

# TRIBAL MOVEMENT IN ORISSA: A STRUGGLE AGAINST MODERNISATION?

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*Come, come mother and sister,  
Become unity, roar our united voice.  
Send back Indal, Tata, Hydro.  
To save Orissa, save Adivasi and Dalit.  
The earth is ours, it is our right.*

-- An Oriya protest song by Bhagaban Majhi, Kucheipadar

## Abstract

*Contemporary India is witnessing a wide number of micro-level social movements struggling against industrialisation, big dams and other similar development projects. This paper looks at the tribal movement against the mining industry in Kucheipadar village of Rayagad district in Orissa. The field survey was carried out in this area in order to understand the movement's stand against mining as an anti-development activity. It was found that tribals in this part of the world are not ready for modernisation coming from outside and invading into their livelihoods. This study captures their struggle against the mining industry and their articulation of demands and strategies opposing modernisation.*

## Introduction

Development, understood as modernisation through industrialisation, science and technology, has become a major concern vis-à-vis livelihood of the people. Today in many parts of the country, there is a strong opposition against dams, industries and other such development related projects. This understanding of development is being questioned at the grassroots level by various struggles from the standpoint of tradition and culture. It is in this context, that this paper discusses the anti-mining movement in Kucheipadar village of Rayagad district in Orissa, and attempts to understand the various debates emerging from the movement. The key questions examined here are as follows: First, on what basis is the movement opposing the mining project? Second, if the movement is opposing modernisation, then is it free of modernisation? And, how does the movement look at such developmental projects: as a blend of tradition and modernisation, or something else? Accordingly, the information collected about the movement during the field visit and through secondary sources is analysed within the framework of tradition versus modernisation.

## Theoretical Framework

Tribal people in India continue to live in with certain element of isolation. Today the regions dominated by tribal people have become the hub of various struggles, particularly in the context of various

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I would like to thank activists of PSSP – Debaranjan, Rabi, Bhagaban Majhi and the villagers of Kucheipadar for their hospitality during field survey. I am also grateful to Geoffrey Pleyers for the fruitful discussions that I had with him during the course of writing this paper. Thanks are also due to two anonymous referees who helped in fine tuning the arguments.

development projects like dams and industries. This has in turn brought in the old, but relevant debate vis-à-vis mainstreaming tribal people. The Ghurye-Elwin debate has been continuing with regard to tribal way of life. The integrationists and the isolationists are still divided on the question of modernisation of tribal people. Ghurye (1963) argued that the tribal people are 'backward Hindus' and hence, they need to be merged into the mainstream society. Elwin (1955), on the other hand, argued for maintaining what he called as a 'tribal way of life'.

There is a wide array of literature covering struggles against development projects. In the Indian context most of the literature is in respect of opposition against dams (Khagram, 2004; Parasuraman, 1999). There is also considerable literature with regard to tribal societies and their struggles. However, issues like mining have received less attention within India and elsewhere (Oliver-Smith, 2002). The current paper looks at the mining project as a part of larger development goals of the Indian state and the resultant tribal people's response to the same in the form of a struggle.

In the light of the above literature, this paper looks at the anti-mining movement in Orissa, where the tribal movement argues on the lines of Elwin's notion of isolation and freedom for the tribal people. The fieldwork was undertaken during the months of November and December 2006 in Kucheipadar region and interviews were conducted with the local activists and supporters of the movement. The self-representation of the movement was looked into so as to understand the perception of the movement vis-à-vis modernisation in the context of mining.

## **Background**

The State of Orissa is rich in natural mineral resources, forests and tribal population.<sup>i</sup> With Orissa alone having nearly 70 per cent of the total bauxite in India and 13 per cent of the world deposits, the State Government considers these mineral resources as a gateway to its development. Aluminium extracted while processing bauxite is used in aviation and automobile industry, in the manufacture of arms and ammunition, and in nuclear fusion process. Accordingly, the Government of Orissa has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) for six mega-projects with various national and international companies in the 1990s only for bauxite mining. Utkal Alumina International Limited (UAIL) is one such company with a joint venture of the Indian company Hindalco with 55 per cent share and the Canadian company Aluminium Canada (Alcan) having 45 per cent share. Earlier TATA from India and Norsk Hydro from Norway were involved in UAIL, but they later withdrew in the face of strong opposition and protests.<sup>ii</sup> In April 2007, Alcan declared that it is withdrawing from the project by divesting its stake to Aditya Birla group by June 2007. However, Alcan would continue to supply its technology for the project as per the agreement ([www.businessstandard.com](http://www.businessstandard.com)).

