

Indigenous Voices: A Case Study of Jharkhand

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Abstract

The article primarily reiterates resistance as assertion of identity, exploring it through the rubric of aesthetic creation. An attempt has been made to comprehend resistance as existential condition of human life, as a constant struggle to loosen the grips of domination and subjectification. This further treads the path to recreate the self through alternative ways, which exemplify resistance. This essay is divided into five sections. The first section is an introduction to the subject, leading to the second section which endeavours to take into account the web of state power relations that serve as modes of domination. The third section tries to locate the site of resistance, i.e. the Potka block in Jharkhand from a spatial and temporal perspective. The fourth section attempts to see the exemplification of resistance against those practices of domination as discussed in the second section. Here resistance manifests through social and cultural enactments under aesthetic creation which has been used as a resource to practice/exercise resistance. Subsequent to these arguments, the conclusion, which is the last section, argues that in this exploration of alternative ways of resistance and its politics, what also needs to be taken into account is dissenting voices within the alternatives. Hence the crux therefore is that such acts of resistance try to recuperate those imaginations, which have been subsumed/conquered by the dominating perspective, however this process of resistance is a continuous one, as alternatives contain seeds of further alternatives.

Keywords: resistance, land, identity, state power relations, aesthetic creation.

1. Introduction

‘Gaon chodab nahi,

Jangal chodab nahi,

Mai matti chodab nahi,

Ladai chodab nahi.

Bandh banae,

Gaon duboe,

Karkhana banae,

Jangal kate,

Khadan kode,

Sanctuary banae.

Jal,jangal, zameen chodab hum kaha-kaha jae?

Vikas ke bhagwan bata, hum kaise jaan bachae?’

(We will not leave our village,

nor our forests,

nor our mother-earth,

we will not give up our fight.

They built dams, drowned villages, built factories,

they cut down forests, dug out mines, sanctuaries.

Without land, forest and water where do we go?

Oh god of development, tell us, how to save our lives?).¹

These lines connote both making and unmaking of subjectivities. Making here implies subjectification according to the controlling/ruling power network (implied in the second half of the lyrics, where development has been imposed in terms of dams, factories, mines), while unmaking implies deconstruction of that subjectification, subsequently re-making our selves by other means of assertion (implied in the first half of the lyrics, where they assert that they will not part with their village, soil and continue the fight). With this understanding, the article tries to understand resistance as assertion of identity through land which would be dealt under the rubric of aesthetic creation. This resistance is not against state or development, instead these acts of resistance create punctures in

the state led development model. Resistance then becomes existential element of the human condition.

The article travels through the terrains of Potka block in Jharkhand, where resistance has become an art of asserting identity in non-statist framework. This draws thread from the conception of resistance as aesthetic creation (existence), in the Foucauldian sense of the term. Foucault in his later works took up the idea of aesthetics of existence i.e. the self to be created as an art, instead of being shaped by universal rules. Here universal rules are those factors which shaped the dominant development paradigm as imposed upon the people by the state after independence i.e. the development primarily via industrialization based upon the process of land acquisition.

Here, aesthetic creation has been taken at the level of community, where the self relates to the others. The sense of community involves the lived intersubjective connections which include linguistic, symbolic and dialogic set of relations through which we identify with the conditions in which we live. These intersubjective connections could be figured from the culture, memories, ability to forget, practices, myths, performing art traditions which enable us to identify the codes of everyday life.

Therefore, there are two primary aims of the article: first to lay out the nexus of power relations against which people are resisting i.e. to figure out resistance against what; and second to bring on the surface various acts of resistance against the former, which are alternative imaginations of association and ties probed under aesthetic creation. These have been illustrated through the study of Potka block in Jharkhand. Before moving further, an attempt would be made to draw the discourse of resistance, in other words the next section makes an effort to locate the web of state-power relations against which acts of resistance are being carried out.

2. The discourse of resistance: web of state-power relations

The web of power relations in the given work could be identified through the strings which connect neo liberalism, development and the state. There are three primary features of neo liberalism which we need to take into account. First we can see the change in the nature of the state. It shifts from being an entity apparently above the society and intervening in its economic functioning in the interests of society as a whole, even at the expense of the unbridled interests

of finance capital, to an entity acting exclusively to promote the interests of finance capital.

