

'The Enemy'

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In early 90's Indian political atmosphere was surcharged with Dunkel Draft and New Economic Policy (NEP). Congress leaders like Narasimha Rao, Manmohan Singh and Pranab Mukherjee were advocating NEP, and many other political forces were opposing it from a national development perspective. In 1992 a controversial MoU was signed between Government of Orissa and Utkal Alumina International Limited (UAIL), a joint venture of multinational companies like Indal of India (later submerged with Hindalco – Birla owned subsidiary), Tata, Norsk Hydro of Norway and Alcan of Canada for a bauxite mining and alumina plant project in Kashipur tribal areas. For the first time in post-NEP period foreign companies directly entered into the alumina-bauxite sector. None of the mass organisations, city based social groups or any political party though aware about it raised this issue, rather kept silent and media at that time welcomed such joint ventures as bringing 'development'.

At the same time L K Advani started his *Rathyatra* for construction of the Ram Mandir, and it created numerous riots in its wake. It ended with demolition of the Babri Masjid and post-demolition riots nation wide. Several democratic forces objected to Advani's voting game plan. But Narasimha Rao, the then prime minister of India and president of Congress Party remained evasive on the demolition issue.

During the last fifteen years the entire debate has got shifted from economic globalisation to religious fundamentalism in the mainstream political circles and in the media as well. In 2004-05 there was little debate in major political circles and in media on globalisation. It all focused on religious fundamentalism. India's ruling classes, both from the 'right' and the 'left' all have accepted the same economic plan under globalisation. Whether Congress or BJP, all have justified the dictatorial attitude of World Bank. BJP tried to prove the success of its economic policies through 'India shining' campaign during its tenure, and the new slogan of Congress now is of 'India super power'.

If anything most of the tribal areas are going to be affected by globalisation. But the mainstream political process highlights conversion as the main issue as if poor Christian dalits and Muslim traders are the real enemy of Hindu tribals. Whether a tribal is Hindu or not is a debatable topic. The ruling governments the world over have attempted to convert all marginalised communities into a mono religion through official pressures. Tribals in Pakistan and Afghanistan are Muslims and tribals of African countries are Christians because the ruling governments belong to these religions. India may speak of secularism, but its radio, television, official holidays, ganesh puja and saraswati puja , durga puja in schools and census data collection all force tribals to identify themselves as Hindus. In post-independence scenario Congress is as responsible as the BJP for converting tribals into Hindus. BJP is merely carrying on the Congress legacy.

Now the issues like fundamentalism and conversion have overshadowed the impact of globalisation in rural India. It is inhuman for anyone to tolerate the state sponsored massacre of Muslims in Gujarat riot. But one can also not ignore the fact that even after such a pogrom foreign investors continue to take interest in Gujarat. Narmada dam was not stopped. Congress and its allies came to power in New Delhi by making a political

case out of Gujarat riots. Later Rajiv Gandhi Foundation headed by Sonia Gandhi declared that 'Gujarat is most favourable state for foreign investment'. However when lakhs of tribals are getting wiped out due to big projects like Narmada, Kashipur (Orissa), Coca Cola (Kerala), Jindal (Jharkhand and Andhra Pradesh), Enron (Maharashtra), etc.; when lakhs of textile workers, health workers, contract workers in mining and other plants, peasants (particularly in Rajasthan, Tamilnadu and Karnataka and Orissa) etc. are opposing the terms of globalisation this has not become an issue at the national level.

The late nineties saw a lot of projects signed in tribal areas. Specifically in Orissa six mega-projects were in lead for just bauxite mining, all with the involvement of multinational companies. Orissa has nearly seventy percent of the total bauxite deposit in India, which is again thirteen percent of world deposit. Aluminium produced from bauxite is second only to petroleum as a valuable mined commodity. Starting from aviation industry to weapon industry including nuclear fusion process (for making bombs), all need aluminium. Pentagon sources disclose that aluminium is going to be the determining factor in world weapons markets in the coming decades. Up to the eighties it was Ghana, Jamaica etc supplying aluminium to first world countries. Now Indonesia, Philippines and India are the major suppliers. Has this growth of aviation and weapon industry any use for tribals? Has it any use for any of the sensible communities? But tribals in Orissa are being forced to give up their lives, livelihood and land for national "development".

Several multinational companies are in line to start their bauxite mining and aluminium projects in Orissa. Prominent among them are Vedanta of UK, Alcan of Canada, Hindalco of India, and L&T. Not only in Orissa tribals of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Chhatisgada with huge bauxite deposits are going to face the same tragedy. Besides several other mining companies like Rio Tinto of UK, Nippon of Japan, BHP Billiton of Australia, DeBeers of South Africa, POSCO of South Korea have signed MoUs with the governments of Orissa, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Chhatisgada, and Jharkhand. They all want to set up their mining and extraction plants in tribal areas in these states. The MNCs with their mega capacity projects will plunder and finish the natural resources in a very short time. Because of their high tech mechanical process employment opportunities will be less. Their environmental record is also poor, it is questionable even by Indian standards.

