each other. People were very depressed, but the most depressed was a tribal youth named Jitu, who was the main organizer of this meeting.

On the very next day, tribal leaders from 17 villages and representatives of Niyamgiri Suraksha Samiti organized a meeting in village Garda. They decided that 'if someone wants to be a part of the movement, they will not deny it, but the decision making power will rest in their hands only. It is obvious that political parties are hungry for votes, but we will be cautious of their divisive and misleading politics. After victory in the movement we will decide whether to go with any party or not. We will ask political parties not to do anything that weakens the movement.'

In Kalinganagar industrial area, there are many companies like Nilanchal Ispat Nigam Limited (Government of Orissa), Jindal Stainless Steel Limited, Mesco, Visa International Steel Limited, Deen Bandhu Steel, Mathen Ispat Limited, K J Ispat Limited, Rohit Stainless Steel, Maharashtra Steel Limited and many more public and private companies. These are very small units and very less people had to be displaced in setting up these units. These companies had promised to do welfare activities for the people. At that time people were not very much aware and organized, hence they did not oppose these industries. Initially the land acquired was not private rather of the Gram Sabhas, forest department and government land. Later, when the companies and government broke their promise, did no development and welfare work, local people did not get jobs, connecting roads were blocked and grazing





fields were blocked, local people started getting organized in its reaction.

Meanwhile, the state government allotted 850 acre land for setting up factory and 478 acre for mining to Tata Steel and Mining Co. on lease. This land will affect four tribal Gram Panchayats and will displace almost 36,000 people. The Gram Panchayats involved are Gobarghati, Dubri, Baragadia of Sukinda block in Jajpur and Chandia-Manitira of Dangadi block. This area is rich in Chromite, Uranium, Bauxite and Gold but iron ore is found in less amount. Savitri Panda and Ramesh Samal of Orissa Mahila Vikas Samiti based in Sukinda say that movement against Tata became intensified because in Kalinganagar, each company had displaced 250-300 people only and they were kept in control through police force and luring. Whereas Tata is going to displace a large section of population, so people were forced to tread the path of struggle against it. People have experienced the betrayal of companies that were set up earlier. They clearly sense that they will be deprived of their land, mountains, forests and communities. This has created a natural solidarity between the displaced and those who will get displaced in the future.

In the initial phase, "Adivasi Vikas Manch" was formed against the company with the initiatives of national level leaders, activists and Action Aid. After the police firing on activists on January 2, 2006, this issue became of national importance. BJP and BJD supported it hailing it as development project. Congress opposed the firing, but said that the project must be installed only after rehabilitating the displaced. Personalities like Sonia Gandhi, Shibu Soren and Medha Patkar visited the site. CPI(ML) became active in the movement after firing took place. Cadres of CPI(Maoist) are also involved in this movement. First they were demanding the welfare of tribals, but now want the project

of Tata to be scrapped. They are not demanding the closure of companies that have been set up earlier.

After firing, Adivasi Vikas Manch was divided. BJD formed Sukinda Aanchlik Adivasi Vikas Manch and started working with TATA. It claims that 65% tribals are with it. On the other hand Action Aid isolated itself from Adivasi Vikas Manch. Now, Congress is dominating on it. Today, both these organizations are dominated by two such political parties which support TATA. These parties are trying to secure jobs and contracts for their people. There have been increased attacks on supporters, contractors and agents of the company and the government blames Maoists for it. Political activists are being branded as Maoists and their repression continues. In this situation, Visthapan Jan Manch of Sukinda has taken reins of the movement. Meanwhile, the company is trying to lure the tribals. It has built houses for them and assured free water, food and electricity for six months. It is also organizing mega eye camp and health camps.

The work in Tata's factory is still closed but only mining is on. Struggle against the company continues till date in various forms. Prafull Samant Ray of Lok Shakti Abhiyan and Prashant Paikra of Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti say that here tribals take decisions about the movement in a very democratic manner. In this movement, Maoists, Maoist(Janshakti), CPI(ML) New Democracy are the main forces. CPI(ML) New Democracy is leading the movement although it is weakened after the death of R K Sadangi.

Today, movement against Posco in Orissa is an important movement and it is facing the collective brunt of government, goons and agents of Posco company. Recently leader of Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti Comrade Abhay Sahu was arrested by police with his two companions on 12 October, 2008. Police convicted him in 30 cases and took him into custody.