Thus, a shift could be discerned in the nature of the state. It assumes the new role of carrying out privatization and disinvestment, earlier the state worked , an investor and a producer. Another shift could be seen in the 'texture' of the state, that is, in the nature of the state personnel, bureaucracy, including the organic intellectuals at large, in the era of neo liberalism.²

It is within this kind of understanding we can see how the neo liberal state led definition of development, has achieved dominance over a period of time under the garb of serving national interest. After independence the task of nation building was contained in the essence of development which was enshrined in the socialist planning and the planning commission. In fact the new state acquired legitimacy because it provided the condition for national development. Development was meant to follow a linear path which in turn was made to be based on general interests, and thus subsuming particular interests.

This planning induced development had a populist side in terms of ending poverty, exploitation, and simultaneously modernist side which was invocation of modern science and technology. This national economy was made tantamount to the nation itself, as seemingly it stood for all. The imagination of the nation was linked through the five year plans and the nation was penetrated in our consciousness through big dams, power plants which were conceived in the post independent period. Hence, patriotism was meant to be working for the nation building tasks. Thus, all these practices were meant to produce a particular kind of subject for whom development meant progress in the name of national interest.

The citizens of independent India were made to see each other as fellow travellers on the journey of development. And those who did not participate in this were rendered outsiders (Deshpande 2003: 64-72). This growth was strengthened since the times of Nehru, explains Partha Chatterjee using the phrase, 'moment of arrival'.³ The nationalist thought as 'scientific and rational' was instituted as state ideology. Any kind of issue be it political, economic, social, justice was related to the economic structure of the society. National project became synonymous with industrialization with emphasis upon heavy engineering machine-making sector, scientific research institutes and electric

power. Thus, the national project became industrialization under the national state (Chatterjee 1986: 131-160).

One very explicit form of this domination was exercised by creating a 'development regime'. David Ludden explains this phrase as 'an institutional complex created by colonial capitalism and by bourgeois nationalism as a vital force in the cultural and material life of India'. This kind of construction has colonial legacies where the colonial state's imagination was considered rational and based on this imagination attempts were made to bring order into the space of disorder or the colony. The trajectory of the development discourse was based on the assumption that the best could be achieved through mature capitalism. It was assumed that the state had the knowledge to realize this potential for the progress of the people. Independence was in a way, the replacement of the colonial state carrying this attitude by the national state sharing the same orientation.

A set of measures was conceived to be scientific and rational which were to serve as models of development. David Ludden explained the continuity between imperial developmentalism and the accumulation of state power in independent times specifically in the field of agriculture. For instance, he held that in the imperial regime economy and society was separated, agriculture became an object of development by being abstracted from society and culture. Similarly, the essence has been carried forward where today there is dominance of state led irrigation systems, hybrid seeds and so on. (Ludden 1992: 247-273) This conception leads to marginalization of local sense of development where they want to develop by their indigenous means not only in agriculture but also in other fields like electricity production, mining and other ways of resource utilization.

In the similar context of continuity, Amit Prakash explains that few colonial concepts were accepted. This included according to him, primarily the arenas of politics and economics where the nationalists had accepted the desirability of the colonial rationalist discourse. He said, "Therefore, the Constituent Assembly sought to implement the ideals that the nationalist leaders had learned to cherish, such as industry-led development and political democracy, and a complete break from the colonial approach could not be expected." (Prakash 1999: 461) He explains further that when the constitution came into the public domain in 1950, the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission was appointed. This was formed in 1959 under the chairmanship of U.N. Dhebar. At this stage it, a discourse was created that awakening of tribals would take place by means of massive developmental activities carried out by the state machinery.

Eventually, the umbrella of state defined development in terms of high modernism to achieve 'national' self-reliance and to uphold the newly achieved sovereignty excluded diverse perspectives as well as alternative paths to development. In the process, what happened was that dissenting voices were rendered as inimical to the interests of the country and thereby started the official national practice of silencing these different subjectivities. The occupation with a singular definition of development with industries deepened to such an extent that industrialization as development became a universal law where the end to be achieved was industrialization/modernization/development.⁴ As a result, perspectives offering other notions of development apart from the industrial progress were rendered as anti-development, anti-national, uneducated, primitive and so on.

The euphoria of independence initially led to the belief that the national state would unlike the colonial state, work for the development of all. However, this ecstasy was soon over for most of the people when they realized that the state works within its own structure, which was projected as 'national interest'. This sense of national interest gradually subsumed within it all kinds of diversions in terms of culture, identity, association, belonging and so on. Only the identity of being an 'Indian' devoid of other dimensions working for the development of national interest was deemed as 'modern' and 'progressive'. The faces of caste, class, region and so on were treated as 'aberrations' of Indian democracy which had to be treated properly.

