

**ANTHROPOLOGY OF A GENOCIDE:
TRIBAL MOVEMENTS IN CENTRAL INDIA AGAINST
OVER-INDUSTRIALISATION**

By Felix Padel and Samarendra Das for the SAAG 2006

India's present investment boom, as it opens its markets and "resources" to foreign companies, has a shadow side too few are aware of. Essentially, the boom is at the expense of uprooting indigenous communities all over central India, and at the cost of permanent damage to India's environment. The "mineral wealth" lying in the mountains of Orissa, Chattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Jharkhand States – a non-renewable resource - is being opened up to an unprecedented scale of mining and metal manufacture by Indian as well as foreign companies. Extracting vast quantities of iron-ore, bauxite, chromite, coal etc from these mountains not only affects the immediate and long-term well-being of India's environment. It also leads to mass dispossession. Even more so the huge factories which process this ore into metal, and the huge dams being constructed. It is a little-known fact that supplying electricity and water to metal factories has always been one of the main reasons for big dams.

Adivasis show an increasing determination to stand up and refuse to be displaced. Even the most generous "R & R packages" offer only cash and promises of jobs (which in practice are rarely kept): not land for land (as required by international standards set by the International Labour Organisation etc). This means Adivasis inevitably lose their traditional lifestyle of cultivating their own food as their own masters. This is what lies behind the police killing of 14 Adivasis at Kalinganagar on 2nd January, who were protesting against a steel plant about to be constructed on their land - the most high-profile of a long train of similar events.

This situation is also connected to the spread of Naxalite and Maoist influence in these areas, and the recent escalation to a state of war and mass displacement in the Bastar region of Chattisgarh, famous as India's "tribal heartland", where at least 60,000 Adivasis have been displaced within the last one year (June 2005-June 2006), as part of a military policy to starve the Maoists of their support base. An estimated 670 villages of exceptional beauty lie burnt and abandoned. Here too, the driving force is the State's plans for more mines and metal factories.

What should be or could be our role as anthropologists in relation to these swiftly unfolding events?

One need is for anthropologists to speak out about what is at stake here: the qualities of tribal society, the reasons why displacement and loss of their land and self-sufficiency lead to a cultural genocide, and consequently, the validity of Adivasis' struggle to keep their land and culture intact. As I suggest in this paper, this needs to start off through a questioning of popular and semi-official concepts about the nature of tribal society and development.

Another role can be to analyse the power structures which impose these changes on Adivasis, including the mining companies themselves, as a means not just to affirm the validity of these movements to maintain Adivasis' lifestyle, but actually bringing anthropology into another world of possibility, which opens up when we invert our usual perspective and make the social structure of the world's rich and powerful into our object

of study, as opposed to our usual role of analysing the world's most marginal or traditional communities. Felix Padel's first book, *The sacrifice of human being: British rule and the Konds of Orissa* (1995), pioneered analysing the colonial power structure imposed over a tribal people during the 19th and 20th centuries. The book we are now writing together analyses the invasion of aluminium companies into the same tribe's territory, and the indigenous movement to prevent their mountains being mined for bauxite and people's land being taken over by metal factories and dams.

Corporations in particular cry out to be understood afresh through the tools of social anthropology. It is increasingly clear that nowadays large mining and other companies have an influence and impact over and above that of elected Governments. As anthropologists we need to ask: What are these impacts? How do these companies exercise such power, trans-nationally? And how can we contribute to civil society by using our expertise in social structure and symbolism to analyse the web of relationships and the value system of those who are imposing changes not just over tribal India, but over all of us?

For the highly complex structures of power which dominate life in modern society are surely visible in their most naked, starkest form in what has been and is being imposed on tribal people in the name of "development". If so, then analyzing this process of imposition, in a way that involves seeing it through the eyes of those being imposed upon or resisting, gives anthropologists our most potent way to reflect back from the traditional societies we know about to our own modern society.

