

Massacre Of Adivasis / at Kalinga Nagar

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2nd January 2006

A Fact Finding Report

by J.O.H.A.R. - J.M.A.C.C.

Reason for this Fact Finding Mission

On 2nd of Jan 2006, in Kalinga Nagar, Sukinda block of Jajpur district Orissa, a State on the eastern coast of India, twelve Adivasi[1] people were killed by the Orissa Police. As killing and similar atrocities on Adivasis for the expansion of mines and industries has become a common feature, and as in such cases the Government and Industry are both know for distorting facts in order to shield the criminals, J.M.A.C.C. (Jharkhand Mines Area Coordination Committee) and J.O.H.A.R. (Jharkhand's Organisation for Human Rights) immediately dispatched a Fact Finding Team (hence forward referred to as FFT) to Kalinga Nagar to investigate the incident, and offer solidarity and support.

The members of the FFT were:

1. Mr. Seerat Kachhap Associate Co-coordinator, BIRSA MMC, (Bindrai Institute for Research Study & Action. Mines Montioring Centre Ranchi)
2. Ms Shanti Sawaiyan Joint Co-coordinator, J.M.A.C.C (Jharkhand Mines Area Coordination Committee)
3. Mr. Ramesh Jerai Ho Samaj Mahasabha (Grand Council of the Ho Adivasi Society)
4. Mr. Somnath Jha Khan Kaneej ADHIKAR and Web-editor,
5. www.firstpeoplesfirst.in
6. Mr. Tirthraj Biruli Documentary film maker
7. Ms Alice Cherowa Gram Gana Raj
8. Ms Salomi Cherowa Gram Gana Raj
9. Ms Etwari Munda J.O.H.A.R.
10. Mr. Abhimanyu Mahato Social Activist Orissa
11. Mr. Lawrence Sundi J.O.H.A.R.

Summary

It is not easy to summaries such a massacre, especially when committed by a democratically elected government, done to favour and facilitate a business house, Tata Company that is held by Indian mainstream society as one of India's most reputed monopoly houses.

If the blood of these twelve martyred could give us a mirror image picture of our political and social progress as a democracy it would show:

ü The Adivasi community comes out as a noble people, law abiding, peace loving, largest contributors in terms of free land, forest, minerals and labour to the national development agenda of Independent India.

û While on the other hand the Government of Orissa, the Industrialist who are operating in Kalinga Nagar come out as law-breakers, mafia like operators, concerned only with profits and not national development.

The massacre is in line with:

1. The killings of the Indigenous Nations of the America by conquistadors of Christopher Columbus

2. Hunting for Aboriginal heads by the descendent colonist of Captain Cook in Australia Massacre for Mining will continue unless the ruling caste and classes of India decide to respect the rule of law even when it may go against their profits. It also brings in question the bigger role that India is trying to climb up to as a world leader. If this country's ruling class are racist, if this country's leading Industrialists are slaughterers, if this country's governments are the prime law breakers, then what sort of a world leader are we hoping to image ourselves upon? It is not in order for the Conclusions of a Report to be placed with the Summary, but, considering the serious nature of the conclusions, we are placing them before the end of this document in order that they be given a serious ear.

Conclusions

From the evidence gathered, the fact finding team has unanimously arrived at the following conclusions:

Prime Law-breaker: The Government

- 1 The government has been prime law-breaker from the onset of the establishing of Kalinga Nagar.

Landmine Use: Legal & Ethical Violations

2. The use of landmine explosives to kill Adivasis implicates the government, the police and the Tata Co. in a very serious legal and ethical issue.
 - 2.1.A.1 Under the Indian Explosive Act the police or the district administration are not authorized to possess dynamite sticks or detonators.

 - 2.1.A.2 Among the three players that day it was only the Tata Company who was licensed to possess dynamite and detonators.

 - 2.1.A.3 Therefore how did these explosives get into the hand of the District Collector DM or the SSP who were the highest officers present and who were conducting the whole affair?