It seems sacrifice for the nation was invented as a noble task, where land were to be forfeited for the national development. It should be noted that the umbrella of Nehruvian state was quite wide to amalgamate few voices of protest against land acquisition. People were convinced that they will be a part of the development process. Therefore, various projects turned out to be successful in acquiring land as well. But then gradually fissures came on the surface, which ultimately led to the questioning of the development policy. Nevertheless, the erection of Nehruvian hegemony on the board of development is quite noteworthy.⁵

This was followed by the period in post 1990s where people were placed in the lap of liberalization, privatization and globalization. Development assumed new dimensions and capital became more porous and fluid. There was an integration of financial, labour and capital markets on a global scale. Attempts were made to restructure our economy in terms of Structural Adjustment Programmes and wooing multinational companies. In addition, efforts were made to avail funds for development from World Bank, International Monetary Fund, including attempts to increase Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs).

In this backdrop, the role of the state was more restructured as neo liberal state to protect the market and so in response to take its step back from other spheres of welfare. Now we had entered the discourse of corporate-government nexus for special economic zones, industrial corridors, urban extensions, mining projects, power plants. These constituted the vocabulary of development in the neo liberal period.

Precisely, neo liberalism and development paradigm of the state became the strings of the web of domination and power relation. The discourse of neo-liberal state emerged as a meta-narrative, henceforth creating exclusionary practices and constraints, thus carving a path on which all the subjects had to move in one direction. Gathering from the above account we could say that a process of exploitation along with subjectification has been going on. Henceforth, resistance have been against the normalcy/naturalness of the present development model in India. We need to take into consideration that many times multiple articulations of history are cemented to produce a singular history. The pores, fissures, disjuncture in history and politics are plastered so that the unity of history to produce a singular articulation appears to be complete. Therefore, in order to explore the diversity, we need to understand that all the claims of knowledge and politics are embedded. In other words, we might say they are contextual. Thus, there is no univocal conception. Here we would narrow down on the case study of Potka block.

3. Case Study

3.1 Locating the Resistance Spatially

Potka block is located in Dhalbhum sub-division of East Singhbhum district in Jharkhand. The block headquarter could be seen beside the Hata - Musabani road at a distance of seven kilometers from Hata (a place on Jamshedpur-Chaibasa Road). **The block constitutes of 25 panchayats and two hundred 93 villages.**

The total geographical area is 1,44,208.7 acres, out of which 17,115 acres form the forest area. Out of the total population of 1,70,657, 4.1% is the Scheduled Caste population and 51.2% is the ST population.⁶ Non-Adivasi communities include the Mandals (Sundi), Monalahas (Bania) and Madina. The occupation of Mandal population is to sell liquor and the indulgence of Bhumij Adivasis in liquor has led to the loss of the land to non-ativasi Mandals and Banias. So today non Adivasis own the Adivasi land and the latter are compelled to work as labourers on their own land. (Tudu 2010: 11)

The economy of the area is agriculture based, this along with the production of paddy sustains the population along with the production of few vegetables for eight months and rest of the year their livelihood is dependent on the collection of forest products as mushroom, *sal* and other non-timber products along with poultry. But on the other hand, many of the government functionaries like Manoj Kumar, the *Prakhand Pramukh*, Deepak Kumar who was the ward member (*Panchayat Sadsya Samiti*) of the Judi panchayat opined that the land is quite rocky and not favorable for agriculture. However, local people wanted better irrigation facilities so that the production could increase.⁷

Conversations with the villagers showed that only 5% of the people are in government jobs and a meager 1% into small business. But then in the wake of making the area ‘modernized and industrialized’ large scale violations of traditional and constitutional rights are taking place, and thereby ignoring the fact that their economy is primarily agro based.⁸ Hitherto, we tried to place our case study spatially. In the subsequent section, a temporal sense of resistance would be dealt, which will further ensue an understanding of the forces against which resistance was being led.

3.2 Locating Resistance on Temporal Grounds

Before moving on with the discussion of acts of resistance, I would try to lay down the sense of resistance as used in the article. Broadly speaking, resistance should not be understood as a space to be created outside power relations. And here goes the statement, ”Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.” (Foucault 1990: 95).

The term exterior is important, because it also implies that power does not always mean being trapped, Foucault says its productive as well, in the sense it produces consciousness, subjectivity and hence the capacity to act. Thus, resistance is not to power as such, instead it is against social practices/arrangements arising out of a specific product of power relations or we could also say against truth effects. (Muckelbauer 2000: 89-90).