On 13 October, extra police force was deployed in this area to ensure law and order. Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti has announced movement against these arrests - On 17 October almost five thousand people participated in the rally. CPI had organized a three day state level demonstration and on 20 October a joint dharna was organized in Bhubaneshwar. On 24 October, a convention was held in Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi to express solidarity with anti-Posco movement and for the release of PPSS leader Comrade Abhay Sahu. CPI general secretary Comrade A.B. Bardhan, B.D. Sharma, Manoranjan Mohanti, Sudhir Patnayak, Ashok Aggarwal, Usha Ramnathan and senior member of PPSS Prashant Paikra was present in the convention.

Prashant Paikra told the convention that 130 cases have been registered against 600 people till date. Thirty cases are against Abhay Sahu only, although police says that he has 75 cases over him. On 29 November 2007, bombs were hauled on activists sitting on dharna, cycles and two wheelers were put on fire. The company goons were doing all this and police watched it silently. In December 2007 police entered the villages and turned schools into its camps. On 20 June 2008 they attacked activists with bombs. Dula Mandal was killed in this attack. The company carried out this attack and police had their full support. Paikara says that despite, activists' spirit is on high. Four thousand people gathered in the terahvi of Dula Mandal, leaders of the left also came. Mandal's statue was inaugurated and responsibility of his wife Savita and three children was given to PPSS.

The BJP-BJD government in Orissa is unable to control the communal hysteria; hence it has resorted to arrest the leader of a popular democratic movement to please its bosses. This government is keen to go on the way Bush, Modi and Manmohan have created. This is why it has signed on 45 MOU's with multinational companies.

In June 2005, the government of Orissa rejected the offer of 120 domestic and foreign companies and signed MOU with Pohang Steel Company (Posco of South Korea). This company is going to invest 51 thousand crore rupees which will be the largest FDI ever in India. This project constitutes of steel plant in 4004 acre, township in 2000 acre, mining in 13000 acre, office space in 25 acre in Bhubaneshwar, water arrangement of almost 15000 crore litres from Mahanadi, captive coal mines (area unknown) and Paradeep port. Apart from this thousand acres of land will be used for railway and road for the transportation of raw material and products of the company.

The government and company claims that this project will directly and indirectly employ 13000 and 35000 people respectively, but people are well aware of these kind of claims through their past experiences.

This project will displace 11 villages of three panchayats Dhinkiya, Nuagaon and Govindpur. This involves a population of 30 thousand people and 4 thousand families. The proposed port at Jatadhari will displace 20 thousand people. The mining operation of this project will displace 50 villages in 8 panchayats in the bordering area of Sundergarh and Keonjhar around Khanddhar hills. These panchayats are Talbahali, Kulifose, Phuljar, Haldikudai, Seskekala, Bhotuda, Khutenga and Koida. Company will extract water from Jobra Mahanadi Bairaj of Cuttack due to which drinking water problem in Cuttack and Bhubaneshwar will become worst and Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapada, Jaspur and Puri will face irrigation water crisis. This port will disturb the river flow. Silt will get deposited in the river and water logging will increase. Flood situation will intensify, coastal forests will get destroyed and chances of cyclone will increase. Paradeep port will get extinct.

CPI general secretary A.B. Bardhan says that proposed site for Posco plant is situated in the cyclonic area where cutting of one tree attracts penalty, but more than 3 lac green trees are



going to be destroyed. Bardhan told us that with Prakash Karat and others, they had met the President and Prime Minister to give an account of this problem but the government has not paid any heed. Basically, these companies are eyeing the fertile land around Mahanadi and its water. Posco Company will extract double amount of iron ore and export the rest to Korea. This is an open loot and the governments have given their consent for this. It is a well known fact that using agricultural land in India for industries and townships is very dangerous.

Anti-Posco movement was started by the people of three panchayats Dhinkiya, Nuagaon and Garhkujang of Kujang block, Jagatsinghpur district just after MOU took place (22 June 2005). Under the banner Posco Kshatigrast Sangharsh Samiti (PKSS).



To discuss on the movement against Posco, a conference was held where left parties, social organizations, environmentalists, scientists, journalists, teachers, trade unions, other political parties including CPI general secretary A.B. Bardhan and CPM general secretary Prakash Karat were present. In this conference, Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti was formed and member of state CPI comrade Abhay Sahu accepted its leadership.

