



RESEARCH ARTICLE

DISPLACED BY DEVELOPMENT: CASE STUDIES OF POSCO MOVEMENT OF ODISHA,
GAGATSINGHPUR DISTRICT PARADEEP

*Dr. Ranjita Behera

Department of Women's Studies, Women's Studies Research Center, Berhampur University, Odisha, India

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ABSTRACT

The controversy surrounding the POSCO project has clearly emerged as a struggle around material issues of livelihood and the economic future of local communities in coastal Jagatsinghpur and the Khandadhar hills of Keonjhar and Sundergerh. The local community in the three gram panchayats of Dinkia, Nuagaon and Gada Kujanga clearly see the agrarian economy, based primarily around betel vine, as one that assures them a future. However, the Government of Orissa claims that the POSCO project, among others, is a crucial part of the economic advancement of the State. Large industrial projects such as POSCO are often seen as valuable to a local economy because of the employment they generate. Both sides – those opposed to the POSCO project and those promoting it argue their positions based on claims centered around the local economy. Therefore, there is an inherent comparison that is already in place. When those promoting the project argue for it, the underlying message is always that this will benefit the local community and its economy, and therefore the fears that are being expressed are faulty. On the other hand, those opposing the project express the fear that the new economy that will be imposed on them is bound to make their lives worse.

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INTRODUCTION

For nine long years, the villagers have been resisting India's biggest FDI project, the setting up of the \$12 billion POSCO steel complex, mine and dedicated port, on coastal land which presently provides livelihood to nearly 22,000 people. More recently, since January 2013 as the state's armed police forces have intensified their siege of the three Gadkujan, Dinkia and Nuagao village panchayats, the epicenter of the resistance, the villagers have been staging a 'sit in' to block access, resisting the forcible acquisition of their land, and demanding the withdrawal of the proliferating camps of armed police from their villages. In May 2013, the armed police broke their defences and arrested Abhay Sahoo, the leader of the PPSS. Despite the government established National Green Tribunal's directive that the conditions for environmental clearance have not been fulfilled, the Odisha administration has stepped up the bulldozing of vines and forcible land acquisition, using armed police to coerce resisting villagers. The South Korean steel giant wants 4004 acres of land, land on which the villagers grow cash crops such as betel leaves, cashew and paddy, supplementing it with fishing in the coastal waters. According to land revenue officials 3566 acres is government land and 438 acres is private land while 471 families are affected.

*Corresponding author: Dr. Ranjita Behera,

Department of Women's Studies, Women's Studies Research Center, Berhampur University, Odisha, India.

This assessment ignores the reality that a majority of the population that lives off the land is landless (a significant number are long term migrated settlers from West Bengal with homestead titles) and earn by fishing and setting up betel vines on encroached government land. Independent estimates indicate the affected population to be 3350 households or 22,000. A third of the population belong to the depressed 'scheduled castes'. The Odisha government has obtained rights to more than 2000 acres by 2011 and wants 700 acres of land near Gobindpur village which the resisting villagers claim are forest lands and therefore under the Forest Rights Act. As forest dwellers, they are empowered to deny the acquisition of that land. Beetle vines have been bulldozed and the standing crops destroyed, arrests have been made and violence has escalated. A total of 11 villages in these three gram panchayats are affected by the POSCO project. The project has disrupted the social cohesion of the communities dividing people into either pro POSCO or anti POSCO villages. The Odisha government has committed to 'facilitate' the setting up of the steel complex, as a part of its agenda for 'developing' the state. The villagers of the affected area have previously experienced the devastation and the resulting mass displacement all around them in the wake of similar 'development' projects. Women have been at the centre of this sustained resistance against the imposition of a development model that they denounce as anti people. The narratives draw attention to women's alertness to the everyday signs that warn of a devastation approaching and