Hence, in the case of Potka block the resistance is not against state or development per se. Instead people have been protesting against the particular power arrangement where the state has been acting in nexus with corporate companies to acquire land. The inhabitants feel that such state moves are

completely wiping off the basis of identity which they share in that region, i.e. the land. They also very strongly hold that the state should not impose the national development upon them rather try to see the local sense of development i.e. the trajectory which people want for their region.

The entire narrative of the resistance against the corporate acquisition of land goes back to 2004. Though the entry to this area i.e. the Potka block was first made by the Jindal company, but the areas of our concern are particularly the areas covered by Bhushan Steel and Power Limited (henceforth BSPL). The project of development according to the company was to establish an integrated steel plant of three million tonnes and a nine hundred megawatt power plant with the estimated investment of rupees 10, 500 millions. Following this, Memorandum of Understanding (henceforth MoU) with the Jharkhand government was signed on 7th September 2006. This plant if implemented required 3,450 acres of land in Potka and Jamshedpur. This threatened thirty villages of dispossession, which were by and large Adivasi dominant.

Vijay Kishore, the vice-president of BSPL, held that as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility, ponds have been dug up to provide water to the villages around the proposed plant. Also he added, industrial training programmes have been initiated so that people could be placed in the company. Furthermore, he held that the company would provide direct employment to approximately three hundred people immediately and to ten thousand people in the next phase of work.⁹

Elaborating on the project, Chandra Bhushan Sharma, Deputy General Manager and Spokesperson of the company said that it would be a modern steel plant which would adhere to all the pollution control norms. He also held that industrial training to approximately one hundred fifty villagers between 18 to 45 years of age has already been initiated. The company declared that it would achieve full production target of three million tonnes per annum by 2012. It was also claimed that 2,792 acres out of the total land required would be provided by the state government. The company would source water from Domuhani (meeting point of river Subarnarekha and Kharkai) and power from NTPC's Ramchandrapur-grid at Gamharia in adjoining Seraikela-Kharsawan district. He added that the company has elaborate plans to develop Potka, situated twenty five kilometres away from the steel city into a satellite town by building necessary infrastructure including roads, water and power lines. He said, "We will soon enter into a land purchase agreement with the state government. There is no controversy about

forest or tribal land. Moreover, there is no question of any displacement, as the land acquired by us is vacant and not inhabited by villagers. We have the blueprint ready for Potka. Development of the area will become necessary as our project would provide numerous employment opportunities.”¹⁰

The 14 villages demarcated by the company in this block were Roladih, Sarmanda, Judi, Samarsai, Bada Bhumri, Rangamatia, Poda Bhumri, Bingburu, Pichili, Chandpur, Rajabasa, Atnabeda, Khadiasai, Hisagoda, Potka, Tangarsai, Bada Sigdi, Chota Sigdi, Hesbel, Jahatu, Kalikapur, Matkomdih, Savnadih, Khanchibil, Dhirol, Dawanki and Sohda. Bhushan company has been trying to acquire land since 2005. Apart from this in Jamshedpur division villages like Marchagoda, Bhuridih and Kudada were demarcated for acquisition. (Tudu 2010: 4) These villages were chosen as they were located on the main road, which made survey of the land easy said Sombari Murmu of Roladih village associated with *Bhoomi Raksha Bahini Kisan Morcha*.

However, it should be noted that the resistance against land grab was not uniform all over Potka block. In Judi village, people easily gave up their land in lieu for compensation and employment in the two industries named Saha and Swati in 2007-08. Though, presently they are resisting against these companies as the promises were not fulfilled and the issue of pollution is creating problems for the villagers.¹¹

At this juncture, it would also be apt to point out the limitation of the work. The fieldwork was biased in the sense that the narratives primarily show the resistance against land acquisition. Again to reiterate, the resistances had varying degrees. Nevertheless, laying down the narratives on a larger canvas showed that largely people were not willing to part away with their land. There were few villages which were composed of basically the non-Adivasi families who were willing to give away their land for a good compensation in terms of money and job in the companies. The fieldwork, however, largely revolved around conversations with those families which comprised basically the Adivasi families, who were unwilling to part with their land.