Going forward some members of Posco Kshatigrast Sangharsh Samiti started speaking in favour of company. Then, PPSS took the reins of movement in its hands. This Samiti is still facing all kinds of attacks and conspiracy but it is intact. The leadership is in the hands of the CPI but a faction of Congress and some people from BJD are also with the movement. Majority in the Congress and the BJD support company. Maoists are not there.

This movement has many successful achievements to its credit like installing check gate in Patna, Maharav and

Dhinkiya, clearing the silt collected at the mouth of Jatadhari, forcing the police to leave the area, evacuating schools from police, keeping the movement united, getting solidarity from every people's struggles and gradually decreasing the number of company's supporter in the area. After murders, attack, conspiracy and arrest of leader comrade Abhay Sahu, this struggle continues.

This movement has four main centers-

- Against plants : In the eight villages of Dhinkiya, Nuagaon and Garhkujang panchayats under PPSS.
- Khanddhar mines (against mining): Here BJP and CPM have dominance and campaign is unorganized. Company has bought those Sarpanchs who have been related to BJP. Government is going to transfer this whole mountain to the company, which has waterfalls, tourist places and fifty tribal villages. PPSS is trying to organize the movement here by floating a third group.
- Struggle against releasing water from Jobra Mahanahi Barrage (against occupation of water): This will effect Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapada, Jaspur, Puri and Bhubaneshwar districts. Formation of Jal Suraksha Samiti in Cuttack in which CPI and socialists are apart. This kind of committee has not been formed in other districts because farmers are yet to be organized.
- Save Jatadhari (against the port): Here also CPI is leading the movement. Congress is also present. After the construction of port, the Sea mouth will get closed which will effect 30000 fishermen and farmers. Committees have been formed in 30 villages. Dharna and demonstration continues although it is not very aggressive.

Apart from this, 8000 acre land is being acquired for





Vedanta University in Konark-Puri against which Vedanta Vishwavidyalaya Virodhi Sangharsh Samiti is struggling. Congress, CPI and CPI (ML) are a part of this Samiti. Comrade Vasudev has a vital role in this movement. In Hirakund farmers movement is going on in which Samajwadi Jan Parishad is active. In the movement against Mittal company, SUCI, CPI (Maoists) and some Gandhians are involved. On the other hand, Chilka movement is facing new challenges today. Kailash Chand Behra of a fisher community in Samantrapur, Balugaon, Khurda and Purna Bhopa of Ekta Parishad say that the government and its agents are working fast to occupy Chilka lake, evict the fisher community and develop tourist place and marketing sector. They have formed a zonal committee to divide the movement. Today, CPI (ML) liberation has the most important role in Chilka movement because it is a large group, however CPI, BJD and Congress are also there with their small groups. Similarly, Praful Samant Ray of Lok Shakti Abhiyan is leading movement against Tata Power Project in Cuttack.

As soon as the state government signed MOU with the London based Arcelor Mittal company for setting up a steel plant in Patna block of Keonjhar district with a capacity of 12 million ton, people started opposing the project. Keonjhar district is rich in iron ore and Chromite. Patna block is known for paddy cultivation having better irrigation facilities. The company will displace 10-20 thousand people in 17 villages as it requires 8000 acre lands. This district has 60% tribal-dalit population and this is a scheduled area.

There is another block Champua in this district where iron ore is also available and government land is vacant.

The company is organizing workshops, health camps etc. on Corporate Social Responsibility to convince people. It is publicizing the benefits people are going to have from the

company and it is in constant contact with the government and politicians.

The movement against the company was started by SUCI. Then, Lok Shakti Abhiyan joined the movement and the struggle continues on a joint platform Mittal Hatao Abhiyan. Local people are opposing health camps of company and gram sabhas held by administration. Villagers collect rice for the movement. They have decided to continue the struggle till the company leaves their land.

Initially, Keonjhar Nagrik Manch had welcomed Mittal company but now it has realized the ill wishes of Mittal. Media is very sensitive towards this issue,

It is a characteristic of people's struggles in Orissa that they have been successful in connecting with those peoples who are going to be directly affected. In this sense, these struggles have failed to address a larger population and disseminate information about the issues and consequences on a larger scale. These struggles are issue based, local and in many cases it seems as if it has a individualist tendency making it 'privatized'. Many influential people in the movement have chosen the role of 'service provider rather than activist'. Sudhir Patnayak feels that any kind of help is welcome but it must be kept in mind that work at the grassroots level is not possible through NGO's.