UAIL project's cost was initially estimated to be around Rs. 4,500 crores, while the revised estimates put this amount at Rs. 10,000 crore (Nair, 2004). The project aims to mine 198.4 million tonnes of bauxite through open-cast mining from Baplimali (in Maikanch panchayat), a hill regarded as sacred by the tribal people, where an estimated 200 million tonnes of bauxite is located. The extracted bauxite would be transported along a 22 km conveyor belt to a refinery at Doraguda near Kucheipadar, where it would be processed for aluminium in an alumina plant. The processed aluminium is to be transported to Tikri by trucks, for onward transport to Visakhapatnam seaport by train for export to different parts of the world. This alumina is perceived to be the cheapest in the world at \$ 85 per tonne. The 45 cusecs of water necessary for the plant per year, it is proposed, will be extracted from the near by Gopad River. UAIL project is 100 per cent export-oriented joint venture. Due to huge protests and stiff resistance by the local people, the project though began in 1993 became functional

only towards the end of 2004. Hence, UAIL has not yet began mining and, for the time being, is only erecting the plant and building the necessary infrastructure.

The bauxite mines that are to be explored by UAIL are situated in the forest region of Kashipur block, Rayagada district of Orissa. Largely the tribal people and to a lesser extent dalits inhabit the proposed mining area. The UAIL project has acquired 2,800 acres of land in Kashipur block in 1995 with 2,153 acres of privately owned land and 712 acres of government owned land. Of the 712 acres of government land, 92 acres is non-forest community land and 206 acres is village forestland (Indian People's Tribunal, 2006: 9). According to the UAIL 147 families will be affected, where as different survey reports on the Project Affected People<sup>iii</sup> (PAP) have their own numbers, ranging from 10,000 to 60,000. On the whole the project includes a rehabilitation and resettlement programme only for 147 families<sup>iv</sup> (Indian People's Tribunal, 2006: 12). By any conservative estimates or by personal visits one can easily find out that nearly 24 villages will be affected due to the UAIL project.

### **The Movement**

In 1992, the Orissa Mining Corporation (OMC) was granted license for subsequent lease of mining in this region to other corporate entities. Accordingly, UAIL was established through a joint venture in 1993. Simultaneously, the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India and the Orissa State Pollution Control Board (OSPCB) gave clearance to the project and issued a 'no objection certificate'. In 1996, the UAIL project team visited the site for survey during which the local people came to know about the project.<sup>v</sup> On January 21<sup>st</sup> 1996 UAIL organised an informal meeting near Kucheipadar in which 6000 villagers from three panchayats attended and presented a memorandum to the Collector, MLA of the constituency and to the management of UAIL. When there was no response either from the government or from the company, the local tribal people organised themselves and formed an umbrella organisation named *Prakutika Sampada Surkshya Parishad*<sup>vi</sup> (PSSP) or Council for Protection of Natural Resources.

In February 1996, a huge rally was organised at Kucheipadar and a struggle against the UAIL project came into being. In June, the same year UAIL initiated land acquisition, as a result PSSP organised a protest in the month of September in front of the UAIL's Tikri office with around 10,000 tribal people. UAIL did not respond to any of these protests. As a result, whenever the company representatives visited the project site the protestors obstructed them. In July 1997, UAIL started the construction of a resettlement colony near Dama Karola village. In August the tribal people demonstrated against the construction of the resettlement colony and, as a result, part of the colony was torn down. In November, the people of Kashipur submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister through the Rayagada District Collector. The day after submitting the memorandum, PSSP led a protest march with 5,000 people in Tikri demanding the withdrawal of UAIL.

The major event happened when PSSP conducted a referendum over UAIL in October and November 1998 across 40 villages. A significant majority (96 per cent) rejected the UAIL mining project. Around same time in November, the tribal people armed with clubs, bows and arrows abducted three of Norsk Hydro's employees and one Indian official to Kucheipadar village. Subsequently, a public hearing was held in the village and the local people complained about the project, after which the Norsk Hydro's employees were forced to sign a protest letter against their own company stating that Norsk Hydro would withdraw from UAIL. This resulted in UAIL postponing the project-related work till 2000. In 2000, a mass rally from Kucheipadar to Tikri was organised against UAIL by locals carrying traditional bows and arrows. In March the same year another rally was organised against UAIL, Utkal Rural

Development Society (URDS), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Bharatiya Janata Dal (BJD) from Tolo Dhaska to Gorakpur. On 15 December 2000, around 4,000 tribal activists blocked the All-Party Committee meeting and the BJD district president Bhaskar Rao from entering Maikanch village. Next day, three platoons of police entered the village and started harassing women and children to disclose the whereabouts of their men folk. Upon seeing their women being harassed, the men in hiding ran to the village. At this juncture the police shot 19 rounds killing three people.

Abilhas Jhoda (25), Raghu Jhoda (18), and Damodar Jhoda (43) were killed in the said police firing. On 20 December 2000, around 20,000 tribal people held a peaceful march in Rupkana junction in Kashipur against the police firing. As a result, the UAIL board meeting decided to reduce the activities related to the project work. Meanwhile, UAIL started its work on rehabilitation and resettlement (R&R) but the people came to know about R&R only through newspapers. In 2004, a huge demonstration was held at Dama Karol village against UAIL. On 16 December 2006 Martyr's Day was observed near Kucheipadar village and a huge rally was organised in which National Alliance for People's Movement (NAPM) convenor, Medha Patker participated. In February 2007 more than 1000 people hoisted a black flag against the Government of Orissa for not heeding to their demands.