The genocidal impact on India's Adivasis is replicated in almost every country where tribal societies have managed to survive into the 21st century. The parallels with events all over the Americas, Africa, and elsewhere in Asia and Australasia are very strong. Analysing these parallels uses our understanding of events in the world's remotest corners to cast light onto the mainstream social system we are part of ourselves.

This reflection back to "us" is all the more necessary because several of the mining companies involved in the most controversial Indian projects are based in London or other foreign cities, and all the projects are facilitated by a background situation dominated by financial imperatives which derive from World Bank-orchestrated loans, and policies designed by the DFID (Department For International Development of the British Government). In every country, the World Bank and financially dominant foreign governments play a similar role controlling or manipulating policy and facilitating the entry of multi-national corporations "behind the scenes". Is it not time for anthropologists to analyse this system of control head-on and call into question its defining concepts?

There has obviously been a general process of displacing mining and heavy industry from Western Europe eastwards, towards East Europe and Asian countries, as well as southwards to Africa. While officially this is invariably couched in terms of bringing "development" and "foreign investment", when seen from the viewpoint of those displaced, it is actually based on the most rampant dispossession and exploitation. Financial investment in many cases is a direct cause of displacement. As Dai Sing Majhi, one of the leaders of the Lanjigarh movement, expressed this, "*They are flooding us out with money*". Literally, money coming into the area buys up Adivasis' land and resources and buys them out.

This brings up a more painful level of the reflection back to "us". Could it be that we are materially "over-developed", and that this over-development is based on

dispossession in the “fourth world” of indigenous people? Cars and supermarkets are among the most obvious symbols of “over-development” to anyone who comes fresh to life in Britain from the third world. The choice of models and brands, and the rapid turnover and wastage, tell a story which links material prosperity in the West directly with the poverty and exploitation in the East. Since every car and all the aluminium-wrapped goods in the supermarket use, and essentially destroy and waste (despite recycling claims), metals that are mined and manufactured in highly exploitative conditions far from our eyes. In this sense our own lifestyle here is not separate from the struggle of tribal people in India against the imposed industrialisation of their own land.

Anthropology excels in understanding relationship, and the elements which give structure to social relationships. The main tendency has always been to study tribal societies as if they were separate entities. In fact they have always existed in relationship to neighbouring peoples. A few of the best studies focused on this, and some also suggested that “the administration operating from various centres” be included in the overall social structure of a land or a people.¹

Some recent anthropology subjects colonial life and its discourse to anthropological analysis. What is a matter of urgency is to understand the power structures which are imposing changes onto tribal societies now, as part of the whole pattern of relationships which have formed between Adivasis and outsiders, including the administration: a pattern which is in many ways oriented towards exploiting and dispossessing indigenous people.

Vedanta Resources and the fight for Orissa’s Bauxite Malis

Focusing here in most detail on Orissa, famous for its ancient cultural traditions, not least those of diverse tribal societies, the names Vedanta and Kalinganagar are today’s symbols of the extreme pressures which tribal people face, as well as of powerful movements to prevent industries taking over tribal territory.

For Orissa is in the throes of great controversy just now about plans to expand bauxite-mining and aluminium manufacture on the one hand, iron-mining and steel plants on the other, as well as new mega-dams for supplying both industries. A British registered company called Vedanta Resources is highest profile in the aluminium field, though projects by several other aluminium companies also make headlines. The killings which took place on 2nd January at Kalinganagar were brought on by the Indian company Tata’s attempts to construct a new steel plant there. This event has put the spotlight on numerous iron-ore and steel projects in the State, particularly the terrible effects of large-scale iron-mining in north Orissa and over 70 sponge-iron factories there, and a highly controversial deal with the Korean company Posco (Pohang Steel Company) to mine Orissa’s iron and build a huge new steel plant and new port facilities near Paradeep.