The absence of a state level common platform for Orissa's peoples' struggles has a negative effect that state repression and corporate violence are not resisted effectively and collectively.

Orissa's peoples' struggles are oscillating between two polls- anti state (in complete opposition), pro-state (better compensation, rehabilitation).

Today, popular leadership in the people's struggles is



missing. Some people are there like Lingraj and Prafull Samant Ray, who are respectable but there is no one in Orissa of the stature of Kishan Patnayak who can bring everyone together. Today, the leaders' personal behaviour and attitude has a repelling nature which divides the movements.

In Orissa there is a lack of popular democratic movements like student movement, peasant movement, trade union movement and movements against corruption, price rise and unemployment. Due to this, the people's struggles in various pockets of the state have no external force or inspiration so that it seems as if they are marching only yet one place and not going forward. This tendency has an intrinsic problem where the state and companies try to linger the issues for longer duration, which depresses and frustrates the movement.

People's struggles are continuing today in this or that form. Since, these struggles are not calendar based and do not have a readymade formula hence some people may think that the active struggles of anti Posco, anti Vedanta, Kashipur and Kalingnagar have become stagnant but it is not so. Reality is that, despite dangerous designs of the state, government, companies and capital, struggles are on their way marching towards their goal in which its sympathizers, well-wishers and supporters are constantly increasing.



## LESSONS FROM THE PEOPLE'S STRUGGLES OF ORISSA

Experiences of people's struggles in Orissa can serve as a useful lesson to the ongoing struggles. Following are the main past experiences from the struggles of Orissa.

- If the leadership of the movement is in the hands of higher caste, feudal lord, rich farmer or an outsider, then that movement fails due to the compromise done by the leadership. This can be seen in the case of Rengali Dam, Hirakund and movement in Raurkela.
- Only those movements are successful where the leadership is in the hands of leftists- revolutionaries-socialists and local people, and movements in which women have larger participation, like Gandmardan and Chilka movements. Chilka movement is a classical example in this context. This movement was spread in three districts and the factors that led it to success were the contribution of Banke Bihari Das, Chitranjan, leader of the fishermen community Ladu Baba and a large participation of local women and people. In Kashipur, Kalingnagar, anti Posco movement and Lanjigarh, movement is in the hands of leftists in which local people have larger participation and leadership.
- As the movement starts, some selfish elements start entering into it through backdoor. Local people see them with suspicion and they ban their participation in the movement. After 1990, no outsider has been allowed to lead the movement.
- Any public sector project is cancelled if the people oppose symbolically also (Balco, Balyapada, Chilka) but same does not happens with private sector projects.





- MNC's face more opposition in private sector also in comparison domestic companies are more efficient at solving problems.
- Professor K C Samal of NCCD, Bhubaneshwar says that donor agencies intrude into people's struggles and help companies of their home state where as act against foreign companies. For example, any movement against MNC's of US is supported by organizations such as Action Aid who is funded by European Union. Similarly, the NGO's, which are working against the Tata project, have been funded by MNC's. Prof. Samal feels that the German church working around Raurkela has used its influence to convince the tribals for not opposing the German plant.
- No political party has ever come in full support of people's struggles against these projects. Only comrade A B Bardhan of CPI is an exception, however local units of some parties can be found with the movement at some places.
- People's struggles have their political and electoral effect. Leader of Balco movement Bhavani Hota became MP where as Narayan Reddy, leader of Gopalpur movement won MLA election.
- Role of donor agencies in the people's struggles is very negative and dangerous because they only care for their interests. Prof. Samal said that Singur movement was funded by Bajaj company and a US funded NGO because it was just to blackmail CPI(M) on nuclear agreement. Hence, it must also be understood that donor agencies have their own political agenda and their utmost priority and duty is to tread path for donor's interests.

- The governments have always tried to strike a balance of power and caste. In places where upper castes were displaced, people were properly rehabilitated (Nalco displaced people in Angul) but it has not been so in the case of tribals (Damanjori-Korakut).