Government Unilaterally Broke Negotiations

3. On the land-rights question the Adivasis were in possession of the land, a negotiation was going on regarding its settlement; the villagers were demanding a price

to be fixed considering the present market rate and the cost that the Central government had paid for this land in 1990 i.e. 350,000 per acre.

3.1 By unilaterally breaching this process the government has repeated its disregard for a democratic process and thereby breach of law.

Six Killed in Police Custody

4. With the killing of the six arrested persons while in police custody the government stands as a cold blooded murderer.

Chopping off of Sex Organs

4.1. With the chopping off of the genitals and breast of these six victims the government stands not only as a cold blooded murderer but as a racist, sexual pervert of the worst kind.

Tata Company Involved

5. Tata Company's claim that their 'officials' were not present and that they having nothing to do with the incident stand as a lie.

5.1. While their 'officials' may not have been present their contractors, equipment and moreover their influence was. The government was acting on their behalf and broke the law for them: therefore, however much they may try, they cannot be detached from this massacre.

5.2. The Company's silence on the killings speaks volumes about its sincerity to 'Corporate Social Responsibility'. This silence of theirs on such a brutal massacre of Adivasis portrays them - when it comes to business - as their patronage for Adivasis being secondary.

Expectations from the Medical Community

6. The six who were killed in custody had bayonet stabs on their face and bodies; they also had bullet wounds which were not there when they were arrested and taken in the police jeep. This proves that they were tortured before they were killed. It was only after this sequence that the Police handed over their bodies to the civil surgeon and medical staff of Jajpur Town Hospital for an autopsy (according to Supreme Court directives all killings by police should be video-taped and done in the presence of the Civil Surgeon and a Judicial Magistrate): the medical reports are awaited. We hope that our medical fraternity will speak up to what they have seen and at least in them we can find some principles of ethics and morals.

Who Are We?

J.O.H.A.R.

Jharkhandi's Organisation for Human Rights is the first human rights mass-based Organisation of Jharkhand. Founded in 1987 it has done pioneering work in taking the human rights struggles of Jharkhand and of Jharkhandi Adivasis to the national, international forums including the UN.

The Organisation continues to work on the right to self-determination of the Adivasi peoples, the strengthening and protection of the traditional system of administration, the right to a distinct identity, culture and economic system.

Its central secretariat is in Chaibasa the district head quarters of Singhbhum District in Jharkhand. More information on J.O.H.A.R. can be found on its web site www.johar.in.

J.M.A.C.C.

Jharkhand Mines Area Coordination Committee is an alliance of communities affected by mining within Jharkhand. It was founded in 2001. J.M.A.C.C has since launched two mass based campaign on 'Ownership Rights to Minerals' and on the consequences of Greenfield mining and allied projects 'Mines Eat Us : Agriculture Feeds Us'

Both these campaigns have helped in the strengthening of local organisations resisting the mining companies. At present at seven places 'peoples imposed curfew' is promulgated where no official connected with mining activity can enter their area. This resistance movement has kept about 22 projects at bay.

J.M.A.C.C's secretariat is at Ranchi the capital of Jharkhand and more information can be obtained from its website www.firstpeoplesfirst.in.

The Report

The Background

On 2nd January 06, in the late noon, we received telephone messages informing us that there was a firing on Adivasis protesting against their lands in Champakoila village being occupied by the contractors of Tata Co. It was only by mid-night we got more details from eye-witnesses over the telephone. The Orissa police in cooperation and support with this illegal entry had fired on unarmed Adivasis defending their land-right. Twelve Adivasis and a police man were killed, about thirty five were injured but fourteen could avail of hospital treatment.

The next day J.M.A.C.C and J.O.H.A.R put together a team of persons (see next page) and they left by road for the site. They managed to arrive at Gobarghati, by 3.00 pm on the 4th January. A road blockade at Duburi (near Express Chhock), was in force preventing any outsiders from entering Duburi. On seeing that a team from Jharkhand had come to offer solidarity the embargo was lifted to let FFT in and thus they were able to enter Duburi and proceed to Ambagadia village where the mourners were performing the last rites of the twelve victims at the village centre.