### **Aspects of Tradition**

To a greater extent the tribal people in Kucheipadar region are driven by traditional way of life. The land, for instance, in this region is owned through customary right. Ownership documents exist mainly for the plain lands and only customary rights are there for the land in the hill slopes, which means they do not have 'legally' defined ownership. Thus, even in the wake of proper compensatory measures many of the tribal people would be left out from the compensation, as they do not have 'legal' ownership. On the other hand, land is seen as inalienable resource for the livelihoods of the tribal people. Apart from providing them with sustainable livelihood, the land also provides them with freedom to work independently according to their needs. This dependence on land and forest produce has relatively isolated the tribal people from the mainstream economy. In other words the absence of modern legal system denotes the weak penetration of modernisation in this region. In recognition of this tradition, the Indian state provides statutory guarantees under V Schedule of the Constitution, wherein tribal land cannot be sold or bought by a non-tribal. However, in UAIL case the rule was bent to suit the needs of industrialisation and development.

The tribal people generally cultivate both plain and hill lands to enable them to different crops. Land forms a very important and crucial aspect of tribal life – land is the basis for the formation of their culture, economy, society and their polity. To quote

Our life, culture, and employment everything revolves around the soil...In the month of *Asadha* (signifying the rainy season) we have Kulimaru parba, we get the root of the crop home and worship it. In the month of *Bhoda* (the following month) we worship maize.... From making the plough to agriculture work, we do everything together. So there is peace in our village. But once industrialisation starts, our festivals will vanish and our region will be destroyed.... We will get jobs, but who will do the cultivation? People will eat money or what? We cultivate; therefore we eat. (Bulka Miniaka).

The tribal people believe that they can be free and independent as long as they own the land.

*Dangar*<sup>iii</sup> is the widely practised mode of cultivation. They grow different varieties of paddy, maize, and various types of pulses and oil seeds like, kandul, masur, mung, chana, alsu, castor, mustard, etc. As most of the villages are surrounded by perennial springs on all the four sides, water is available throughout the year. Their food habits are in tune with the crops that they cultivate. In the morning, generally, they have *mandia paej* (gruel prepared out of ragi), which is also their staple food. Rice with some cereal forms is another major part of their food. However, since the last one decade, there is also increase in the cultivation of various vegetables. As a result something or the other is available around the year. Apart from this, they also grow various roots and tubers in their kitchen gardens, which also form their staple food. Whatever is available through agriculture activity is not accumulated in the modern sense, but exchanged in return for other goods.

A weekly fair (market) serves the purpose of bartering goods, wherein people from different villages meet to exchange their excess produce. These weekly fairs are not only crucial from the economic point of view, but also from the cultural point. The barter system still continues to rule the economy largely, in spite of the slow and steady inroads being made by monetary exchange. This weekly fair also acts as a cultural space for the tribal communities, where apart from economic activities many other activities are also being carried on. The tribal people are dependent upon natural resources like land, water, and forest for their livelihood, which to a large extent kept them away from the mainstream economy. The community life of tribal people is not in tune with individual-consumerist culture. They are self-sufficient as a community, and hence, their interaction with the mainstream economy is very less. Moreover, since their mode of cultivation is through hard physical labour, they cannot afford to produce much in the form of surplus. Also, producing or using anything in surplus is against the cultural norm.

## **Process of Modernisation**

The movement and the region are not entirely free of modern aspects. There are various agents of modernisation that operate in this region. This section discusses some agents of modernisation and some characters of modern elements that helped in ushering a change in this region. The major agents of the change are state and the market, while the little modernisation that made in roads has transformed the idea of traditional community to a certain extent.

### ***State***

Soon after the hunger deaths in Koraput-Bolangir-Kalahandi (KBK) districts many programmes were implemented to develop the region. Some of the programmes are Tribal Sub-Plan approach (TSP), development of tribals through Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), Micro-Projects for the Development of Primitive Tribes (MPDPT), Modified Areas Development Approach (MADA) for smaller areas having a population of 10,000 or more with 50 per cent tribal concentration (Bulliyya, *et al.*, 2005: 130-31). All these programmes were in addition to the International Fund for Agricultural Development along with Orissa Tribal Development Project (OTDP), Large Area Multi-Purpose Co-operative Society (LAMPS) for the overall development of Kashipur block of Rayagada district and anti-poverty programmes (*ibid*). Along with the above programmes many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) also have been working in this region for the upliftment of the tribal people. The state-led infrastructure projects like roads, rail, special funds, helped the state to make inroads into this region. These projects also acted as key agents for social transformation of tribal people to bring them into the mainstream society by integrating them with the nearby towns.

Meanwhile, the Government of Orissa saw mining as one of the key industries that can help in alleviating poverty in the state. For instance, according to Government of Orissa's *Economic Survey*, 2004,

Though Orissa is rich in minerals, exploitation is still not commensurate with the potential. Enhanced rate of exploitation of different mineral reserves will not only improve the financial position of the State but also will be helpful in generating sizeable direct and indirect employment. (Cf. Khatua and Stanley, 2006).