how they spontaneously banded together in opposition even before the CPI leader Abhay Sahoo (Babu) came to spearhead the struggle in 2005. "The day the POSCO Company came and floated the huge balloons in our sky and a hole was bored in the ground near our village Patana, water levels in all our nearby ponds and wells rose alarmingly. The women were selflessly committed to saving land and livelihood and safeguarding the future of their children. Moreover, several women expressed concerns about the gender consequences of the influx of 'outsiders. Women constituted the front line of the blockade. At the signal of a threatened incursion by the POSCO men backed by armed police and state officials, the women would leave everything and for months on end camp out, living in tents constituting along with the children a human blockade braving lathi charges, brutal assaults and rubber bullets. Seemingly over these years, the women have overcome the fear of physical violence. The armed police have not hesitated to brutally assault women as they formed a human barricade blocking the entry of POSCO men and the armed police. Women have been bold and assertive in their confrontation with local elected representatives and the police including roughing up the district chairwoman, for which they have been charged with attempted rape and murder. They have repeatedly held the police hostage and prevented them from arresting men whose names are included in omnibus charge sheets that indict groups of men. About 250 criminal 'cases' have been filed by the police indicting 1500 of the residents, out of which 340 are women. As a result activist women are constrained from venturing out of the 'security' of the resistance site lest the police arrest them. Despite urgent health needs, the women dared not seek medical assistance. Even when they are able to reach these public facilities they are denied access by local authorities who tell them to "go to their leaders" for assistance. Inspired by the spontaneous naked protest of the Manipur women against the Assam Rifles (2004), Abhay Sahoo, the PPSS leader, suggested this to the women and alerted the media.

On two occasions, in 2008 and 2013 the women stripped themselves to drive away the POSCO people who had come with the police to Dinkia village. Most active women are in the age group of 30 to 50 years. They either have young daughters or daughters-in-law to take care of the household chores, so that the women can be full time anti POSCO workers. Children are the first line of defence and while as a strategy it has been effective, it raises uncomfortable questions. In this confrontation, the police, the legal system and other government agencies have become positioned as a source of insecurity and oppression for the women. The demand is for the withdrawal of the police from their villages. However, there is a curious contradiction. Whereas, in moments of confrontation, women take pride in their defiance of the police, in more reflective moments, the women realise "the police are just the paid servants of government following government instructions. On occasions, the police have confessed that they are with us and we should not stop. So whenever we hold the police hostage in the village, we treat them well". For the women of the movement, state law and order institutions are deligitimised as they are seen as part of a corrupted system which has sacrificed the interests of citizens and sold out to globalised corporate interests. It is important to acknowledge that the anti POSCO movement leaders have been very successful in mobilising women and keeping the morale of the protest high. Women have displayed tremendous courage of conviction, and this is not only because of leaders like Abhay

Sahoo but because they are determined to hold on to their source of livelihood and the ancestral land. Women believe they have the largest stake in the movement and that has made for a selfless commitment to the struggle despite brutal assaults and escalating violence by the armed police, government agencies and POSCO men. A democratic government that refuses to respect the constitutional entitlement of people, especially women, who are the most honoured owners of the land in terms of how they have maintained the sanctity of the land and its sustainability, in fact has no legitimacy to rule. The anti POSCO movement members including women and children have used their fundamental right to challenge this refusal. Several such movements are ongoing all across the country and in a majority of cases, it is the strong presence and voice of women that stands witness to their rightful demand for justice including the demand to stand strong on their homestead. "As feminists, the question to ask is whether the effort of the left or any other political formation to use women as front liners, can lead to the gendering of the movement? More often it leads to instrumentalising women for its own end. In the anti POSCO movement, women are not seen as the architect of the movement as they are rarely included in the decision making processes. The strategies women employ are based on their memories of extreme suffering and unimaginable hope. The leadership recognizes this magic both in terms of the undeterred commitment of women as well as their practiced subservience to men whether as fathers, husbands or leaders. This is a familiar patriarchal script where women do not need to learn to follow. They, in fact, follow with full faith and trust. Men exploit this quality and find women to be the most reliable strategists and followers. " Moreover, the widely held belief that issues of life and livelihood are more important and issues of inequality related to gender and caste can be taken up once the economic issue is addressed, is often an obstacle in raising equality issues within the movement. The fact that women accept that the issue of domestic violence is secondary to the struggle for land and livelihood, is reflective of the perspective of leaders of such political movements.