After participating and filming this touching and painful ceremony they spent some time with the mourners and proceed to Chhandikol enroute to Cuttack where the injured were

admitted in the S.C.B. Medical Hospital at Cuttack, a state run institution. After visiting the injured in the hospital they returned back the next day to the affected villages, surveyed the site where the incident occurred and continued to listen to the stories of the people from the affected villages.

In this process they held discussions with the local leaders, injured persons, the eyewitnesses, and relatives of those killed or injured people who lost their land for various projects, local journalists, social activists, Superintendent of S.C.B. Medical Hospital and other medical staff. Samples of the materials relevant to the incident which were available were photographed and some collected. All the interviews were videotaped. This report is based on the evidence thus gathered by the team.

Khuntkatidars

From time immemorial, people belonging to Ho Adivasi nation have been living in the Sukinda valley, which now comes within Jajpur district. From the wild forest they developed the land into agricultural fields giving them the title of Khuntkatidar, a title given under the British Raj to Munda and Ho first settlers. This fact is also present in their folklore and the relationship they yet maintain with the other Ho habited areas. When the region came under the princely state of Sukinda, its Raja had recognized their nation as a republic as late as 1920. The region politically and culturally once came under Kolhan[2] Rule whose core area is presently within the neighbouring Jharkhand State. The Oriyas to this day refer to the Ho people as 'Kolhha'. With the bifurcation of Jharkhand and thereby Kolhan too into Orissa and Jharkhand this political region is losing its significance, however the social and cultural links between the Ho's of Sukinda and their relatives in Jharkhand are very strong to this day. The main reasons for the bifurcations are the same as in the bifurcation of all Adivasi or Tribal regions in India. In this particular case it is in consistency with government objectives/policy:

To break the political and cultural unity of the Adivasi people who were militantly anti-colonial and

To divide this mineral and forest endowed homeland to better the process of expropriation.

Economic

The people are dependent on traditional farming, animal husbandry and forest gathering. The main crops they grow are paddy, a variety of pulses, oil seeds and other food products. For their basic needs they are self-sufficient. The land in question and which the Tata Co. has set their eyes on, is rich paddy fields with fairly good irrigation system. This fertile land and their time-tested crop management patterns is so well balanced that they could survive even a drought or crop failure. However basic amenities for which the State is responsible for i.e. education, health care and irrigation, are strikingly absent.

Demographic

Jajpur district, recently carved out of the former Cuttack district, has a total land area of 2,899 sq kms. The total population, according to 2001 census, is 1.623 millions. The population density is 560 persons per sq kilometer, which is almost twice the population density of the rest of Orissa. This shows that the pressure on land and other natural resources is severe. According to 1991 census, Adivasi constituted 7.4% of the total population in the district, but according to one UNDP survey, this has come down to 5.5% in 2001. However the Adivasi population in this district is concentrated in just two blocks i.e. Sukinda and Danagadi, where it is said to be around 70%.

This drop in demography in regions earmarked for industry or mining is a common phenomenon, ascribed to the in-migration of outsiders and the dispossession of the local population, leading to pauperisation and out-migration. Pauperisation also brings in declining health standards and their consequent higher infant mortality, lower longevity life spans that add up to other reasons for drop in demography. For this reason the demographic profile of this region indicates that the non-Adivasi segment of the State's population is growing, whereas the Adivasi population is dwindling. Correspondingly, the literacy rate among the Adivasis is 5.6 for females and 26% among the male, a low figure compared to the non-Adivasi population in the same district Sukinda which is 70:95 in the same district.

Kalinga Nagar

Kalinga Nagar was originally planned (1990) to be a major Steel City on the lines of the former West German-aided Rourkela Steel City (co-incidentally its fiftieth year golden jubilee is being celebrated this year, 2006). Planned for a Public Sector undertaking, a total area of 30,000 acres (52 sq miles) has been requisitioned by the government for this purpose. The endowed Daitri Iron Ore Mines, another government-owned enterprise, managed by the Orissa Mining Corporation OMC was to supply it the iron ore. Being only thirty k.m. away it was considered an ideal location.