Ever since the hunger deaths of 1980s and early 1990s, the State Government aimed at building infrastructure facilities in order to undertake development projects in this region. Accordingly, a railway line from Rayagada to Koraput was built in 1992 and a road was constructed from Tikri to Kashipur (*Struggle India Reader*, 2004: 110-17). During this period the State Government sanctioned numerous programmes for the overall development of this region. However, UAIL was seen as the major development project for this region. On its side UAIL also started an organisation URDS in 1997 in order to cater to the welfare of the people. One of the partners of UAIL, Alcan in its backgrounder to the Utkal project has stated that UAIL has been working closely with the local community organizations on numerous community issues and development initiatives. Provisions for mobile health camps, ambulance services, kindergarten, primary adult education, forestation work, training for income generation skills, women awareness camps, village sanitation systems, are all some of its stated programmes (Alcan, 2006).

There is a strong pro-mining industry group that actually counters the movement and champions for more development projects. For instance, former Chief Minister, J.B. Patnaik stated that development should be given top priority and, for this, companies interested in setting up industries in underdeveloped regions like Kashipur should be encouraged. He also opined that the alumina project in Kashipur region would help in developing the region (Mohanty, 2000). UAIL has conducted environmental impact assessment (EIA) in 1995. It obtained the consent of three gram panchyats in the region under the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act of 1996 in December 2004. The Orissa State Pollution Control Board (OPCB) held a public hearing in Tikri in 2006 October on UAIL's proposed expansion plans. UAIL follows the Mining and Metals Supplement of the Global Reporting Initiative. This calls in for a set of standardised international norms (Goodland, 2007: 7-12). Moreover, Alcan has a good track record of managing such projects elsewhere. For instance, the Alcan Gove project in Australia has won the Prime Minister's award of Australia for excellence in community business partnerships in 2006 (*ibid*). Accordingly UAIL committed to rehabilitate and resettle all the 147 families that are to be affected by the project.

The state Government also looks at the UAIL as a development project that can provide employment to the rural poor of this region. The state government also categorically stated that the Supreme Court's judgment in *Samata vs. State of Andhra Pradesh* would not be applicable to the state of Orissa, where development is still in infant stage. In 1999, an All Party Committee was started under the leadership of young MLA, Bibhishan Majhi in order to promote mining. The Committee met Chief Minister in support of mining activities and appealed to him to impose a ban on voluntary organisations carrying anti-mining activities in this region (Das and Das, 2007). Political parties, like Congress, BJD, and BJP, each claim the credit for bringing in UAIL to this region. They see UAIL as an answer to hunger deaths in this region. They, therefore, see the movement as an impediment to the development of Orissa. While the Left parties – CPI and CPM – do not oppose the project, they do support the movement against the state's suppression.

Panchayat as a form of local governance has also been acting as a modernising agent, as it is different from the tribal traditional form of governance. The democratic election to the panchayat in itself appears to be a strong modernising element, while traditionally, the head of the village came as hereditary. The panchayat of Kucheipadar is reserved for the tribal people. Initially the movement thought that capturing panchayat power would give them some leverage in deciding their own development. Thus, Bhagaban Majhi contested and became the *sarpanch* (President) of Kucheipadar Panchayat. However, when the movement understood that nothing came out of it, he resigned from that post. This has also resulted in creating different centres of power within the village. The elected panchayat president became the modern head of the village, while the traditional head of the village is different.

Also the struggle against mining is led at two levels – one within the Constitutional framework where the PSSP demands for the implementation of Fifth Schedule of the Constitution. Similarly, it also argues for the implementation of Panchayat (Extension for Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, wherein the gram sabha of the village should agree for any project coming up in the scheduled area. In this case, the movement projects the failure of the state in implementing constitutional provisions. On the other hand, the movement also invokes the traditional rights of the tribal people to control, preserve and manage the forests. This traditional notion of rights is essentially projected as being different from the modern constitutional rights. These are different in the sense that the movement invokes culture, history, identity and tradition in asserting these rights with no legal guarantee, while the modern constitutional rights are guaranteed under law.

The movement perceives the State as the rationalising agent of exploitation in the name of development. PSSP opines that the changing character of state is in tune with the aspirations of the global capital and, hence, the resistance to challenge the State's Authority is vital. The process of State led development would only destroy the traditional knowledge systems and livelihood of the tribal people. The struggle understands that the State has much power in using violence against the tribal people. Hence, as a strategy, PSSP has adopted non-violent path to struggle against the State. However, there are undercurrents of tension among the villagers due to the state repression. Many false cases have been filed against the tribal people and 47 people have been imprisoned, according to the list of PSSP. As mentioned earlier, three tribal people were killed in police firing on 16 December 2000. It was after this firing that the struggle against UAIL came into limelight.