Displaced by posco case studies

Following Case Studies were compiled from the data being collected from the field through personal interview and group discussion method.

Name: Manarama Khatua ,Village: Dinkia

Manarama Khatua is 22 years old lady who lives in the village Dinkia of Erasama block which comes under Gadakujanga police station of Jagatsinghpur district. She joined the movement in the year 2008. When POSCO came in 2005, many villagers had a fight with the police within the movement period. Mr. Maochi Ram Khatua and Mrs Srabani Khatua. Her parents used to discuss about the movement at home and she was inspired by their discussion. Then in the year 2008 she joined the movement along with her mother. Because she was a lady, POSCO supporter people wanted to defame her by spreading a scandal that she was a kept of Mr. Abhay Sahu. It was a totally false matter as reported by Monorama Khatua and Mr. Abaya Sahu. As she was blamed the unmarried Monarama is yet to get a match for her marriage. She is more than 36 years old. She is very happy about her position as POSCO cannot grab Dinkia village. She has given her life to protect Paddy field, fish catch, battle cultivation (Dhana, Pana, Mina) which is an epitome of their identity of livelihood.

In the year 2009 many women had been beaten by police. She had suffered 'Lathicharge' many times from the police. There have been warrants against 250 women and 340 women had gone to jail as reported by Ms. Khatua while taking interview. Cases are there against her but she was never caught by police because police are restricted to enter into her village. There are as many as 42 cases in her name. The movement affected significantly her personal life. When the movement started she was studying 10th standard. She wanted to be probably educated and wanted to go to college for higher study. But she joined the movement and could not go to college as police were searching her. She had gone through the phases where the police had taken her father, mother, brother to jail on false cases. That time she felt what is education for her? Her 10th qualification is as equal to P. G qualification. She reported, "If I can fight for my mother land and save her, then there is nothing good in education as compare to my mother land". With this thought, she joined the movement. The people have never thought of negative and they are in fair side with positive thinking as reported by her. Monarama narrated her participation in movement from the beginning. In 2005 July first protest movement against was started for the first time in Balitutha. In the first November 29th 2007 again for three months a continuous movement was agitated.

In October 2008, Abhay Sahoo was arrested and since then the police had filed 42 cases against Manorama. She has been hiding since then and not going outside the village. In every movement 'lathicharge' was used to hide herself by climbing tree before the police come. She told us that, if they catch her, she has no chance of release. To make the women's movement weak, they put 'lathicharge' and took them to jail for months together. The company has not shown any bad behavior towards us as we have not given any opportunity for showing bad behavior towards women being reported by her. In the words of her, "The political parties used to help us but sometimes, due to fight among them those help stopped to come". Now CPI is with them. The leaders of the party CPI and different outside organizations come and join with them in the movement. People from different age groups participated in the movement together. Initially, men used to stand in front of the movement but when the police arrested most of the men protester, their movement became weak. Then they decided that women would stand in front and men would be in back. But nobody initiated to lead and everyone had said "no" for the leadership. She said she had strong desire and Abhay Sahu and others push was to lead the women's movement, and since then I lead the movement". All men were happy by watching her leadership as mentioned by her. She has never thought of joining politics through movement as she earlier had developed anti politics feeding.

She does not believe in the words of politicians as reported by her. She is not able to go outside because of these politicians. She reported, "Today, our chief minister doesn't even see how we are living, what the situation here is and how women get 'lathicharge' in the movement". She also said, "He has sent POSCO here to make the company but not interested to visit our place". She questioned, "Is it the main agenda of politics to torture us by giving order to take out everything from the villagers?" That's why, even she had interest in the politics; she wants to participate in the movement for saving her homeland. "We don't oppose to the company but we will not make to start the company", she said, an activist of anti POSCO Movement.