## CHALLENGES AGAINST PEOPLES' STRUGGLES IN ORISSA

At the time when Ford Foundation was busy instilling professionalism in the social sector of Orissa, Late Pro. Manmohan Chaudhary was raising questions on the process of development. At the same time, revolutionaries like Kishan Patnaik, Chittranjan, Lingraj, Narain Reddy, Garhnath Patro and Ladu Baba were engaged in peoples' struggles. Environmentalist Banke Bihari Das was saying that things can't be changed without political intervention. On the other hand, Ford Foundation was mobilising professionals on a different platform. These people were engaged with the Youth Hostel Movement and Community Aid Abroad. Going forward, many more professionals joined them. These people were close to donor agencies and had sufficient professional skills due to which many organisations approached them. This was the same time when Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini and Samajwadi Jan Parishad had made its strong hold in the pockets of Orissa. All the three Patnaiks- Biju, Janki Ballabh and Kishan had emerged as big leaders. All we mean by saying this is that in any movement, there always has been pro-establishment, revisionist and radical lobbies and till date, these are playing positive and negative roles in the peoples' struggles of Orissa. So the basic question facing peoples' struggles in Orissa is that how to strengthen the radical forms of struggle? Simultaneously, how to make mutual consent over the definition of change?



- On July 20, 2008, activists of Kalahandi Sachetan Nagrik Manch, Niyamgiri Suraksha Samiti and Bhumi Suraksha Samiti organised a brain storming in Bhawani Patna on the same issue and they came to a conclusion that "movement is not only resistance and opposition, but

positive aspects are the building blocks of any movement. Any movement must not be limited to a company like Vedanta, but it must be extrapolated to complete transformation of the system". Other peoples' struggles too do not differ, but the question remains as to how to convince the people and revolutionaries on this? How to create an understanding that "struggle is the only alternative" rather the popular policy of "adjustment"?

- One more challenge is to tackle with the conspiracy and divisive politics and designs of donor agencies, major NGO's, selfish elements etc. We find that Sukinda Anchalik Adivasi Vikas Manch was only formed to divide Adivasi Vikas Manch in Kalinganagar. Similarly, an independent zonal committee was formed by dividing Chilka committee, Posco Kshatigrast Sangharsh Samiti was broken into two and instead of giving a helping hand to Niyamgiri Suraksha Samiti, a parallel organisation "Green kalahandi" was formed.
- Orissa's peoples' struggles are facing problems in coordination. It is a big challenge in itself, although attempts have been made in this direction. PPSS comrade Prashant Paikra told that a joint committee has been formed of representatives of various peoples' struggles of the state in which following are members:

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Prafull Samant Ray | (Lok Shakti Abhiyan)                               |
| Ravi Zarika        | (Visthapan Jan Manch, Sukinda, kalinganagar)       |
| Vasudev            | (Vedanta Vishwavidyalaya Virodhi Sangharsh Samiti) |
| Lingraj Azad       | (Niyamgiri Movement- Lanjigarh)                    |



|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Bhagwan Manjhi/<br>Devranjan Saroj | (Kashipur Movement)  |
| Anant/ Lingraj                     | (Water movement- Sambalpur)                                    |
| Prashant Paikra                    | (PPSS)   |
| Garhnath Patra                     | (CPI-ML)   |
| Radhakant Sethi                    | (CPI-ML Liberation)  |
| Bhalchand Sadangi                  | (CPI-ML New Democracy)   |
| Shivram                            | (Basti Suraksha Manch,<br>Bhubaneshwar and CPI-ML Red<br>Flag) |
| Natwar Sadangi                     | (in place of R.K. Sadangi)                                     |



Committee's convener was Comrade R.K. Sadangi. After his death in March 2008, this committee has become passive.

Nikunj, a Comrade from Cuttack informed that Orissa Bachao Movement is formed to support various movements in the state. They have a supportive role in all the movements run by PPSS, Orissa Jan Adhikar Morcha and Bharat Jan Andolan. This may also be accepted as a limited but joint initiative.

The same initiative was taken when PPSS was formed through a joint conference. Editor of Samdrishti Sudheer Patnaik says that joint initiative was started in November 1999, but when all were informed of the police firing on activists on December 16, 2000, no one came out and the initiative went in vain.

Although these types of attempts related to joint initiatives have not sustained, but solidarity has been observed at times when firing took place in Kashipur and Kalinganagar or when

the Supreme Court gave its verdict regarding mining of Niyamgiri. This unity has strengthened after the arrest of Abhay Sahu.