The movement is also not in favour of approaching the judiciary as it views judiciary as an extension of the state. In 1998, Agramee, an NGO working in this area, filed a petition, and the judgment favoured the company. Further, the movement believes that approaching the judiciary would shrink the space for democratic struggle. Thus, the movement has a complex relation with the state, given the fact that state is not a monolithic actor. At one level, the movement appeals to the state for more schools, hospitals, and to implement the constitutional provisions related to tribal areas. On the other hand, the same movement invokes constitutionally guaranteed rights against the state.

### ***Education and NGOs***

The people of this region feel that the state-given education is fast transforming their society. Primary schools act as the immediate agents of change through imparting mainstream education to the children. This education is seen differently, to quote,

Education in schools is of not much use to us. They teach the standardised Oriya language, which we don't speak. They teach science and other subjects which say

our way of life is wrong.... This education is not needed for us. It should be according to our needs (Bhagaban Majhi).

In spite of the mainstream education children are sent to the nearby primary school for primary education. On the one hand, while the movement fights against the industrial and state led-development, it demands more schools and hospitals in their region, instead of industries. To quote:

What the area really needs is schools but the government hasn't provided these ... the area will develop by building schools, and hospitals, not through this project (Manohar Jhodia).

Thus, the movement, at one level, looks at the modernisation process with suspicion and, at another level, favours it but it is limited to the basic requirement of education and health.

During the 1980s along with the State, the NGOs also made inroads into this region through teaching farmers about horticulture and other forms of cultivation. Initially, NGOs were with the movement, but when the Government of Orissa blacklisted Agramee for inciting tribal people against 'development', the latter apologised and abstained from the struggle. Hence, the movement sees NGOs as agents of State-led development. To quote,

NGOs are agents to bring community into the fold of the market process. They act as agents of State. Hence, NGOs speak of all issues like rights, dalits, women, physically handicapped, tribals ... In the process NGOs are only trying to hijack social movements (Debaranjan Sarangi).

Thus, ever since Agramee's 'U-turn' the movement looks at NGOs also with suspicion.

### ***Market***

The tribal people traditionally need to interact with the mainstream economy for various reasons. As the forest cannot give them everything, they need to participate and interact with the mainstream economy. For instance, it is a known fact that salt is not available in the forest, but salt is a major ingredient of the tribal food culture; in order to procure salt, tribal people need to trade with outsiders. However, the interaction and participation levels might vary among different tribal communities. Even in the case of tribal people in Kucheipadar, market has made considerable inroads as revealed by their day-to-day activities. But the question remains as to whether the tribal community interacts with the market at the equal level or does any inbuilt hierarchy operate within their relation.

Pathy (1992) argues that the geographical isolation of tribal people is a myth. He argues that the tribal movements are against the material and cultural domination of the mainstream society and, in that sense, all tribal societies are class societies and are intertwined with the Indian political economy. He further adds that these societies are in the lowest ebb of the capitalist hierarchy which, has given rise to the gross exploitation of the tribal people which is essentially due to their unequal status within the market economy. In other words, tribal people form the periphery of the mainstream economy. The non-surplus production process and non-accumulation culture of the tribal people goes against the basis of the mainstream economy. As a result, the tribal people continue to be at the lowest order of the mainstream economy or the periphery, where the exploitation of the tribal people continues.

The activists of the movement argue that the tribal people need not participate in the mainstream economy as their limited needs are satisfied by their hard work and forest. The activists allege that the state is trying to make entry in order to inculcate a consumerist culture among these people. While it is true that the needs of the people are limited, there are other aspects that induce

tribal people into markets, rather than the state. For instance, the bus-service that runs 4-5 packed trips daily to district headquarters Rayagada has definitely a role to play in the bringing the market into tribal villages. As discussed earlier, education and NGOs act as agents of change, however, each of them act at different levels in modifying the tribal communities dependence on market.

People only buy things like salt, kerosene and cloth in the nearby weekly market. The usage of cloth has increased since past two decades and among the younger generation one can find wide use of cloth in general and particularly the latest fashion clothes. Almost every village has a small shop that sells soaps, *bidis*, cigarettes, tobacco, etc, and these shops are owned by dalits. However, usage of commodities like soaps and hair oils is still not very popular among the tribal people. One can occasionally find items like cycle, transistor, and torchlight, and very rarely a black and white portable television. Many of the young people travel at least weekly once to Rayagada town,<sup>viii</sup> which shows that the relative isolation is slowly breaking. It is also observed during the field that many of the tribal people have latest music systems with speakers, and they play latest Bollywood songs. Generally they buy the pirated music CDs that are sold at a throw away price.<sup>x</sup> This limited participation and interaction is due to the low and subsistence income of the tribal people. Thus, on the whole, the interaction between tribal people and market is very limited and yet is slowly expanding.