One another way of understanding resistance here could be acts to affirm the difference in terms of identity linked to the land. For instance, the explanation by Dayamani Barla, the Convenor of *Adivasi Moolvasi Astitva Raksha Manch* which played a major role in organizing the resistance against Arcellor-Mittal in Torpa-Kamdara is helpful. She says that the adivasis have ‘created’ their

land. Though, she holds that there is no legal proof for this, but in an asserting tone she adds, “History gives the proof which show how our ancestors created the land of this state by clearing the forests and fighting with wild animals like bears, lions, snakes.” Therefore she puts, “We do not have to look up to any authority for our rights because we have traditional rights over this land.”¹² The transgressive acts are meant to bring into light the exclusions created as a result of dichotomies or how norms which are portrayed as natural/universal are actually creating marginalization.¹³

Another aspect which comes up through the acts of resistance is that, they are meant to show that there are no neat compartments of development and anti-development. When people are not willing to part away with their land, it implies that there is a necessity to look into alternate ways of politics. It is not that people are being recalcitrant by not following the path of development treaded by the state. More precisely what need to be accounted for are the specificities of ‘India’ in the postcolonial era in terms of its political system, understanding modernity, development and so on. Similarly, we need not forget that there are particularities within the meta-narrative of Indian nation state. A point which needs to be reiterated is that there is no ‘homogenous time and space’, instead the heterogeneities need to be celebrated.

The article tries to probe one such basis, i.e. the land and how it serves as a basis of identity, henceforth the resistance against any such acts which try to question that premise. Therefore, their sense of development has a different understanding of land and hence the politics is also different from the one which has been imposed by the state.

I would also like to draw here that the freedom is nothing absolute here, instead it is ‘recognition of one’s entanglement in the webs of power/knowledge’ (Thiele 1990, 908). Adding valour to resistance, we might say that we as subjects, tend to transform our existing conditions. In this process of genealogical understanding, we have popular/local/discontinuous knowledge which help to resurrect the subjugated knowledge system from the metanarratives.

Therefore, delving into alternative vocabularies of imagination of spaces, by unsettling the ‘normal’ spaces form an important part of emancipatory politics.¹⁴ They serve as spaces for resistance in ‘other’ lived spaces that is apart from the dominant ones.¹⁵ It is within this realm of ideas we are trying to explore the

basis of land for various imaginings apart from the normalized understanding given by the state¹⁶.

4. Resistance as Acts of Aesthetic Creation

The entire formulation that Foucault does not provide normative parameters on what form will the resistance take has been taken as a criticism against him. One significant implication of this is that it creates imaginations which are not dictated by the present discourse of power and here lies the space of aesthetic self-creation. Precisely, it implies 'refusal to what we are' (Pickett 1996: 464). The underlying sense of this statement is that first we understand that we have been constituted as subjects with the interplay of truth, knowledge and power. Thus, this also means that there is a scope of re-fashioning ourselves as subjects or to resurrect the ways of subjectivity which we think is ours.

From this understanding we draw the aim of self-creation or aesthetics of existence/creation as a weapon of resistance. The ethics within this comprise various practices of thinking, in fact our being. This process of self-fashioning (stylization of the self) is a means of self-empowerment, which means exercise of agency and autonomy.¹⁷

In our case, aesthetic self-creation as a weapon of resistance could be primarily understood through narratives which bring on the surface the fact that land is a basis of identity and not something which could be traded off in return for a compensation. A further manifestation of this was also seen in the assertion of the indigenous ways of life.

This process requires the analysis of meanings of culture which entail feelings and experiences of everyday realities. This also engages a study of perceptions, responses, reactions which shape along with producing changes in consciousness, which in return profile the social order. So, the culture of oppression and the culture of protest need to be dealt simultaneously. Within the former a theatre of terror is devised which is not just to create fear through authority but also inculcates a sense of self-derogation. This is done by relegating the subordinates as dangerous, inferior and violent.

Nonetheless, this is countered by a relentless culture of protest which is not only physical survival but a collective will to live. This is done by nurturing their own inculcated values of justice, equality and preservation of zones of

resistance through symbols like drums, arrows, oral history, songs, literature and so on (Devalle 1992: 200-227).

In order to attack these constructs of domination, we need to indulge into local struggles against power and thereby de-subjectify the subject. This deconstructive exercise would unmask those imaginations which do not fit the discourse of normalcy. They are not inferior or less subordinate or utopias of illiterate people, steeped in backwardness, unliberated by modernity, rather it reveals that there are myriad imaginations of the term development.

The method to achieve this is to problematize the given arrangement of social order, based upon the premise that there is no universal knowledge system which can speak from anywhere for everybody.

