

Executive Summary

**Land Alienation and the Politics of Tribal Exploitation: a Study of
the Tribal Uprising in the Koraput District of Odisha (2009-2013)**

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The major issue for the vast majority of the tribals in India in general and Odisha in particular, is the scarcity of land or limited access to land which leads to the problem of backwardness, rural poverty and food security in tribal areas. Although, a number of land reforms legislations were promulgated, but their state of implementations remain a major concern. The non-tribals' (basically the outsiders migrants in the tribal areas, historically referred as '*dikhus*') relation with that of tribals is not of symbiosis but of parasitism. The non-tribals' lead to the displacement, alienation and violation of tribal rights. Koraput being the most tribal dominated district in Odisha, has witnessed incessant tribals' agitation against the land encroachment and alienation, but no solution has been visible at the ground level. Due to continuous land encroachment and alienation by the outsiders, negligence of the revenue administration and the apathy of the state government, the Koraput tribal land issues became precarious. Keeping the above significant issues in mind, throughout the present study, the researcher attempts to highlight the process of land estrangement among the tribals which has been identified in the Narayanpatna and Bandhugaon uprising in the Koraput district of Odisha.

Historically speaking, the indigenous people of Koraput district have never retired from their relentless protest against the land-grabbers. Once again, the tribals of Narayanpatna and Bandhugaon block have launched an armed uprising against hooch and land-grabbing (2009-14), under the leadership of the "*Chasi Mulia Adivasi Sangh*" (CMAS). Through this uprising, by the end of 2009, the tribals of Narayanpatna and Bandhugaon block reoccupied 3000 acres of land. The uprising continued from 2009 to 2014 under the chief leadership of Nachika Linga until his surrender to police in 2014.

Towards the land issue of Narayanpatna and Bandhugaon, the State response always remained tongue-tied. The present *Biju Janata Dal* (BJD) government vehemently suppressed the uprising, to protect the interest of the exploiters, after branding CMAS as a frontal organisation of the Maoist and the agitation is Maoist led, without solving the real problem of land. The Congress party, which ruled the State for near about four decades, adopted a laissez -faire policy towards the tribal problem. The leaders of the State have never tried to realize the problem; the government tends to look

at the problem as a Maoist problem, the police says it is a law and order problem, while the bureaucrats call it a socio-economic problem.

By way of conclusion, it may be said that, the uprising elsewhere has inspired the people of Deomali areas and Pattangi block in Koraput district while struggling against displacement and mining activities. Though the Narayanpatna and Bandhugaon tribal uprising is very crucial in the history of tribal movement, but was least highlighted because the 'corporate media' 'police State' and the 'Statist academia' has presented it in a distorted form. One must visit the tribal areas of Narayanpatna and Bandhugaon in order to find the truth which the State wishes to hide and to give voice to the peoples' concern, to act as a corrective to such media misinformation.

By Addressing all the major issues raised by the present study, the conclusion attempts to offer the following basic arguments: Firstly, land remain central issue and viable for the tribals, as their life, livelihood, freedom and development are concerned. Secondly, the cultural attachment of the tribals and their world view to the idea of 'place' (land), furnishes crucial perspectives in apprehending the politics of collective resistance. Thirdly, the politicisation of group identity and material interest against the outside authority serve as the basis of the unrest among the tribals. Finally, when the grudges of the people are hardened in an insensitive and tyrannical way, the extent of tribal resistance escalates and the war starts between the state and its own people.

As far as the building of theory is concerned, I generalized the following line in the context of 'the Narayanpatna and Bandhugaon tribal uprising' and 'the nature of the present Indian State' that 'the State apparatus apply coercion to arrest revolutionary and social forces through the easy and most popular tactics of suppression after declaring the organisation and uprising as Maoist generated and proclaiming a war against its own people in the name of law, order, peace, security and development.' The easiest path that the Indian State has found to crush democratic movements is by using the biggest fetish of democracy, 'the law'. The best way to suppress an uprising or revolution is to brand it as Maoist or Maoist-backed as the Maoists have been posited by the Indian State as the single largest threat to 'internal Security'. The 'civil society' of Odisha has partially been subsumed by brutal attacks of the State and partially been hegemonies in the typhoon ongoing 'development'. Therefore, after 70 years of India's independence, tribals of Koraput district in particular, and Odisha in general remain backward, landless and underdeveloped.