For yet another national development's dream project, the owners of the 30,000 acres of lands were asked to make this sacrifice. Under the archaic Land Requisition Act of the British Raj; a highly questionable legislative relic still in force, their lands were requisitioned. The first lands to be requisitioned in 1990-96 were from Duburi, a group of villages. In exchange the people were promised a compensation package which included: land for land taken, jobs in the industries, houses, schools, hospitals and other facilities.

The Reform Agenda

The present NDA (National Democratic Alliance), led by the BJD (Biju Janata Dal) party under the Chief Ministership of Sri Naveen Pattanaik, the son of the late Sri Biju Pattanaik, is yet another State in the country that has gone overboard to implement the reform agenda of the Bretton Woods institutions. The government's plans, policies and agendas, which include favouring the private sector over the public sector, are said to be set under the advice of the World Bank and DFID (Department for International Development U.K.)[3] both of whom are investing heavily in this dream project.

It was under this reform agenda that the government altered the original plan from a Public Sector enterprise to making it a 'Steel Hub for the private sector'. This is Sri Naveen Pattanaik's second term in office and hence, over a period of seven years, he has had the necessary time to foster here fifteen different steel industries of varying sizes and ownership. During this period, industries with a combined production capacity of four million tons a year could set shop here; the major ones being: Neelanchal, Jindal, Maharashtra Seamless, Rohith, Dinabandhu, Maithan Ispat, MESCO, K.J.Ispat, Orian, Sarita and VISA.

Kalinga Nagar core zone comprises of 13,000 acres where the industries are situated. The remaining 17,000 acres are earmarked for the townships and civic amenities. Surrounding this is a greenbelt of dense forests spread over an additional area of 75 sq k.m.s. The flora includes sal, kurum, vandan, ashan and piasal. The forests of Nakasa, Natimara, Barsuli etc, all within ten kilometers of the project area, are also home to rich and diverse wildlife like leopard, deer, scaly ant-eater, python, cobra etc. This is also an elephant corridor zone as it comes within the larger Saranda Sal Forest area.

What is noteworthy is that the people in these forty Adivasi villages have been protecting this forest zone even prior to 1946. Their protection plan included what we call today 'Community vigilant groups'. It is for this reason that the forest and wild animals stayed protected from forest mafia, poachers' et al. Interestingly the practice of these community vigilant groups is older than our present- ay environmental NGO's, claiming to protect the forest.

The Bone of Contention

A lesser known fact is that the first and the last land survey was done in 1928 under the British Raj, resulting in 60% of the Adivasi areas not being surveyed. Thus 60% of Adivasi population in Orissa does not have land papers, while those of non-Adivasi have been surveyed and are documented. Despite a Supreme Court ruling, the government had not moved a finger to grant papers to this mass of Adivasis. The advantages of maintaining such a status quo by the upper dominant caste and class are manifold. One such advantage is seen here in Duburi where only those who had land papers were given compensation in 1994. The rest of the land the government got for free.

The Tata Factor

The Tata Steel Ltd (TSL) a latecomer, has been allotted 2400 acres in Kalinga Nagar, for the construction of a six million tonne plant. The land that the government purchased at the rate of Rs. 37,000/- per acre in 1994, was sold to the Tata Co. for Rs. 3,50,000/- thus making a net profit of Rs 720,000,000 and at the same time giving the Tata Co. a saving of over Rs. 87,600,000 over the market price, whose going rates are between Rs. 5,00,000 to 7,00,000 per acre.

This was the bone of contention, why the people had assembled to prevent the bulldozers from destroying their houses and taking over their lands that fatal day on 2nd January.