### **“Whose development...?”**

The state in India looks at the development process, particularly, as a part of modernisation. Hasan (2000) argues that the Indian state pursued twin goals through the process of development: unifying the nation and social transformation. These two objectives were crucial as the Indian state was formed on modern premise with a traditional society as base (ibid. 16). On the other hand, the movement by way of questioning the process of development, appears to be also questioning the basis of modernisation itself. But the question remains whether the movement is articulating tradition against modernisation or is it just struggling for alternative notion of development that is inclusive of tribal identity and culture within it.

One of the larger questions that the movement raises is the very notion of development. For the tribal people, the term development has come to mean destruction of livelihoods, identity and culture:

We have seen big projects in our district like Indravati project and NALCO project. We have heard about Hirakud and Upper Kolab hydro projects. We have seen deprivation and sorrow of local people caused by these development projects. In our view development means that all should live peacefully and happily. But that some should die for development – we do not require this kind of development (Bhagaban Majhi).

Any meaningful development needs to recognise the rights of the tribal people over land, forest, and other resources that are related directly and indirectly to their livelihood. To sum up, in the words of one tribal woman:

What is development? Whose development? Does development imply cars and vehicles for everyone? The Chief Minister and others may need cars but why does everybody need it? Is it possible to give cars and vehicles to everyone? We don't need cars and motors. We are people of the soil and our lives revolve around the soil (Bulka Miniaka).

Thus for the tribal people development is something that has livelihood, land, water, forests, culture, identity, history, community, freedom, as the key ingredients.

## Community

For the tribal people, community as a whole, rather than the individual, is the centre of the life in the sense all-important economic, political, social and cultural activities are carried out at the community level, rather than at the individual level. The moment an individual is born, it means that this child is born into the community and not in the family alone. Moreover, the community is also very small in number and it makes sense to live in community rather than individually. Women play a crucial role in keeping the togetherness of the community. It is in this context that women, particularly, of Kucheipadar feel more threatened by UAIL and, hence, they take active part in the struggle against mining. To quote:

Women feel the strong sense of community is safe for them as they can move around even in the midnight. At the same time if the company would come, more strangers would be there that are accountable to no one, it would only impede their freedom (interview with Lachamma Majhi; also see Patel and Jha, 2007).

Thus, there is a strong sense of community, and they want to defend it. Women often feel that it is their natural surroundings and environment that is being threatened. Vandana Shiva, for instance, argues that women by nature are close to their ecological surroundings and, hence, find it difficult to move out of the place (Shiva, 1994). In addition to the above, the women also feel threatened by drawing instances of harassment from nearby mining areas. To quote Sidharth Nayak<sup>x</sup>

The employees of the company harass girls and women of Bandhaguda village. They have often threatened them and also physically check their bodies and clothes when they pass through the land acquired by the Company [Vedanta], outraging their modesty. When the women protest, they have been known to say that [the] Supreme Court has ordered them to physically check any person who passes through the company's proposed campus.

Women's participation in the movement has been very active with a concern to defend their community's centred lifestyle.

However, the movement has transformed the community by making it more inclusive and thereby giving a new identity to the community vis-à-vis the company. Earlier there were divisions among the tribals and dalits, but one common cause that is, fighting against the company has united and brought them together. The movement, while addressing the internal differences between the tribals and dalits, is striving to bring about a change by fighting shortcomings within their community. At the individual level too the community (read as movement) is striving to fight evils like alcoholism. Moreover, the presence of the company restricts the physical movement of the tribal people. This, in turn, makes them to reflect upon the days when they had freedom in their land. To quote Rabi,

*Adivasis* displaced from their land are like fish out of water.

The tribal people are independent in nature. For them, freedom and community play a very significant role in their day-to-day lives. They are also viewed as the utmost value for their dignity. To quote Prof. Bhagwat Prasad Rath<sup>xi</sup>,

...The other problem people face is the problem of culture. In a way they live in communities and communities give them strength [and] solidarity is only because of community. And when they lose touch with communities or communities get fragmented, it is difficult for them to seek out a livelihood.... Another part of the

culture is that Adivasis [or] the indigenous people think that freedom is very precious for them. They lead a free kind of life. But when these companies come, and start mining in this area, the people who get employment also lose their freedom, because they are not highly educated people. They can't be absorbed at the top level getting very fat salaries. They can only work as coolies or say *kalasis* or watchmen. They will be at the mercy of not only company officials but also people at the higher level. Now it is an independent community [with] people enjoying freedom, but if that [mining] happens they will be just like... sort of slavery. (Interview in Rayagada, 02-12-06).

Earlier the identity of the community was built without the presence of the 'other', whereas the coming up of company and the role of the state have forced the movement to build the idea of community by projecting the state as the 'other'. Thus, the construction of community identity is not traditional anymore, although the identity is constructed using traditional aspects. The identity is built more on the basis of modern form of identities with presence of a strong 'other'. As a result now the idea of community is more inclusive of dalits, landless, women, etc. The traditional idea of community had excluded dalits and women to a certain extent, while they became integrated in the current idea of community. To develop the community feeling the movement has incorporated demands that transcend the group interests of tribals or dalits. These demands coincide well with the interests of both the groups and thus it resulted in a transformed idea of community; it also helped to question the idea of traditional community, which was exclusive as mentioned above. It is in this context that Debaranjan, activist of the movement, opines that not having a dalit-woman-non-land owning as the leader of the movement as a serious limitation.