Name: Hemalata Malik, Village: Dhinkia

Hemalata Mallikis 35 years old schedule caste community of Dhinkia village of Erasama block in Jagatsinghpur district. "When we heard about the POSCO project, we had meetings in our village and I was there at meeting", she said. She reported, "The next day we all went for the "Andolona" and I involved myself in the "Andolona". She stood in front and led the movement. She was beaten by Police Lathicharge. But due to lathicharge I was more motivated towards the movement", she reported. She played one of lead role for the movement against the POSCO project. She left all her personal interest and work in order to participate in the movement. She informed that everyone in the movement had voluntarily involved themselves. "We have intention to help each other in the movement", She told. She also said that the all the members of POSCO Pratirodh Sangram Samiti (PPSS) would come forward to help if anyone fell into difficult situation.

She joined the movement in 2008. In 2009 November, she along with her more than one hundred women was arrested and put them in jail around five days. Their children were alone at home and were crying as their mothers were in jail. After five days, when all of them were released from the jail, again they started the movement. She was put in false cases during the jail conviction. She reported us that the police had not shown any wrong behavior to her. She told that Communist party of India (CPI) had helped them during the movement. "Our movement will go on until the POSCO leave and I will be in movement until it goes", She said. When people of here village heard all-out installation of POSCO project and the proposed induced displacement of villages in the area. She was an activist of anti POSCO movement and attached to Abhaya sahu. She was one of the care activists. Since 2005 she was targeted by the police in their heat list. Till 2014 she is in the list. She along with other care activists cannot go beyond Balitutha, a market area of the village. She along with all comrades is contented with in this area even for educational and hospital facility or need. Her children even are not allowed to go beyond Balitutha even for educational purpose. She was always found at the front of the movement and thus faced lathicharge, tear gas and tortured by the police. Lady police have given them foot blow doling movement time. She has left all her social and family activities of life to a secondary position but gave primary importance to participation in the movement. It is became the very tiny economy of her family was it threat. Her panbaras, peddy crop, CPR comes along with her hones were proposed to be displaced. Because of their strong protest and active participation in the movement; not a single home or agricultural field has not been either displaced or grabbed. When police lathi charged her and other women comrades, this is the thing which made them more decided to fight against POSCO project. Guni Jena is 38 age year old of village Gobindpur in Panchayat Dhinkia of Jagatsinghpur district. She belongs to OBC Caste.

When she heard that villagers would lose the Bettlevine (panabaraj) and agricultural land which was their main source during our discussion of income, she decided to participated in the movement as she reported. She was scared of her children's future as she might lose her major source of income. She joined the movement in 2008, and was with this movement from the very beginning. She said, "Our positive factor is our unity and we have good understanding among us". She had taken the leadership and joined the movement with

Manorama Khatua, Sushma Swain, Bachani Biswla. “Whenever there was “lathicharge”, they faced the police and they didn’t allow Manorama Khatua to be caught”. The police was mainly looking for Manorama khatua in order to weaken the women’s movement against the POSCO project. She was never caught by the police due to the unity and strong strategy of the relief force. When every time when there is any upsurge in movement, police come and start lathicharge, and scold very badly to women. She said that police had made a lot of false cases against men and women of their village. She informed us that CPI leaders had helped them in every movement. Outside organization, socialist came and had joined with there in the movement. She said fought for truth, she is not stealing, and she is not cheating to anyone, she was fighting for his mother land, for her livelihood and for their sustainability. She reported that the help of men in the movement was always with women. Her husband gave her confidence to go for leadership and her husband was also a leader in the movement. She informed that she would like to join politics if possible. Her motive is to remove all false police cases against them, if she wins even in politics. She cleared that she would continue the movement till the POSCO project is there. She said, “Till our death we will fight for our mother land and that will continue until POSCO leaves our mother land”.

