

Jharkhand is still Bihar

Gladson Dungdung

The media is known as the fourth realm of democracy though it has not been mentioned in the Constitutional or legal document. Since, the Media plays a role of watchdog (free, fair and fearless) therefore, it has the legitimacy of being called the fourth realm of Democracy. However, in the era of globalization, the media is in the hands of few vested interest groups. Today, the Jharkhandi media is one of the crucial examples of how it is being used to protect the vested interest in the state. It is obvious that since the creation of the state, Jharkhandi Media has been battling hard to ensure the corporate interest in the state. After the order of the Jharkhand High Court to enforce the Chhota Nagpur Tenancy (CNT) Act in the state, there has been upheaval in the state. The pro- and anti-CNT Act movement started in the state and the Jharkhandi Media also became a party to the anti-CNT Act Movement.

There are three kinds of people who reside in Jharkhand—Adivasis (Indigenous People), Moolvasis (Local Settler non-Adivasis) and Pravasis (Outsiders). According to the section 46 (A) of the Chhota Nagpur Tenancy (CNT) Act 1908, one Adivasi can transfer his land only to another Adivasi resident of the same police station with the permission of the Deputy Commissioner (DC). Similarly, the Section 46 (B) of the CNT Act states that the SCs and OBCs can also transfer their land to their community people within the area of district with the permission of the DC. Since, the CNT Act had been propagated as a safeguard of only the Adivasis therefore; the land of the SC and OBC people was transferred without any prohibition and the Adivasis' land was also transferred by misuse of the Act. But after the Court's order the land transferred of Adivasis, Dalits and OBCs was stopped in the state, which hit the real estate business, illegal land grab by the corporate houses and illegal land transfer to the outsider individual. Since, the Media has direct interest in the real estate business, industrialisation and individual land transfer to the outsiders therefore, it became a party to the anti-CNT Act movement.

How media is party to the anti-CNT Act movement? There are some cases, where the media persons had made arguments with the leaders of pro-CNT Act after the press conferences or protest programmes. Some TV news channels did live coverage of some protests organised by the anti-CNT Act group "Jharkhand Bachao Sangharsh Morcha" led by Uday Shankar Ojhar, Niraj Kumar and Bacha Singh. But the same TV News channels did not give much space to the pro-CNT Act protest organised by "Jharkhand Janadhikar Manch" led by Bandhu Tirkey, "Adivasi Chatra Sangh" led by Chamra Linda and "Jharkhand Bachao Andolan" led by Salkhan Murmu. The News papers also played dubious role by giving prominent spaces to the anti-CNT Act protests and special news and views were published against of the CNT Act but the same Newspapers neglected the pro-CNT Act protests. There are some leading Newspapers, who had even engaged special correspondents to find out the cases of violation

of CNT Act by the Adivasis and Moolvasis officers, Bureaucrats and Politicians but at the same time, the same newspapers didn't publish any story or list of the outsiders who have grabbed the Adivasis or Moolvasis' land illegally.

There are some obvious reasons for the media being party to the anti-CNT Act movement. Firstly, the Builders who are engaged in the real estate business in Jharkhand also run TV News Channels in the state. For example, Bihar origin Builder Sanjay Chaudhary runs the real estate business in Jharkhand known as the "Kashish Developers", who has been developing a 'SAIL CITY' at Pundag near Ranchi, also owns TV News Channel "Kashish News". Interestingly, the green land of Adivasis and OBCs was acquired in the name of "SAIL Cooperative Society" because the Builder cannot buy land under the CNT Act. The said Builder is also using local police and middle men in acquiring rest of the land for the SAIL CITY. The other Builders, who didn't own TV News Channels or Newspapers, invest huge amount of money in the media in forms of advertisements. Therefore, the Builders have been doing all kinds of power politics to make sure that their business does not get hampered. They also use the media to manipulate the public opinions in favour of them. It is obvious that without support of the Builders, many local news channels will be shut down therefore, the Media has been batting hard for the real estate business in the name of development of the state because closing down of the real estate business will have direct impact in revenue loss of the Media houses.