The narratives gathered during the land struggle in Potka block came up in various forms. Placing under the rubric of aesthetic creation, the narratives show that people are not against the state per se, rather they are uncomfortable with the statist framework of land acquisition. Their acts of resistance they display reassertion of their existence by reiterating their ties with the land by treating it as non-saleable asset. It was held by the villagers that the state is not able to understand the importance of land in the life of Adivasis. So people have been protesting against the state, trying to tell the state, that land is not merely an economic commodity which could be 'compensated'. They held that the identity and existence of their community till date is based on land. This could be perceived in the proclamation of Shailendra Mahto, an activist of *Bhoomi Raksha Sangharsh Samiti*, which has been protesting against the land acquisition led by Jindal company in Potka block. He said, "If the government would not stop capitalist exploitation, then *sendra* will be declared against them."¹⁸

Sendra is a term in Adivasi vocabulary. This is a traditional custom in which once in a year Adivasis go to the forests with all their traditional *auzaar* like *teer* (arrow) and *dhanush* (bow). It should be noted that they do not use the term *hathiyar*, rather *auzaar* because they associate the former with violence. Along with arrows, bows and drum beating they go to hunt down the wild animals in the forests who damage their crops and cattle. Thus, declaration of *sendra* serves as a means of protection for the people against the wild animals who try to damage their land and crops. So he held that nobody, including the animals could alienate them from their rights endowed by their ancestors in terms of

land and other resources. He added that even if the state attempts to do so then *sendra* will be deployed against the state as well.

Simultaneously, the villagers also emphasized that they have been wrongly branded as ‘anti-development’ and also as ‘anti-national’. Rather, they say that they want development, but not through industries nor by imposition of state led industrialization. They have been asking the state that aren’t they the ‘citizens’ of this country, so why is the state not catering to their needs instead imposing things on them. Broadly, it could be said that they are trying to create a space in non-statist sphere, which could also be treated as arts of not being governed. The next section delves into the narratives which were collected during the fieldwork conducted in three phases, the first in April 2010, the second in May-June 2011 and the third in February-March 2012. These narratives will attempt to explain the acts of resistance.

Narratives are used in the sense that they are anchored in some understanding of the self, as they originate from someone’s point of view. Narratives give shape to various kinds of habitable spaces existing, as the self understands in relation to other selves, collectives and the environment. Placing the narratives within this paradigm in no way intends to produce narratives ‘versus’ the nation state/ dominant political community.

Narratives

If the company is giving compensation and even jobs, then why not give up the land and lead a better life? Here lies the answer ‘land is everything, without land education has no meaning’, says the family of Sombari Murmu of Roladih village. Land is the only asset and agriculture is the only means of earning as people are not educated, says Sakhan Majhi, Sombari’s brother. Does this mean that if they will be educated then they will give away their land and move to other occupation? The answer is an emphatic no. A collective voice speaks aloud ‘land is our existence’. They say that their ancestors ate from that land and also their generations will eat from the same land. Wheat production is enough from which they could eat and sell. They are able to produce some vegetables for survival.

There has been a strong negation for compensation also because villagers feel that no corporate or the state can give the space where their cattle, bulls, goats can go with them. Their concern is also about trees, rivers, mountains, *zahera*

(place of worship), *akhada* (common ground), *sasandiri* (ancestor burial ground) water, things which can never be replaced. Most importantly, they raised, ‘what about our memories? For instance, they strongly feel about the place where their ancestors are buried. For some communities, ancestors are their custodians and they are also worshipped during festivals. Therefore, the concern of the Adivasis is that with the coming of the company their existence and their community will vanish. Neither the state nor the company could compensate for their customs and traditional systems. As Saraswati Sardar says, “We will become refugees without land.” Adding to this, Sameer Sardar of Roladih village said, “We are happy the way we are.” With an expression of agreement Saraswati Sardar exclaimed, “Yes we are satisfied with our lives and we do not want to eat smoke.” People agreed that in no case, neither for employment nor for money will they give their productive land.

Furthermore, the villagers were of the view that even if they give unused land then due to pollution and industrial wastes the production of *dhan* in cultivable land will also stop and eventually the villagers will have to move out.

Simultaneously, they have clearly asserted that they are not ‘begging from the state’. Land is their existence and the state’s rule would not be accepted on that. This has been a clear declaration.¹⁹ The slogans till now demonstrated that Adivasis would sacrifice their lives but not their land. This was given a new dimension by Siddheshwar Bhagat. He affirmed that the state does not give us birth so it has no right to take it, rather right to life is a fundamental right which the state should protect. So he says, “Neither will we give our lives, nor our land.”