Name: Bachani Biswal, Village: Dhinkia

Bachani Biswal is 45years old women belong to Odia castes and from class family of Dhinka villagers. Banchai Biswal joined the protest movement against POSCO in 2008. She reported us that when initially POSCO came to Jagatsinghpur. They arranged a public meeting. All village people had attended the meeting. In the meeting, POSCO had demanded 4000 acres of land and there was a fight in the meeting. The people of the project area had organized a meeting after the POSCO’s public meeting at night. In the meeting, they had discussed about how to start the movement, how not to allow police to enter into the area. Then police came to the area and movement began. She participated in the movement since then. To save the mother land and Bettlevine (panabaraj) she had joined the movement. She told us that police had arrested and lathicharged on her and the people involved in the movement without any reason. Police had scolded the children. She shouted, “What mistake we have made that company is trying to snatch away our livelihood, to fight for our livelihood is it a mistake, Police were beating the people and lathicharg the protestors with the concern of company’s officer. Instead of downing their moral, that gave them more motivation towards the movement. She had participated in all the movement during the period of 2008-2013. On May 15 2010, hundred protestors got injured at Balittha entry point due to police lathicharge. On this day police had arrested ten women protestors. She was also one of the women protestors got arrested by the police. The police put her along with other ladies in the jail around five days as she reported. Police had filed case on five hundred women protestors. As per the interview with her, she reported us police not beaten them in the jail. Police were trying to convince them to drop themselves from the movement in exchange of job, money etc. She informed us that CPI was helping them in the movement. She got the leadership but all of them decided to give the leadership to ms Manorama Khatua. There are people who still support the POSCO project and those people are against all women protestors. She had never thought of joining politics in life.

She lauded, “Movements is going on and if will carry on, until the people of Dhinkia pachayat are alive, we will fight for our livelihood, POSCO will never make the company here”.

Name: Satyabati Swani, Village: Dhinkia

The people from the three panchayat of Erasama block that is Gadakujang, Dhinkia, Nuagaon had started the movement against the POSCO project. Afterwards, many had dropped themselves from the movement. Some of were from Gonindapur villages, Dhinkia panchayat. But she is still in the movement and fighting for her mother land. She had also joined the movement in 2008. She participated the movement against the POSCO project to save her livelihood and mother land. She reported us that the movement started in July 7, 2005. She informed about some major protests which were progressing during the period. In 2007 there was a major protest was started from 29th November and lasted for three month. On 7th November 2008, during the protest POSCO people attacked the rebel throwing by bomb at them. Few protestors were injured in that attack. On May 15, 2010, while protest was going on in a long hut house, police had started firing and also put fire on the house. She reported us that police had filed many false cases against many protestors (see Annexure-2) and had been arresting them. She shouted that the movement will long live. POSCO will never enter to their area, till the POSCO is there they will continue the movement. They said till last their land, they will fight for (bhitamati).

Name: Debendra Swain, Village: Dhinkia

Debendra Swain is 38 years old man of Dinika village. He was with this movement from the beginning since. He told that the people of the area had arranged a meeting through Abhaya Sahoo. In the meeting, they all had discussed about the movement, how to start an organization, how to make it work etc. Through this discussion they wanted to form PPS, he said. He informed about the formation of PPSS, the role of various person in the PPSS. AS per the discussion with him, Shishir Mahapatra was elected as the secretary of PPSS. Ranjan Swain, Prakash Jena were selected as vice-president. He had involved in these events from the starting. He said, “To fight for my livelihood and mother land, I joined the movement in 2005”. “We will not leave our bettlevine (panabaraja), land (dhana bila) and homestead land (bhitamati) in the hands of the POSCO Company. We will not leave our motherland being the son of the soil, I participated in the movement, he lauded.

The villagers are very simple and hearted kind and the company had taken the land of the people promising offer of job in company . It has cheated people. He fought against this type of cheating and started the protest movement. He was arrested in 2008 with Abhay Sahoo. They stayed in the jail for a long time and then they were released from the jail through bail. After release, they again started the protest. In every protest, police had used the lathicharge to dissipate the protest. Due to these police actions, he had decided to do the protest whole life. He was beaten by police in every protest and that made him a stronger person to protest. For him this had become a used event for him, to be beaten up, being arrested & going to jail and after that also, fight in the movement. Till now he has not dropped himself from the movement despite of serious torture by the police. In July 2005, a strong protest was initiated for a period of three months in Balittha. In this movement all the villagers of three Panchayats were involved.