There were other reasons for this dispute. The Government had paid only for those lands amounting to 13,000 acres that had ownership papers, for rest of the land amounting to about 17,000 acres that were common lands and those lands of the Adivasis who did not have the papers, they did not pay any money. Within this category comes forest land, but traditionally the Khunkhatidars also include large amounts of forest lands and hence the ownership of this is in dispute: whether they belonged to the Forest Department (Government) or the Khunkhatidars, or how much belonged to each. While this amounts to another staggering mathematical figure, in terms of blood it has taken the lives of the twelve killed, the dozens of injured, the trauma of the repression that followed, and the burden of collective memory that is going to linger on.

Land in People's Possession

The dispute over price was an issue the people had taken up with the government and, as no settlement had been reached, they continued to enjoy the possession of the land and livelihood. To facilitate negotiations the affected people had united as an Organisation under the name Bisthapan Virodhi Jan Manch (People's Organisation Against Displacement) (BVJM), as has become the modus operandi of social movements in India, to better the process of collective bargaining.

In the dispute raised by B.V.J.M. they had staked claim to an additional amount. The Organisation claims that in 1994 the central government had paid the state government Rs. 3,50,000 per acre for the land; it then being for a steel plant that came under the Central Government. They were thus demanding this price for handing over possession. The government had offered an additional amount of a mere fifteen thousand which the people refused. This dispute was in the process of negotiations when, on 1st January this year, the villagers came to know that a heavy contingent of armed police was stationed in Jajpur the district head quarters, and was waiting there for the past week.

Chronology of the Events

On receiving the above information the Bisthapan Virodhi Jan Manch, had immediately called for a general body meeting on 1st Jan 06. With the entry of armed police it was now clear that the government was sending a loud message to them that the ongoing dialogue and negotiations process was unilaterally called off. It was in such a desperate environment - where their very survival was being endangered - that the following events need to be seen:

02 Jan 06

7.00 AM

Six bulldozers and other heavy duty earth moving equipment, contractors of the Tata.Co, accompanied by all the top government officials of the district i.e. the District Collector[4]Senior Superintendent of Police and Additional District Magistrate[5], enter Champa Koila village under the protection of four hundred and twenty[6] armed police and station themselves on the plot of land belonging to Sri Soberdev.

8.00 AM

The Tata Co. labourers start leveling the ground while their mining staff spread out and place land mines made of dynamite sticks all around the area. The detonators of the dynamite sticks are connected to trap strings. The villagers are unaware of these trap strings.

On seeing the work in progress the villagers all gathered at the other end of the football field where they were wondering what to do. As time went by, their number increased, with a mass of people on one side of the Champakoila football ground that stood in-between the armed police force and them.

Frightened, the people decided to send a delegation to meet the government officials to question this illegal occupation of their private land. But D.C. and S.S.P. and other officials refused to listen to them and the ground leveling work continued.

9.30 AM

On seeing that their requests for a dialogue with the Government officials was turned down the people decided to request the Tata Co workers on the bulldozers to support them by stopping all work. A group of people went towards them.

As they were approaching one of the workers, Sri. Birasing Gop (27 yrs.) of Chandia village hit the trip string of the dynamite and it went off blowing off his one foot and injuring three others.

This created a panic and anger among the people and they rushed towards the police abusing them.

Simultaneously the police started firing live ammunition, tear-gas shells, rubber bullets and started a lathi /baton charge.

10 - 12 AM.

In the firing Sri Bhagaban Soy (25 yrs.) of Gobarghati village received two shots and became the first victim of police bullets.

Sri Landu Jarika (29 yrs.) of Bamiyagotha, who was by the side of Sri Bhagaban Soy, attempted to escape but he was shot and became the second victim.

A group of woman and some men ran towards the two injured and as they were on their way the police started firing indiscriminately on them, shooting them.

The third to fall to police bullets was Sri Sudam Barla (25 yrs.) of Belohari village who received bullet injuries on his head and died on the spot.

A child, Gobinda Laguri (14,) who was standing outside his house in Champakoila was hit on his chest and dropped dead. He was the fourth victim hit and the second to die on the spot.