Adding to this, the major festivals and worship to their god called *marang buru* are linked to the agriculture cycle and hence land. Hiramani Murmu, Butti Soren, Shakuntala Murmu in Kalikapur, explained their festivals with great enthusiasm. In March they have *baha* to celebrate spring, praying for the new flowers and fruits, and for a good monsoon. Then they celebrate *erok* in June-July after the first showers which commemorate the beginning of ploughing and crop cycle. This is followed by the festival *janthar* in November which is a ritual offering that signifies the beginning of harvest and threshing operations. And the most important is *sohrai* which is thanksgiving after harvest (Das 1991: 277).²⁰ So that particular space (as there are no images of god) has emotional meanings, for them which can never be replaced by any means. Thereupon, the attachment to land works as the basis for overall reproduction of their collectiveness and identity.

The narratives show that sense of belonging through the land are varied as land has multiple dimensions, in the sense starting from identity flowing into tributaries of livelihood, security, memories, social status, ownership, ancestral asset, balanced ecology and so on.²¹ So they are completely against the state sponsored development in terms of industrialization which they feel are dispossessing people from their everyday life system. These narratives clearly reveal resistance to the web of state power relations. This has been analysed by mapping numerous ways as material, social, political, cultural, spiritual in which land shapes the identity of the Adivasis in this region through the narratives.

5. Conclusion

An important outcome of the above study is an analysis of resistance in its myriad forms and how it has become the existential element of human condition. Nevertheless, in this exploration of alternative ways of resistance and its politics, we should not forget to delineate dissenting voices within the alternatives.

Do these alternative spaces give further space to dissenting voices? Generally, we see that a certain kind of imagination becomes dominant in movements or protests. Therefore, 'whose imagination' becomes an important question. Various voices especially based on gender, are subsumed in a movement of a generic type as land issue. What we need to understand is that in any community there is a selective tradition which becomes overriding and thus we have some tones encompassed within the overarching voice. This explains the enduring nature of agonistic politics which is constant struggle, without closure.

Henceforth we could say that the article tried to comprehend practices of resistance by dwelling upon the conception of land to comprehend unconventional fashioning of grouping and ties. The identity through land has been explored by placing it as a geographical place, means of livelihood, value system, personal and collective security, as a means of maintaining ancestral links and so on. All these coming together form a sense of association which do not sit comfortably with state imaginations and thus form alternative modes of identity. A major emphasis has been placed on the resistances arising from the present land acquisition process. This strong wave of resistances which sweep across Jharkhand reveal explicitly that people are not ready to place themselves within the given state or corporate definition of development.

Nonetheless, this argument by no means implies that there is complete opposition to the present development discourse. Travelling through the narratives of the fields give a clear picture where Adivasis have articulated in a lucid way that they are not anti-development. The problem for them is in the present trajectory of development being pursued. In a few instances, people have rated the present policies of development as 'terror of development' which they in their discourse term it as *vikas ka aatank*. This they say has been working against their *pehchan, astitva aur asmita* which can be translated as identity, existence and dignity. Development it seems in this mineral rich area of Jharkhand has been defined as land grab, exploitation of natural and mineral resources and massive dispossession leading to dislocation of various kinds of communities.

Endnotes

- 1 These are the lines inspired by a song of Bhagwan Maaji, leader of the adivasi struggle against bauxite mining in Kashipur. (Sasi 2009) *Gaon Chodab Nahi*. <http://kafila.org/2009/06/25/gaon-chodab-nahin/>. Accessed on 21 January 2010.
- 2 Prabhat Patnaik, 'The State under Neo-Liberalism', 10 August 2010, <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2010/patnaik100810.html>. Accessed on 15 May 2012.
- 3 One of the endeavours has been to question the characterization of 'development' mainly in terms of 'industrialization'. This growth was strengthened since the times of Nehru, explains Partha Chatterjee using the phrase, 'moment of arrival'. The nationalist thought as 'scientific and rational' was instituted as state ideology. Any kind of issue be it political, economic, social, justice was related to the economic structure of the society. There were three requirements 'a heavy engineering and machine-making sector, scientific research institutes and electric power'. Thus, the national project became industrialization under the national state. See Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought And The Colonial World, A Derivative Discourse*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986, pp.131-160.
- 4 We can say that all the three terms industrialization, modernization and development have become synonymous. Routledge Paul, "Modernity as a Vision of Conquest: Development and Culture in India," *Cultural Survival*, 19 February 2010, <http://www.culturalsurvival.org/ourpublications/csq/article/modernity-a-vision-conquest-development-and-culture-india>. Accessed on 10 July 2010.
- 5 One area of interrogation which spills up here is that of docile bodies. Is it that the state had made the subjects docile in the name of development that the resisting agency was missing in most instances, and people had given their land?
- 6 Potka block has been functioning since 1958 vide the letter number 3852 dated 23.03.1958 of the Department of Community Development, Government of Bihar. See "Potka Block, East Singhbhum", <http://jamshedpur.nic.in/potblk.htm>. Accessed on 6 January 2012. Here the data are according to 2001 census. While talking about specific villages later, the data has been given on the basis of interaction with the villagers during the fieldworks. As far as East Singhbhum district is concerned, the population has been recorded 2,291,032, the sex ratio is 949 per 1000 males and the literacy rate is 77.13. *Census of India 2011, Provisional*