The new mining projects along with other forest based interventions are an imminent danger to all tribal communities. The new environment buzz-word is carbon sink projects. The first world countries responsible for depleting ozone layer seek to compensate this through "forestry" projects in the third world. The recent Supreme Court judgment for eviction of tribals from reserved forest and subsequent new Tribal Bill with its original form (not conferring forest rights to tribal communities), amendment on Environmental Impact Assessment guidelines brought in by the Ministry of Environment and Forest department clearly speak that Indian rulers require the eviction of tribals so that forest areas are made into an impermeable enclosure. The tribal communities are to be alienated from their lands and forests.

The presence of these MNCs only increases power corruption because of their financial and political might, and their ability to buy political influence. Whether national political parties like Congress and BJP or regional parties like TDP, BJD, AIADMK and JD, all have the same views on globalisation. They are all keen on inviting

the MNCs to their regions. This is one reason regional political parties align with national political parties even when they have a 'political difference of opinion'.

The Kashipur struggle could be seen as an example of the real face of democracy and emergency in today's India. The fight of the tribals for the land and livelihood has brought in its wake severe police torture and oppression. In December 2000 when police firing at Maikanch in Kashipur area killed three tribals no one thought the struggle would survive. But the determination of the tribals ensured that the company (UAIL) despite police protection could not start work. The Justice PK Mishra Commission (PK Mishra was a sitting judge in Orissa High Court and later transferred to Madras High Court) enquiring into the Maikanch firing did not pin the responsibility on any police officer (though it condemned the firing). It gave a clean chit to the company "because the area is agriculturally backward so the industry is inevitable in Kashipur region". Judiciary is not free from bias and the conviction that only industry can bring development.

An American agency BPD (Business Partners for Development) formed by World Bank with active cooperation from government, NGOs and corporates for promotion of business of MNCs, got involved with the process. Since December, 2004 when second phase of repression started in Kashipur, every next day was more horrifying than the previous day. The Orissa State Armed Police, CRPF and Indian Reserve Battalion conducted regular flag marches inside the villages and several activists were picked up from their fields, market place, and their own home. When the state has several other laws to act against crime and there is no necessity for TADA or POTA, and the authorities justify the Indian Penal Code for checking 'crime'. But IPC is equally draconian as POTA because activists arrested under IPC are still languishing in jails charged with false cases of arson, dacoity, and attempt to murder. On a false FIR police can arrest anybody; the local judiciary, totally supportive of the mining companies, is least bothered about granting bail. The judiciary neither rejects the bail petition nor grants bail. By its inaction it allows the illegal detention to continue. All in the district administration, police, judiciary and political parties are partners in supporting the company. The main political parties including Congress (opposition party in Orissa) and BJD and BJP (ruling combine) have formed an all-party committee to smoothen the process of mining. The company sponsors these leaders to organise pro-mining rallies in the project area.

Urban middle class people represented in the media, judiciary, bureaucracy and in Indian politics hold the view that tribals may be allowed to die but the country should progress. They represent self-interest that equates their own benefits from globalisation with national interests. Whether it is job opportunities in multinationals, assignments in foreign agencies, education abroad, ad revenues for the media - the real beneficiaries from globalisation are this narrow segment. This is the self-seeking definition of the progress and national interest that they advocate.

Right now India produces 6.5 million tons of aluminium and its own consumption is just 5.5 million tons as per 2002 business data. Nalco (National Aluminium Company - a public sector company formed in 80's) alone produces 4.2 million tons of aluminium. Due to Nalco project the local ground water has been polluted severely by the ash pond and red mud pond. The factory residue contains carbon dioxide, silicon etc. that pollute both air and water (like any other aluminium plant). The main source of determination to launch Kashipur struggle came in the nineties from knowledge of the bitter experiences from Nalco-its settlement package, environment pollution, noncompliance

of promises (like providing jobs), impact on tribal life and culture etc. Nalco is just 70 km away from Kashipur in Orissa. The experience of Nalco is not unique. It is similar to that of every big project in independent India.

The exploitative nature of the modern state and all its institutions has been clearly exposed. There is a common thread in the state's handling of the '84 riots, Gujarat riots, Coca Cola struggle in Kerala and people's struggles in Manipur. The attitude of the judiciary is evident from its various judgments, whether on Narmada, Kashipur, or Balco. But NGOs and their funding agencies still claim the possibility of a reformist space within this oppressive system. This attitude of NGOs is against the interest of people's struggles. It weakens their movements, allows for cooption and facilitates multinational penetration. *~~~~~*