## Networking

PSSP is also involved in networking with other like-minded movements and people. For instance, it has the networking with National Alliance for People's Movements (NAPM), which is a broad alliance of such movements all over the country. PSSP has networked with some civil society groups in Norway like Stromme Foundation,<sup>xii</sup> Norwatch,<sup>xiii</sup> when Norsk Hydro, Norwegian company was part of UAIL. Similarly, there is another group based in Montreal, Quebec, Canada called as *Alcan't in India*,<sup>xiv</sup> which acts as a solidarity group for the PSSP. Alcan't in India primarily opposes the involvement of Alcan's (Aluminium Canada) involvement in UAIL.

The issues for PSSP at the local level are more rooted in livelihood aspects, while for the groups in Norway or Canada it is the question of transparency and accountability among the shareholders and indigenous people's rights. On the other hand, for NAPM at the national level it is equated with the fault development paradigm of the Indian state. At the same time, the PSSP also perceives itself as anti-war and anti-imperial movement. This understanding of PSSP arises out of the fact that aluminium is used largely in weapon and ammunition industry and a little in the automobile industry and very negligible amount being used for domestic purpose. In this backdrop, PSSP perceives that struggling against UAIL is also a part of the larger struggle against war and imperialism. In that sense the movement also looks beyond the state in understanding and articulating their demands.

## Conclusion

The tribal movement against mining is more rooted in the struggle for livelihood itself. Guha (2000) argues that the environment movements in the South are primarily material conflicts with claims for economic justice. Such movements have widened the human understanding of 'rights' and 'justice' by

drawing attention towards sustainable lifestyles (Guha, 2000). For such struggles development projects like mining have become synonymous with destruction. It is these struggles that have brought the issue of environment as a part of development model into the forefront. Sinha (1998) argues that environment movements are an expression of the socio-ecological effects of the narrowly conceived development based on short-term criteria of exploitation.

Modernisation has not really penetrated the tribal community in its true form. For instance, modern day legal norms are still not part of the tribal society, wherein most of the land holdings are maintained on the basis of customary rights. The near absence of the market in their day-to-day life exemplifies the fact that their lifestyle is traditional in nature. Further, the tribal people do not have skills and knowledge and believe that the money given as compensation would only bring in consumerist tendencies and thus, destroy their community's traditional life pattern. In that sense, the movement seems to be opposing the modernization and modern development.

On the other hand, the movement to a certain extent has changed the traditional notion of community by making it more inclusive, whereas the traditional idea of the community was more exclusive in nature. At the same time, the movement gives scientific reasons for its opposition to the company. This scientific knowledge, the movement might have gained from other similar cases where mining is going on. Within a range of 100 kms radius, mining activities are going on since long and that might have acted as their knowledge base. Similarly, there is growing dependency on market along with a growth in consumerist tendencies. The establishment of mining company, the movement believes, would further increase such tendencies. Hence, one of the larger issues that the movement is confronted is with freedom from such dependency on market and state.

Thus, it is not about tradition versus modernization whereas, it is more about freedom as development and vice versa. At the same time, the movement's notion of freedom is defined not on the modern lines, but more rooted in their cultural tradition. Thus, for them freedom is something that is associated with their identity, culture and livelihoods. The fact that many of the tribal people even question the idea of money and thereby consumerism makes it clear that they do not assign monetary value to their labour, production and goods, like the way it is done in modern societies. To quote,

For us the lands, forests, hills and the rivers of Kashipur are the source of livelihood and also our Gods. We worship these lands... If you take away our natural resources from us, then we cannot live and the money given to us for the land is of no use. We only know about land. What will we do with money? ... Till now there has never been any consultation with the people in our Panchayats on the mining companies.... The government has taken our votes to come to power but now forgotten us... The government is using guns to drive us away from our own homes.... We will continue to protest ...— Sumani Jhoria and Mukta Jhoria

The above quote exemplifies the traditional lifestyle and culture; but at the same time they also express that modern form of elected government has not done anything for them. Thus, there is certain aversion among the activists of the movement about modernisation and its aspects. On the whole the movement has the elements of modernisation, when it demands for a better health facilities and education infrastructure. At the same time, its struggle against the mining is strongly rooted in the cultural traditions of the tribal people. Thus, it appears that the movement is against the state directed development, which is exclusive and one-sided, whereas an alternative vision of development is based on decentralisation – local decision and solutions for the local problems, self-reliant – freedom from depending on others, safeguarding their identity and culture and enhancing their livelihoods.