Many comrades are of the view that some activists of major movements are bound to remain underground due to the fear of arrest. This hinders larger unity and coordination. Some are of the view that Lingraj or Prafull Samant Ray may be pivotal in the joint campaign and initiative as they have been at the centre of peoples' movements in the state.

So, it is a grave challenge how to strike coordination amongst the peoples' movements of state. It is obvious that the duty lies in the hands of experienced and older activists from Kashipur, Kalinganagar, anti-Posco and Lanjigarh movement.

The first and the foremost condition for joint action must be a clear cut strategy to go forward and put an alternative. To strike consent on this common strategy is also a challenge. Since the peoples' struggles in Orissa have no clear cut strategy, hence it is not possible to chart out a common strategy so easily. It has valid reasons-

- Leadership, perspective and sight angle of every movement differs,
- Every movement has its own circumstances/situations and interest groups involved.
- Almost every struggle is focused on immediate issues and cases and they do not have a prior experience.
- People have only local experience and they discuss, plan and act on local level only.
- Peoples' movements are self-made, so they have a tendency not to learn from the lessons of others. They believe on their own experiences only.





- Local leadership is always scared of outsiders due to the differing levels of knowledge, information and skills. They fear that their movement can be hijacked.
- Local leadership is always scared of joint action because they feel that it will go out of their hand. They fear that their own movement will be weakened if they join a joint action.
- Lobbies created by political parties, donor agencies, NGO's, local parties and selfish elements and their stakes bar joint action.
- Some tendencies like ego, personal grudges, likes-dislikes, contradictions of an intellectual Vs activist and power equations of society etc. hinder unity.
- The basic reason behind these tendencies is unclear understanding on issues and initiatives. Although the commitment and dedication is high level, but this fudgy understanding does not allow for joint actions.
- Each struggle has a plan, but they lack in strategy. They feel that any strategy from outside could not be imposed and it will emerge out of their own struggles and experiences.
- Leaders of the peoples' movement have no time to discuss and contemplate. Their joint action is limited to processions, dharna, rallies and conferences, which has underestimated the importance of joint action with "minimum consent and maximum contribution".

It is true that people involved in the peoples' struggles have theoretical differences between them, but it seems as if it is not much theoretical rather difference of minds. It is a very serious question indeed that each movement is facing the same brunt of the state, oppressors belong to the same class and so the oppressed, revolutionaries have the same character

almost and each one of them is committed for change- then why a common initiative and joint strategy cannot be made.

Despite the presence of leftists and socialists, intellectuals, Sangharsh Vahini, Samajwadi Jan Parishad, Gandhians, Sarvodayis in the movement, if the peoples' struggles are not politicised and meaningful political intervention can't be struck, then this is serious case. This is the reason why struggles are unable to leave their local fervor and challenge the state on a larger scale. As Prashant Paikra and Prafull Samant Ray say, "We take help from anyone who is against imperialism, communalism and ongoing process of development". But only taking help will not suffice, these forces must be united, joint action must be carried out and peoples' struggles must take the task of political intervention in their hands.

Today, when the state's approach towards peoples' struggles is repressive and violent, all the democratic ways of movement are proving to be a failure, every democratic institution be it assembly, parliament or judiciary has been made obsolete or being used against people, governments have become slaves to global capital and major political parties have become insensitive to people- in this situation it is imperative for the peoples' struggles to think over new ways of movement and find them.

Last but not the least- All the glitter of development, industries, company, mining etc is ends or means? If these are means, then what will be the character of end i.e. what will the character of that society for which these means are being used? Are these means helpful in making such a society? What is that development and progress, which is being much, talked about, for whom and for how many people? How then islands of riches and sea of deprivation being created simultaneously? What are those policies and provisions that are helping in this? What are the forces behind this? Who is responsible for this?





Can the power equation be transformed and political intervention made possible without addressing people on these questions? If not, then how a strong and popular movement could be framed?

What is happening in Orissa today is the result of globalisation and geo-commercialization. This does not mean that before the recent process of LPG started, everything was fit and fine but as its speed increases, larger population of this world is going to shackles.