He was arrested in 2007 and he was kept in jail for two months. In 2008, Abhaya sahuo was arrested and was kept in jail for 14 months. Abhay Sahoo was arrested for second time and stayed in jail for a period of six months. After the arrest of Abhay Sahoo, Surendra Swain, Shishir Mahapatra and few strong leaders had continued the movement. As of now, there are false cases against thousands of protestors. While discussing with him, he informed that Debendra Swaien was there in jail for two months. The police had beaten Debendra swain while he was in jail. Protestors had tried to rescue him but the police didn't release him. It was threatened that whoever would go for releasing Debendra Swain on bail, that person would be sent to jail. Surendra talked about the company's action related to enforce the protest. Company's people had come to the project area but the company sent other people to threat the people. The company also took the help of police and the police used to beat and arrest the protestors. In other words company was involved itself indirectly in the conspiracy against the rebel. He discussed with us about the involvement of politics in support of the movement. Initially congress, BJP and CPIM had helped for the movement. But as of now, only CPI is the only political party which is helping the villagers in the in protest movement. Apart from the CPI some of outside activists have also been involved in the movement. He is one of the strongest leaders out of all the activists. He used to stand stay in the front line of the protest. He has become a strong activist to handle the movement. He is fighting for his mother land, livelihood and the future of the area. He told that he liked to join the politics. He lauded, "until POSCO leaves the area, the movement will go on, I shall also protect my mother land till I am alive".

Name: Babuli Rout, Village: Dthinkia

Babuli Rout is 42 years old from Dthinkia village. He joined the movement to save guard his birth place since 2005. He was arrested and in December 2008, he was again arrested for the second time by the police. Till now, they had been more than 35 police cases filed against him. He said that in every protest, police used lathicharge to dissipate the protestors. When police come to the movement, they start convincing the protestors to drop out from the movement and when it fails they start using tear gas and lathicharge. Police had arrested the strong leaders and those who stood in front line of the protest. The company had tortured the villagers of the area through indirect way. He was interested to join the politics, if gets an opportunity, he reported. "To save our livelihood I will continue the protest, I may even die but I will never drop out of the movement", he lauded.

Name: Abhay Sahoo, Village: Dthinkia

When Odisha government signed the MoU with POSCO, on June 22 2005, people of Jagatsinghpur particularly from project affected area. We have made a strong commitment to start the protest against the project. On that they had called for a gathering of villagers of the three panhayat. Within their understanding, they had arranged a Gramasabha. In that gramasabha, they had discussed about how to face the company. He has been involved in the movement from 2005. In this movement, they have created an organisation and they named it as "POSCO Pratirodha Sangram Samiti". They had elected secretary and president and Abhay is taking care of the work. The members of PPSS have not dropped themselves from the protest from 2005 till now. They all have promised

themselves not to allow POSCO Company to start its activities in the area. Mr. Abhay Sahu started "I joined to save my mother land, for the land where I took my birth, for our village, for our livelihood, for our people, I have joined the movement. I have strong commitment not to tolerate the takeover of my mother land to a foreign company."

Further he added, "This place is my birth place. We are using her for our livelihood. We are getting huge revenue from the bettle vine (panabaraj), Peddy cultivation, and fishing. A ten year child can earn upto Rupees 10,000 per month from the peddy cultivation. There is no other place where peddy cultivation is done twice in a year except Erasama block. From fishing also good revenue is collected. With one bettle vine (panabaraj) one can easily live his/her life. That person can earn one to two lakh per year. The company can never give them that amount in exchange of panabaraj. How long we can live with the compensation given by the company by taking out our livelihood. What will happen to the future of these people? That's why I am involved in the movement. To protect peddy, Bettle & fish culture (Dhana, Pana, Mina), I have organized movement. On what right, a foreign company can snatch the livelihood of these innocent people. The company is going to grab the livelihood of these innocent people and to protect them I have started the movement. Further he said when I started this protest I became the target of Government, Police and the company people. After the starting of the movement, I am unable to go out of this area. Police has kept a look close at me. I am hidden myself in the villages. I stayed in outs and thousands of women keep guarding around me. Even I don't know how my life has been spent for last seven years. I cannot go outside. Because of this, we have a gate around the Dthinkia village beyond that gate, I am unable to go to my own village also". Every member of PPSS are positively involved in the movement. We are demanding justice from the company and state Government. "We will win and POSCO will go from here" he said "Until POSCO moves back, this movement will go on" he concluded.

