

# The Plight of Koraput Oustees

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After 36 years of displacement still tribal people are struggling for their rights in Koraput district. In 1963 Govt. acquired 12000 acres of land in Sunabeda area of the Koraput district for establishment of HAL. At that time the HAL authorities asked for 8000 acres of land but the State govt. acquired 12000 acres. 10 villages were totally displaced and another 12 were partially affected villages. At that time 3639 people from 861 households were displaced. Out of total displaced ST were 480 households (2016 person), SC 232 households (998 people) general 149 households (625 person). In the absence of R and R policy in 1963 displaced people were not rehabilitated and had to be kept silent only with compensation. Most of the people went to the nearby area and settled on the govt. land as they didn't had any other choice.

Out of 12,000 acres finally HAL acquired 3000 acres of land and all the units of the HAL were not established in Sunabeda. Govt. distributed the rest of the 8000 acres to Central breeding farm OUAT research institution. Some of the land (around 50 acres) was also later given to a private English medium school.

During 1985 the oustees displaced for the second time by the Kolab dam later for the third time for the establishment of National Armament Depot (NAD).

Though the HAL and the OUAT research station acquired the vast land but hardly 50 % of the land was actually utilized.

Many people returned to their original place and cultivated the unutilized vacant land which is highly productive land of their own. In this process two villages were again re-established on their pre-displaced area with their original name Pangiguda, Talaput, from the year 1990, as they observed that the acquired land was fallow. They are living like aliens on their own land ( as it is acquired by the govt. though not in use).

They are cultivating the agricultural land. Many times the HAL authority has tried to vacate the land and to drive out the people by burning their houses. But people started resisting it and cultivating the land. Not only the villagers of Talpaut and Pangiguda but also from the nearby villages of Rajput Gram Panchayat are cultivating the unutilized land of the OUAT research station. Many people of the Rajput GP are affected oustees by both the OUAT and the Kolab Dam.

In this process a people's organization under the name and style "HAL DISPLACED SANGHA" came into existence and these people are struggling to get the legal entitlement on land, other facilities from HAL to adopt the villages and employment provision from HAL. The protest of the people's organization is democratic and peaceful in nature but the HAL authority and the district administration is always trying to suppress them through its actions.

## **COBRA BATTALION**

In the year 2008 the Govt. of Orissa decided for establishment of COBRA battalion on the 301 acres of unutilized land of the OUAT research station where the displaced people have their agricultural land. From the beginning the people of 32 villages from Rajput GP( similiguda block) and the people of the 8 villages

(now under Sunabeda NAC) are protesting against the establishment of COBRA battalion.

Their demand is that as the land was acquired for the establishment of HAL and it was never utilized for the said purpose so the land should be re-distributed to the displaced people. There are around 20,000 people mainly tribal and dalits are against the establishment of COBRA and want land rights. And the said COBRA battalion can be established at some other place.

Trilochan Muduli, a Paroja tribal youth is heading HAL displaced Sangha and also a part of now land rights struggle of tribal people.

In the first week of April, 2009 some of the revenue officials went for the demarcation of the 3001 acres. Around 500 people gathered there and protested. Immediately the officials informed the police and 16 vehicles of force reached to the spot. But the people did not allow for the measurement of the land. On the same day Sunabeda police called Trilochan Muduli to the police station for discussion. But when he reached at Sunabeda PS he was taken to Koraput. After hearing this news around 1000 people gathered at Sunabeda PS and demanded for the release of Triochan. Because of the pressure from the people he was released on same night around 12 o clock. But the FIR was lodged against him along with 12 people. After that the general election was in Orissa and the police remained silent. In the month of May again building materials were stored on the location. Around 2000 people opposed it and destroyed the materials. After that two persons were arrested and they remain for 15 days in Jail and later released on bail.

Other 14 people tried for the bail from High court and avoided the police arrest and torture. Trilochan Muduli was one among them. Recently they got the direction from the High court to surrender in the lower court to obtain bail. But the Police planned not to allow Trilochan for the surrender but to arrest him. By all means Trilochan reached at Koraput on 17th of July in disguise of a woman. The police present in front of the court tried to arrest him. In this process there was scuffle with police and Trilochan became unconscious on the spot. The president of the Koraput Bar association protested and he was produced before the justice. The bail was granted to him and other people.

Immediately a fresh FIR was lodged in the Koraput town PS against Trilochan and other 40 people and Trilochan was sent to jail. There are GR case no 345/2009 section 307,332,507 against Trilochan now. Trilochan Muduli was targeted as he was spreading the agitation against the HAL and the COBRA BATALIAN for their land rights.

In Koraput even the Machhkund Dam displaced people are still struggling from the year 1950. It seems that there is no end to miseries of the displaced people in district but day by day another problem is cropping up against them. □□□