Ms. Janga Jarika (27 yrs.) was on her way to bathe at the village pond when she was hit and died on the spot. She is a mother of four small children, two girls Bonita (6 yrs.) and

Menka (3 yrs) and two boys, Madhu (9 yrs) Bijay (7 yrs.) She was the fifth victim hit and the third to die on the spot.

As they were running away, the police continued to fire on them. This is corroborated by the fact that many of the dead and injured have received bullet injuries showing that the bullets penetrated from the back.

Most of them did not rush to their homes but into the forest in order to save their lives. On seeing them run away policemen chased them and continued with their targeted firing.

Smt Muktha Bankira (30), an unmarried woman of Chandia who had fallen to a bullet, was lying in a pool of blood. She was soon surrounded by police who started beating her up with whatever they could get; she became the fourth victim to die on the spot.

A policeman, Gopa Prasad Mohanty, who had entered the crowd and started hitting the people with rifle and bayonet was beaten to death by the people.

The villagers who did not run away started taking their dead and injured. But the police stopped them and started arresting all of them.

But the villagers managed to rescue 14 of their injured people.

Both the parties proceeded towards the Jajpur Town Hospital 40 k.m. away.

Some of the villagers took their injured to the Cuttack Medical College Hospital 90 km away.

Besides the 14 injured, the villagers managed to take hold of four of their dead relatives and bring the bodies to their village.

Police repression continued till the late night and went to the extent of preventing them from taking the injured to hospital.

List of victims killed on the spot & through hospital neglect

1. Ms. Janga Jarika 27
Baligotha
Spot
4 children
2. Gobinda Laguri 14
Champakoila
Spot
Student

3. Sri Sudam Barla 25
Belohari
Spot
unmarried
4. Mrs. Deogi Tiria
Champakoila
Spot
3 children
5. Sri Rangalal Munduya 40
Baligotha
In Hospital
Single
6. Sri Rama Ch Jamuda
Bamiyagotha
In Hospital
2 children

3 Jan 06. Day II

The villagers reached SCB Medical Hospital Cuttack at 11.00 PM on 2rd Jan 2006. But some of the injured persons were not allotted beds until around 12 pm the next day i.e. 3rd January night, about 20 hours after their arrival in the casualty wing.

Sri Chema Hembram, who was referred by Jajpur Town Hospital to Cuttack Medical College, arrived at Cuttack at 12 at midnight on 3rd Jan 06.

He also was allotted his bed at around 10.30 AM next day 4th January, a few minutes before the arrival of an Adivasi Member of Parliament who was visiting the ward.

At 11 am the police informed the relatives to collect the bodies of the six victims from the hospital morgue.

By 3 pm the bodies arrived in Ambagadia. These were the six who were taken alive into police custody. They were returned dead with bayonette stab marks on their bodies, with bullet wounds on their chest with both wrists cut off, with their genitals chopped off and the two women with their breasts chopped off. Below is the list:

Name & Age Village

Killed

Status

- 1 Ms. Ati Jamuda 32
Chanan
Police custody
Unmarried

2. Sri. Bana Badara 35
Gadpur
Police custody
Married with 5 children
3. Sri Rama Gagarai 35
Gadpur
Police custody
Married with 5 children
4. Sri Landu Jarika 29
Bamiyagotha
Police custody
Married two daughters
5. Sri Bhagaban Soy 25
Gobarghati
Police custody
Unmarried
6. Ms. Mukta Bankiri 30
Chandia
Police custody
Unmarried

4 Jan 06. Day Three

When the relatives were preparing the bodies for the cremation ceremonies they saw that both fists of all six victims were cut off.

Those close saw that the genitals of all four men were cut off and the breasts of the two women.