### Chronology of the Movement

Year	Event
1992	Orissa Mining Corporation (OMC) obtains license for subsequent lease of mining to other corporate entities.
1993	Utkal Alumina Industries Ltd. is established through joint venture
1996	UAIL project team visits Kucheipadar for survey
	UAIL organises an informal meeting near Kucheipadar during which 6000 villagers presented a memorandum to the Collector, MLA of the constituency and to the management of UAIL
	In February a rally was organised at Kucheipadar against the UAIL
	In June UAIL initiates land acquisition
	In September PSSP organises a protest in front of the UAIL's office in Tikri with 10,000 tribal people
1997	UAIL starts construction of a resettlement colony near Dama Karola village
	In August the tribal people demonstrated against the construction of the resettlement colony.
	In November the people of Kashipur submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister through the Rayagada District Collector.
	PSSP led a protest march with 5,000 people in Tikri demanding the withdrawal of UAIL.
1998	PSSP conducts a referendum over UAIL across 40 villages
	In November tribal people armed with clubs, bows and arrows abducted three of Norsk Hydro's employees and one Indian official to Kucheipadar village.
2000	A rally from Kucheipadar to Tikri was organised against UAIL carrying traditional bows and arrows.
	In March a rally was organised against UAIL, Utkal Rural Development Society (URDS), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Bharatiya Janata Dal (BJD) from Tolo Dhaska to Gorakpur.
	In December around 4,000 tribal activists blocked the All-Party Committee meeting and the BJD district president Bhaskar Rao from entering Maikanch village.
	The following day three tribal were killed in police firing.
2001	Norsk Hydro pulls out
2004	Demonstration at Dama Karol village against UAIL
2006	16 December was observed as Martyr's Day.
2007	In February more than 1000 people hoisted a black flag against the Government of Orissa.

## End Notes

- i As per 2001 Census, the Scheduled Tribes constituted 22.1 per cent (8,145,081) of Orissa's population.
- ii Norsk Hydro, a Norwegian mining company withdrew in the year 2001, while TATA, an Indian company withdrew in the year 1999 citing that the project has become a sore thumb due to all the resistance the project was facing from the local population (Goodland, 2007: 27).
- iii For instance, the Norsk Hydro estimates that 750 people would be displaced, however, Norsk Hydro is out of UAIL. UAIL, on the other hand, claims that only 3500 people will be displaced due to the construction of the company. The PSSP sources claim that more than 20,000 people will be displaced. A survey commissioned by Norwatch, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation claims that 60,000 people could be displaced. (see Norwatch Newsletter, 1-96 at [www.norwatch.no](http://www.norwatch.no); press kit at [www.alcantinindia.org](http://www.alcantinindia.org)).
- iv This figure is arrived by the UAIL project survey conducted in 1995 based on 1991 Census.
- v When the worried local people enquired with the survey officials, they were told that they would get more jobs and they would be developed.
- vi The seven organizations under PSSP's umbrella are Baphlimali Surakshya Samiti, Maikanch; Gaon Mati Surakshya Samiti, Siriguda; Sasbohumali Surakshya Samiti, Khurigaon; Anchalika Surakshya Samiti, Srunger; Basundhara Surakshya Samiti, Barigaon; Bankam Surakshya Samiti, Puhundi; and Sunathei Surakshya Samiti, Baghrijhola. PSSP is an umbrella organization of all the above seven organizations in leading the movement against UAIL.
- vii *Dangar* is slash and burn cultivation. Each village has a traditionally demarcated area for *dangar* use of the people of that particular village. If the possessor of the land does not use it for consecutively for two years, then the village community will decide about its redistribution.
- viii If one stands at the bus stop in Rayagada town waiting to board a Kucheipadar bound bus, one can find many tribal people also waiting to board the same bus. Moreover, the charge for one way is Rs. 28/-, which means up and down it would total to Rs. 56/-. This journey from Kucheipadar to Rayagada town and back is relatively a costly journey for the tribals.
- ix For instance, one audio songs CD containing around 150 songs is available for Rs. 15-25/- depending upon the popularity of the songs. Moreover, Rayagada town has many shops selling audio and video CDs of both Hindi and Telugu movies.
- x Sidharth Nayak is with the Sachetan Nagarik Manch in Kalahandi, Orissa.
- xi Prof. Bhagawat Prasad Rath is a retired professor living in Rayagada. He is a Gandhian activist and plays active role within the movement against UAIL.
- xii Stromme Foundation is a Christian aid organization founded in 1976. It is based in Kristiansand, Norway and has offices in several parts of the world. It is not involved in any missionary activities, but only in poverty alleviation programmes.
- xiii Norwatch is an independent news service that conducts critical journalistic investigation on Norwegian businesses in developing countries, investigating whether the companies acted in accordance with basic human rights, labour rights, and safety and environment standards. It was established in 1995. Also see [www.norwatch.no](http://www.norwatch.no)

xiv Inspired by successes in Kashipur and Norway, the *Alcan't in India* solidarity group is founded in Canada to raise awareness about Alcan's heavy involvement in the UAIL project. *Alcan't in India* consists of a coalition of concerned citizens, groups and Alcan shareholders. Much due to the campaign of Alcan't in India, Alcan has declared to end its share in UAIL project, by selling it to Aditya Birla group by June 2007.

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