Globalisation always speaks of equal and voluntary participation whereas inequity and hierarchy are the characteristics of capitalism. Connecting backward, poor, developing and underdeveloped countries to globalisation just means colonising India again. Globalisation is basically a sign of slavery for countries like India, Bangladesh and countries of Africa and Latin America. Countries like US, Japan, Britain and Germany may have lucrative opportunities in it because it will create a situation where poor countries can again be colonised and rich countries can reap profits from them.

It is necessary to call the very concept of globalisation into dock and uncover it. Presently, it is in disguise of some theories and ideologies. Third world countries could not see its real face.

After the fall of Soviet empire, unipolar world was formed in which capitalist forces started their victory campaign. There was no hurdle in this except strengthening alliances. The most easy and beautiful way for this victory was share in the loot. This is why the contemporary capital was provided with the global outlook and WTO, patent law etc. were made part of this global drama of democracy.

It was expected of India to keep a control over this global campaign of capital because India had chosen the policy of

non-alignment as its constitutional commitment. Today, what is happening is just opposite. Now, it gradually became unbearable for the middle class bourgeoisie to hold on to Nehruvian perspective of development. They were keen to taste the delicacies of consumerism. They saw their liberation in privatisation and liberalisation. Today the Indian bourgeoisie is celebrating the gala of globalisation with much pomp and show; however it is also unaware of its long term consequences. It thinks that it can achieve everything through globalisation what the best has.

Today, when the world have become unipolar, right wing tendencies are becoming sharp, use of force is increasing, belief has ousted the logic, fascism has taken a new form food-water-medicine-books are on the gun point of capital, nations have lost their sovereignty and the rulers of this world have united- larger population is fighting for its survival in this world. In this situation one can not expect any kind of welfare activity from the state. Today, struggle against imperialism has become equivalent to fighting the ruler class in our own country. This ruler class has invited the global capital for a feast, they have signed on the document on slavery and led the workers of this country on a path to destruction.

Our inspiration for people's struggles comes from independence struggle. Our independence struggle was against the structural logic of colonialism and world capitalism. Today, global capital is in its imperial phase, the workers of India need to get liberated from its structural logic, and it is fighting too. Marxist thinker Prof. Randhir Singh says 'people will fight, they can't be stopped. This is a battle of life and death. If they will not get the right way, suitable alternative, then also they will fight, on the wrong way.'

Controllers of the state-nation , capital, company, government all are aware of this fact, therefore undermining constitutional provisions, they are giving attractive slogans-



like Vishwagram, Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam, Adjustment and Development. The same kind of slogans were raised by allied-nations in the Second World War and appealed to save democracy from this world. But, today they do not need democracy for market regime and profit. Capitalism understands this thing that it has no auto correct option, therefore it manipulates immediately as the problems comes. Today, the crisis which capitalism is facing, it is bound to devastate the lives of common men to escape from the crisis.

To control the common people who are against their destruction, capitalism does not require democracy any more. This is why, it resorts to repression and oppression and activates the state in this direction. Secondly, it uses the intellectual power of its tamed scholars to confuse and mislead the people's movement.



Despite this the situation arisen in Orissa clearly states that people are fighting for their land, forest, rivers and hills and they will continue doing so.

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There is a famous statement of Engels, 'Scholars have analyzed this world, but the basic question is to change it'. The role that people's struggles of Orissa will play in this process of change lies in the future, but it is true that the struggle against the loot of water, forest, land, natural resources, minerals will never stop. This is the natural consequence of dialectical struggle between the interests of exploiters and exploited.



Popular Education and Action Centre (PEACE) is an organization represented by committed and experienced people which is endeavoring to make the process of social change stronger at local and larger levels.

In this context, the prime concern of PEACE is to enhance the awareness and knowledge of the people's groups wrestling to save their identity and democratic values, and of individuals and communities struggling for their livelihood.

For last few years, by initiating a process of dialogue between groups and peoples' organizations with a common understanding, PEACE has been trying to strengthen the process of widespread people's movements and alliances.

Other than this booklet, we had also created and published educational learning materials on the issues that have impacts on the common man's life. Given below is a short list of some important material available with us:

- ज्ञान की पूँजी पर पूँजी का शिकंजा
- पूँजी के निशाने पर पानी
- बाज़ारीकरण के दस साल
- The Nose is Tightening-AOA (July Framework)
- Gats (Primer)
- नकेल कसती जा रही है
- Struggle India
- कहीं पर निगाहें, कहीं पर निशाना  
वन अधिकार अधिनियम 2006

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