Sequence of Atrocities prior to 2 January 2006

The above killings were the consequence of a series of acts of deceit, betrayal, injustices, which should give us an idea at what level our democracy and standard of governance stands at. The issue of land rights, fair compensation, implementation of compensation packages, jobs, rehabilitation had become perennial issues between the Adivasis affected by the setting up of Kalinga Nagar, the Government and the Industry. The Government's all out support, encouragement, and open identification with Industry at the cost of being unjust to the Adivasis has been the thumb rule. Below are the sequences of events:

June 2004

Messrs Jindal Ltd started to evict the people from Baisipur village. This time a new strategy was employed. In the presence of a strong police force, they started blasting the rocks nearby the village. When stones and boulders started falling on the roofs, the

people had no alternative but to leave their homes and run for safety. These people are still living in tents near the road side in village Hudisai, and earning their livelihood by working in the nearby stone crusher.

09 May 2005

At the foundation laying ceremony of Messrs. Maharashtra Seamless Ltd on 09 May 2005 near Khurunti village the people had organized a sit-in protest. On that day the same government team, consisting of District Collector and District Superintendent of Police, and ADM broke up the sit-in by beating up demonstrators and then resorting to a firing - this time with rubber bullets.

It was followed by a raid on the villages and consequent arrest of 40 people, which included 25 women, 14 children and a 70 year old man. Among them was a mother with a 15 day old infant. The infant was separated from his/her arrested mother who was nursing him. Two toddlers in Gadpur village and two sick people in Chandia village died as there was nobody left in their families to care for them.

07 October 2005

Tata Steel Ltd had their foundation ceremony at Dhulapathar village. Interestingly, no senior manager of the company was present. But the district level officials and a large contingent of police were there. The police used batons, lobbed tear gas shells and rained rubber bullets against the people who were peacefully protesting.

26 October 2005

Tata Co. started constructing a wall around the land allotted to them. The Organisation organized a sit-in at Dhulapathar junction from 11 am. A kilometer away the government kept a fully armed force stationed with bullet-proof jackets etc

The Director General of Police DGP, together with the Officer in Charge (OIC) of the police station and the Deputy Collector came and met the leaders of the Organisation. The DC told them "you do what you have to do, I will do what I have to do".

Important Notes

The D.C., Sri. Shawasat Mishra, was the D.C. of Rayagada on 16th December 2000 when three Adivasis of Kashipur were killed by police bullets at Maikongunj. Interestingly the same Chief Minister appointed the Justice R Mishra Judicial Commission to go into these killings. The commission report that came out three years later exonerated the government and said that the killings were justified.

The D.C. Sri Shawasat Mishra is the son in law of Sri Pyree Mohan, the Personal Officer and mentor of the Chief Minister. In such an intertwining of family, social and caste relationships where does the Adivasi stand?

Company

No of Displaced Families

Contract Jobs Given

Visa Steel

23

Not One

Jindal Steel

59

Not One

MESLO

53

47

Neelachal Ispat Nigam Ltd

634

182

Rohith

12

Not One

Common corridor rd.

28

Not One

Regarding Bows & Arrows

Our imagery of 'Tribals' is a mindset in itself. We often fail to see the mout of their grass skirts or feathers or bows & arrows. The government, the police, the Company, take advantage of such mindsets of ours and then in the mainstream media it takes on a domino effect. The use value of such imagery to the establishment is manifold; for they are able to blur the hard facts and portray the incident as a battle between two armed forces or as one side (inevitably the Adivasi in this case) 'instigating' the other by throwing the first stone. This precisely is the reason why the administration capitalized on our mindset and got the benefit of it.

Bows & Arrows are a part of Adivasis attire. They protect them from the wild animals in the forest as well as from the evil spirits especially when they go out of the jurisdiction of the spirit of their ancestors (the good spirits) who continuously give them protection. An arrow is placed on the bed of a child just born to ward off the evil spirits.

On the 2nd January, as they were not organized for a battle they had not come with their bows and arrows. It was only later after the police firing that some of them ran to their homes and brought in their set. However, it was too late to match the weaponry of the police i.e. landmines, guns including SLR's etc. Those that did go and get their arrows did so like in the metaphor 'to grab the last straw'.

Having explained this, the FFT would like to stress that, had the Adivasis come organized as a force, then there would have been more dead; on both sides.