Population Totals, Paper-I of 2011 Jharkhand Series-21 (Ranchi: Directorate of Census Operations, 2011), p.21, 40, 53 respectively.

- 7 The information about occupation was given by the people during the fieldworks. I met the government functionaries mentioned here on 14 February 2012 in Hata, the market place in Jamshedpur-Chaibasa road. Judi village is around twenty kilometers from Jamshedpur. The functionaries even said that the local villagers also feel that their soil is not suitable for production and that they want industries to be set up. But the picture that came up about agriculture during interactions with the villagers was in contrast to what the government officials held. In opposition people held that agriculture sustains them primarily.
- 8 'After Mittal....Bhushan, the Struggle Continues', <http://www.cnisbss.org/infocus/Potka.pdf>. Accessed on 7 January 2012.
- 9 See Pinaki Majumdar, 'Bhushan Steel Offers Villagers Price sop For 300 Acres', *The Telegraph*, 19 May 2010. http://www.telegraphindia.com/1100519/jsp/jharkhand/story_12464251.jsp Accessed on 10 January 2011.
- 10 'Rs 10500cr Fillip for Potka', *The Telegraph*, 7 May 2010. http://www.telegraphindia.com/1100507/jsp/jharkhand/story_12421650.jsp. Accessed on 10 February 2011.
- 11 This information was given by R .N. Banerjee who was a retired school teacher in Judi village whom I met on 15 March 2012 at his residence.
- 12 This was part of an interview with Dayamani Barla when I met her during my fieldwork in Nagdi village. This was on 3 October 2012 in Ranchi.
- 13 A genealogical study of the trajectory of deveopment in independent Inda could explain this. We need to understand how land acquisition has been made a 'normal' mode in order to attain development, by very naively subsuming the various dimensions of land which are components of identity.
- 14 The term emancipation is another contested term, there are different meanings attached to it at different levels. Here, the term is used as Nivedita Menon understands emancipation as a process without closure, it is not a goal we can reach. Each victory becomes the site of a fresh cooptation, but conversely too each defeat releases new potential to resist oppression. So political practice is the perpetual attempt to eliminate oppression rather than the achievement of this elimination. Emancipation is thus a horizon which drives our political practice. See Nivedita Menon, *Recovering Subversion: Feminist Politics Beyond the Law* (USA: Permanent Black, 2004), p.20.
- 15 The term 'other' has been used in the sense of various and not as connoting 'we' versus 'they'.
- 16 Normalized as used here implies that land has been treated as saleable commodity by the state, as something which could be compensated through monetary or other means. If we look through the land acqusition acts we see that there is no scope to see people might not be wiing to part away with their land in any circustances. It should be noted that in the

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- present laws, state assumes that a 'fair' compensation and rehabilitation can replace the dispossession of land.
- 17 The realm of art is taken 'as a sort of refuge for all those aspects of human life and culture that have been forgotten, excluded or repressed by Western modernity', which are also seen as 'pre-rational embodied otherness'. See Jon Simons, *Foucault & the political*, London and New York: Routledge, 1995, pp.78-79.
 - 18 I met Shailendra Mahto in Dorkasai village, Potka block at his residence on 20 February 2012.
 - 19 This can be seen in the slogans raised during the protests, *khan, khanij hamara hai, raj tumhara nahi chalega* (minerals are ours, your rule will not be accepted). They also claim, *hum apna adhikar mangte, nahi kisi se bheekh mangte* (we are asking for our rights and not begging).
 - 20 Victor Das in his study also holds that all the major festivals are based on an appreciation of natural resource, environment and thus the land.
 - 21 We need to see also how land is treated as an ancestral gift, which needs to be preserved for generations to come. So people feel that if they give away their land then it will be a betrayal to their ancestors.

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