Voices of posco affected children

We have interacted with some children of these families who were affected by POSCO project. As the children had participated in the protest movement. It was interacting to note the voices of some of these children in the context of our study.

Name: Jagannatha Das, Village: Patana, Dthinkia GP

Jagannath Das is 11 years old who lives in the village Patna of Dthinkia panchyat Which comes under Jagatsinghpur district Mr. Bangale Das and Ms Nehane Das, her parents used to discuss about the movement in their family. He was studying in 6th class, Maa Fulakhai U. P School, in that area. Jagannath Das says "I dream to be an engineer". My family currently has sufficient income and we are able to save money for my future requirement of study. Once POSCO project is built here, our livelihood will be destabilized. And none knows what will happen to my study. Why should I end up becoming a labourer for POSCO Company?"

Name: Jitendra Dalai, Village: Patana, Dthinkia GP

Jitendra Dalai is 12 years old who lives in the village Patna of Dthinkia panchyat . Which comes under Jagatsinghpur district

Mr. Jogendra Dalai and Ms TukuneDalai, her parents used to discuss about the movement in their family. He was studying in 7th class, Maa Fulakhai U. P School, in that area. Jitendra Dalai says “We will lose our schools and playgrounds surrounded by natural forest once POSCO company work starts”

Name: Jharana Rout, Village: Gobindpur, Dhikia GP

Jharana Rout is 10 years old who lives in the village Gobindpur, Dhikia GP, Jagatsinghpur district, Odisha. Which comes under Jagatsinghpur district Mr. Sisir Rout and Ms Charulata Rout, her parents used to discuss about the movement in their family. He was studying in 6th class, Gobindpur U. P. School, in that area. Jharana Rout says “Due to possible environmental pollution, we will face severe health related problems. We will lose the beautiful natural surroundings like rivers, forest if POSCO project comes up”

The children sitting in the group were responding to my queries and said: “We don’t want to lose the traditional livelihood based on betel, fish and paddy (*Pana, Mina, Dhaana*), rich cultural practices and most importantly our homeland. In first week of June 2011, police has severely beaten the families’ members of Basudav Behera of Noliasahi village under Gada Kujang Panchayat including 5 children. They were arrested and detained for one day in the police station. Last year also in Balitutha, the police beat our parents and burnt houses in the area. We have been seeing this inhuman attack by police on our people. As the young soldiers we are determined not to give up our resources and fight till the POSCO withdraw from our area. This is our motherland. How can government take this from us with force? Why government is showing so much favour to a foreign company? This government is behaving like a British government to us. Why the government allots nearby schools to the policemen to give shelter for last six years? This seriously hampers our education and creates a fearful atmosphere among us. We strongly demand to immediately vacate the police from our school buildings. ” To keep their determination alive and keep their zeal sustained in their fight to protect their homeland, the children sing the chorus

“Jami Chhadiba nahi re bhai, Gaan Chhadibanahin...Bidesi Company Asichi madi Gaan ku neba pain...” (We will not leave our land and village...the foreign company has come to take our land and village)

Our observation

While very small children are coming to the spot with their mothers who are participating in the Dharanas, the elder children even from class 2 onward have developed the understanding of what they are going to lose in case the company comes. They have been witnessing the struggle by their parents and the torture by the police. There is no denying of the fact that it has ignited the young minds with vengeance and determination. When they feel that any time their parents may be beaten up and house may be burnt, their love to their parents and homeland has taken a shape of a determined struggle. They have been grown up in the environment where they have seen and learnt the struggle knowing well that that’s their life –If they do not struggle, they will be thrown out of their land. That’s been part of their socialization process. They are left with the options of “do or die” of which the children have preferred to “fight and live than die”.

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