Role of Prafulla Chandra Gadai

Finance Minister of Orissa.

Mr. Gadai, the local MLA and the finance minister known to be the number two in the Cabinet, runs a private army of the Bihar 'Bahuballi' variety and has called it the Biju[7] Sena; he claims to use it curb "extortionist activities of the anti-social elements", so that the investors did not shy away from putting up their projects in the area. But in fact the Biju Sena is used to terrorize the Adivasis struggling for their rights.

This Minister, at several public meetings, has called the Adivasis 'Jharkhandis' (used here derogatively) and said they should be driven back (to Jharkhand) so that the Oriya people will get land, jobs and other benefits from the proposed industries. A Congress (I) leader Mr. Sarat Raut, told the electronic media, that the same finance minister a day before the firing on 01 Jan 06 had made similar remarks at Mangalpur, causing a social rift between Oriya people and the Adivasi people.

The Official Versions & Justifications

The chief minister, Mr. Naveen Pattanaik, while expressing sorrow at the death of the policeman killed, failed to even mention the fact that 12 Adivasis lost their lives. The chief minister defended the police action and accused the people of being responsible for the events. He has however ordered a judicial inquiry.

District administration

According to the District Collector, Mr. Saswat Mishra, the villagers had brought in trouble-makers from outside. They also had iron rods with them.

After he was suspended he made another statement where he said that it was the government which is responsible for the incident, as the people should have been evicted before beginning the construction works.

This later statement putting the entire blame on the government, is an interesting one as it looks to have been timed to bail out the Tata.Co. from any implication.

The S.S.P. said that people were warned about the firing.

Tata Steel

Mr. J J Irani, Director of Tata Sons, said that his company has no role in the event. It was the government's responsibility to provide the land. He also added that "none of the company officials was present at the scene". What is interesting in this statement is its silence about the act of violence; nor does it offer any regret for the loss of life in the establishing of his company. The House of Tata are known for putting thought behind each word they utter.

Role of Political Parties

Seeing the media reaction and the anger of the people, including the students of Orissa, some of the Bharatiya Janata Party legislators started discussing withdrawing of their support for the BJD-led government. Talking with the media persons, BJP state chief and an ex-minister in Central Government, Sri Jual Oram, said: "such things cannot be decided here in Orissa. We have a meeting with Rajnath Singh, the national president of BJP". On the next day, Rajnath Singh ou rightly rejected the demand to pull out of the coalition. It should be noted here that the party has the largest base among the Adivasis and Dalits in Orissa, yet they did not want to act against their coalition partner.

Concluding Remarks

The FFT concludes that this was a premeditated massacre done on unarmed, innocent, democratic-loving and law abiding citizens of this country, who are also our first people. It cannot be, and should not be, regarded in any lesser light

[1] The Indigenous Peoples of peninsular India prefer to be known as Adivasi which translates as first-people.

[2] The Ho's call them selves Kol, but when interacting with non-Adivasis they prefer to be known as Ho which mean 'human being'. The word Kol gradually is used by non-Adivasis as a derogative way to mean 'hard nut' . Ho's are often teased by this rhyme 'The Oal (a potato) does not cook, and a Kol cannot comprehend'

[3] On 15 August 2002 a platform of Left party organisations of Orissa united to give a 'Quit India' call to World Bank and DFID, one of their allegations was that both these institutions had influenced government policy on privatisation which included the retrenchment of 50% of government staff employed in the Health and Education sectors.

[4] The government representative in every district in India is normally a District Magistrate (D.M.) but in Schedule V (of the Indian Constitution) areas this Magistrate is given the additional powers making them a District Collector (D.C.) with a duty of 'protecting the Adivasis '.

[5] When a ADM accompanies such a contingent it is read as a preparedness for shooting. The ADM in such instances carries a pre-filled and signed order permitting the police to use firearms.

[6] Fourteen Platoon

[7] Sri. Biju Pattanaik is called the 'father of Modern Orissa' an Industrialist and the father of the present Chief Minister Naveen Pattanaik.