

## **Mining in Red Shadow; Asur under Threat**

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### **Introduction**

Rampant mining of bauxite is in full swing under 'red shadow' in the pat area of Netarhat in Jharkhand. The red rebels' active in this bauxite rich belt, keeping eyes on mining and providing protection to the contractors as well as private and Government servants to allow them function without hassles in return of levy. The red rebels have threatened to the innocent tribal people (local), who have obvious reasons to not to approach police, said a local tribesman of Asur tribe on anonymity. Ecological hazards causes by rampant mining, deforestation, naxal menace and other factors have made the Asur tribes, living in the lap of nature, endangered in Jharkhand.



Amid fears with naxal atrocities innocent tribes are forced to spend nights. “We remain in fear as the rebels usually come and threaten us with terrible penalty if we go against them or disobey their orders”, he said.

“For mining, we are deprived from our lands and forest”, he added.

Mining is on rise in our areas said a tribesman residing at Sakhupani village. And now mining officials are depriving us from work (daily wage) too. Our conditions are pathetic and we are finding hard for our livelihood”, he added.

Demanding employment (on daily wages basis) once we (youths) got vocal and stir-up at mining site, but they refused and all goes in-vain. At mid-night naxal cadres rushed to our houses and threatened to kill us if we go there for our demand. Before leaving they urged to keep distance from the mining site, alleged the youths of Asur tribe. “Red brigades suggested us to keep ourselves away from the mining site”, added the youths. Living in the dearth of basic amenities innocent Asura are forced to spent sleepless nights.

Instead of banning mining, the promotion of bauxite mining in our forest land leads us for forced eviction, said told Punam Asur a member of a primitive tribe of Sakhuapani in the pat area of Netarhat. The forests are not only the source of livelihood for us (Asur’s) but have an intricate relationship between tribals and the eco-system she said.

“The depleting forest resources with rampant mining are threatening imminent food security not for Asurs only but hits other tribal groups too”, added Punam. The destruction of forest cover has ruined our traditional livelihood occupation and the pursuit of alternative activities such as agriculture has been beset with problems.

“We have land but we cannot grow crops in absence of irrigation facilities. We have to depend upon monsoon”, she said. Studying under the Jharkhand Media Fellowship-2012 its’ found that there are countless constraints responsible for lower pace of Asur’s development process than desired. Some of the major constraints are — mining, destruction of forests, lack of awareness, protection of tribal rights and others.

### **MIDDLEMEN TAKE HUGE CUTS FROM TRIBALS**

Call it irony or outrageous that innocent Asura’s — an endangered primitive tribe facing exploitation by middlemen and non tribals amid Government’s sturdy initiatives.

Studying under Jharkahnd Media Fellowship-2012, it’s found that middlemen are playing as an exploitative force in the lives of poor innocent tribes, participating in fraudulent practices to maximize their own gains only. Middlemen taking huge cuts of 3 kgs grains from each of the tribal in the name of make it available nearby their hamlets, alleged Sumeet Asur and Raju Asur resident of Sakhuapani village in the pat area of Netarhat.

Notably, keeping in view the extremely low life standards of primitive tribe communities the Jharkhand Government has started Chief Minister's Special Food Security Scheme for the people of Primitive Tribes Groups. Under this scheme food grains (rice or wheat) are being made available free of cost to all families of Primitive Tribes. Under this scheme each family of Primitive Tribe will get 35 kg of food grains rice per month.

Middlemen are the main barriers in the way of the Asuras' access to Government sponsored welfare schemes in Jharkhand. Many of them are not getting the benefits of Antodaya Yojana despite having the Antodaya card. They are not getting grains regularly.

The 'Antyodaya Yojana' commenced in the year 2001 to provide food security to the poorest of the poor. The selected families are given a special Antyodaya card, with which they can claim grain from the fair price shops (FPS) or ration shops, the local outlet of the public distribution system (PDS).



This card entitles the selected family to 35 kgs of grains each month free. Despite having the 'Antyodaya Card' they are not getting rice regularly, though few of them got but it was not mentioned (written) in the card that when and how much rice had been given to them. The troubles of Asuras' are miserable as cunning people used to exploit them by various means. Dishonest middlemen, exploit the honesty of the tribals only for securing their own exorbitant profits.

On the subject of anonymity one Asur family reveals their pathetic tale, that how the middlemen fraudulently taken their money which was allotted them under Indira Awas Yojana. All funds allotted under scheme is exhausted and now only half built structure of their newly built house is erected in crunch of fund. Elaborating his agony Chamru Asur said: "We are facing tough time and always undergone lot of problems. Life has always been tough and unfair to us". Study found that without education and away from civilization, town people have deceived these tribals. Over the past many generations, these tribal people have remained as unskilled, daily wage laborers and their children also becoming laborers. There is neither development in their community nor improvement in their lives.

### **TRIBALS WANT 'TALKS', NOT 'VIOLENCE' TO ELIMINATE NAXALISM**

Living on the flank of bullets (fired by 'Cops' and 'red brigade') tribals' residing in the dense forests demanded 'talks' to solve the Naxal menace; 'not with the violence'.



Several violent incidents like landmine blasts, encounters and routine gunbattles among the cops and rebels created mayhem among the people residing in the hilly and densely forestry area of Jharkhand. Irked over the series of violent incidents occurred in the pasts, members of the Asur and Birjia Aadim JanJati Sangharsh Samiti- Gumla, Lohardaga, Laterhar and Garwha demanded 'talks' to solve the naxal issue.

Rebels are triggering violence to establish their supremacy while the cops aiming to root out naxalism, said Ajay Asur a member of the Samiti. In a bid to flush out naxalism few companies of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) are deployed across the state. "But naxalism cannot be eliminated with violence", said Heera Birjia.

We (tribals) are in horns of dilemma and forced to spend sleepless nights. Rebels always branding us as police informers and threaten us with terrible penalty, while the cops expect inputs on the Naxalite movement from us, said Heera.

"Uncertain with future, we along with our families either confined us in our homes or forced to migrate elsewhere for finding a new way for peaceful life", he added. Residing in the dearth of basic amenities tribals have to depend upon forest. Most of the tribals are forest dwellers use to collect Mahua flowers, Woods, Kendu leaves including others for their livelihood, are facing a threat to their lives. "Inside the forest we are facing stern threat from 'bullets'. No one knows when, where and how any bullet ends our life", said Punam Asur.



“If the same situation persists then we will be forced to migrate in search of livelihood”, added. Notably, about 28 percent of the Jharkhand’s population are tribals and 12 are primitive tribes also depends upon for their livelihood. Demanding earliest implementation of forest rights to the Sabha’ members of the samiti urges to the government for ‘Special Budgets to preserve their ancient culture.



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Denying, giving land Asur and Birjia and other tribal people residing in Netarhat area (Latehar) demanded immediate closer of Netarhat field firing range for peace.

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