Secondly, the media has a clear corporate business interest in the name of development of Jharkhand. For instance, a Jharkhand based wire rope manufacturing company the "Usha Martin Limited" runs mining projects in Saranda Forest and elsewhere of Jharkhand is also the owner of a leading Hindi Newspaper of Jharkhand "Prabhat Khabar". The "Prabhat Khabar" is one of the leading media campaigners for industrialisation in Jharkhand and also carries a campaign against CNT Act with the intension to serve special interest for the outsiders in Jharkhand. The "Prabhat Khabar" has published a series of stories regarding the violation of CNT Act by the Adivasis and Moolvasis. The paper has also published a series of lists of some Adivasi / Moolvasi Govt. Officers, Bureaucrats and Politicians who have purchased land by violating the CNT Act but the same Newspaper didn't publish any such list of the Pravasias (outsiders) who have grabbed the land of Adivasis and Moolvasis illegally. Why? Can any media house be biased like this? Similarly "Dainik Bhashkar" that runs many mining projects in Chhatisgarh and other places, has launched its Jharkhand edition a year before, eyeing the minerals of Jharkhand, has also been advocating for the corporate model of development, which is against Jharkhandi culture.

Thirdly, the composition of the Jharkhandi media is self-explanatory to rest of the story. Nearly 90 percent Journalists, engaged in Jharkhandi media houses come from non-Jharkhand origin upper caste. The Hindi dailies and Hindi News Channels are completely dominated either by the Bihar or UP origin upper caste Journalists and the English dailies are under the clutch of either West Bengal or South-Indian origin upper caste. Similarly, most of the Builders, Industrialists and individual land grabbers are also outsiders, who have direct or indirect association with the Media. Hence, the Media persons bat hard to protect the interest of the

outsiders. Though, Jharkhand is known as an Adivasi state but hardly any Adivasi is found in the media. There are few Adivasi and Moolvasi Journalists at the last rung of the Media, who have also been struggling for their survival therefore; they are not able to influence the media to protect the interest of the state.

Fourthly, though Jharkhand is a separate state in the political map of India but the media continues to treat the state as part of Bihar. There is a tradition of joint TV News channels “Jharkhand-Bihar” in the state. The major regional News channels like Sahara Samay, ETV, Kashis News, News 11, Maurya TV, etc, run joint News Channels for “Bihar-Jharkhand”. The print media even goes beyond. The every Newspaper carries special “Bihar” page in its all editions in Jharkhand. Hence, the people of Bihar origin residing in Jharkhand get news of the both states in the same price and the Jharkhandi people also have to pay the price for them and forced to read the news of Bihar. The most stunning thing is the same Newspapers do not publish special “Jharkhand” page in their Bihar’s editions though a large number of Jharkhandi people live in Bihar for jobs. Why? Is it not true that the Jharkhandi Media serve special interest of Bihar in Jharkhand? Should media do anything like this merely to serve its business interest? Is media selling a product in the market or playing a role of a watchdog in the society?

Fifthly, most of the Media’s consumers are the Pravasis (outsiders) therefore the media protects the interest of its consumers rather than Jharkhand and its people. The conclusion of the media campaigns is that the CNT Act should be either repealed or amended so that the outsiders can buy the land of the Adivasis and Moolvasis in Jharkhand. The media has been attempting to humiliate the Adivasis with the intention to alienate them from their land stating that if one Adivasi sells his land to another Adivasi means selling land at the rate of garbage therefore all the Adivasis should sell their lands to the non-Adivasis if they want to become a developed one. They are advocating to legalise the illegal encroachments by the outsiders in HEC (Ranchi), BSL (Bokaro) and Dhanbad, etc and also legalise the illegally grabbed land by the outsiders under the CNT Act.

The question is where is the media ethics gone in Jharkhand? Why Jharkhandi media is biased instead of being free, fair and fearless? And are the media houses becoming merely the product seller non-ethical companies whose intension is only to earn profit at any cost? Since the inception of the state, the Jharkhandi Media has been carrying on anti-Jharkhand campaign to serve the corporate interest and special interest of the Pravasis (outsiders), and the Media’s anti-CNT campaign is merely an addition to its anti-Jharkhandi campaign. The present role of Jharkhandi media is not only against Jharkhandi people but it is against media ethics, and democracy as a whole.

□□□