Vedanta’s huge alumina refinery is nearly complete at Lanjigarh in southwest Orissa, right on the source of the Bamsadhara river where it forms below the Niyamgiri mountain range. The location was dictated by a lease to mine bauxite on the northwest ridge of this range, though environmental clearance to carry out mining there has not yet been granted. The ridge is extensively forested right up to its summit, and is sacred to the Konds. Beyond the summit, in the valleys and hill-slopes of the Niyamgiris, live one of Orissa’s most traditional tribes, the Dongria Konds.

What follows is a brief history of the aluminium industry in Orissa, recounted as a way into comprehending the complex structures behind today's situation.

Back in the 1920s several of the biggest mountains in south Orissa were identified as sources of good quality bauxite, when a geologist named Fox outlined the very plans for an integrated aluminium industry in south Orissa which are being pushed forward now, 80 years later. Plans based on mountain-top mines, refineries and smelters, big dams harnessing Orissa's biggest rivers, a railway network, and port facilities for export. The base rock of these mountains had recently been named Khondalite after the Konds (early British sources usually called them *Khonds*) – a naming which acknowledges the close relationships which exists between these mountains and this people.² Most of the bauxite mountains occur in Kond territory, and when asked their religion by Census officials Konds have often answered simply *Pahar* or *Donga* (Mountains).

In the 1950s-60s Indal (Indian aluminium), a subsidiary of Alcan (Aluminium Canada), built an aluminium smelter at Hirakud in northwest Orissa, processing bauxite mined and refined to the north of Orissa. This obtained hydro-power and water from the State's first mega-dam of the same name, near Sambalpur, which displaced at least 160,000 people, more than 50% of them Adivasis. Few if any were properly rehabilitated. The dam was justified in terms of irrigation - a canal system irrigates about twice the area of cultivated land inundated by the reservoir; hydro-power - of which an inordinate proportion went to the smelter - and flood control - though major floods in 1980 and 1999 caused by the need for sudden release of heavy rainwater to save the dam, caused more damage and loss of human life than anything that had occurred previously.³

In the 1970s an extensive survey was carried out of the bauxite mountains.⁴ This resulted in the setting up of a new Orissa-based aluminium company in 1980, Nalco (National Al.Co.), which established an extensive mine on top of the biggest mountain (Panchpatmali in Koraput district), a refinery nearby at Damanjodi, powered and watered by the Upper Kolab dam (which displaced an estimated 3,000 and 14,000 people respectively, mostly Adivasis) and its smelter at Angul (central Orissa), linked by a new railway through the south Orissa mountains (Koraput-Rayagada). Nalco is a Public Sector Utility (PSU), which makes a large profit for the State. Attempts to privatise it in 2003 met with stiff resistance from employees.⁵

Subsequent attempts to set up bauxite mines and aluminium factories have been opposed by large-scale movements, in which Adivasis and Dalits have played a central role, facing frequent arrests and beatings by the police and "company goons". First came an attempt to mine the top of Gandhamardan in west Orissa by Balco (Bharat Al.Co.), another PSU. This is another exceptionally well-forested range. Local people made great sacrifices to oppose Balco's plans. When their husbands were jailed, women stopped the police and company vehicles by putting their babies in the vehicles' path, to show they had no future if the mountain was mined. The company went so far as to construct a colony for several hundred employees – never used and now taken over by the jungle, after the Ministry of Environment and Forests denied clearance to the project in 1987.

In 1993, several companies made a concerted effort to set up bauxite mines and factories in Kashipur, an isolated region in Rayagada District, against strong opposition. The front-runner was a consortium called Utkal, whose basic plan was to mine bauxite on Bapla Mali and refine it in a big factory on the site of a small Kond village called Ramibera. At first the consortium consisted of Tata and Indal with Norsk Hydro

(Norway's biggest corporation). Between 1998 and 2000 as the local movement against Utkal gathered strength, Tata left, and Alcan bought up a major share in its subsidiary Indal, and sold it on to Hindalco (Hindustan Al.Co), India's other major al.co, which had been set up by the Birla family in the 1960s in collaboration with the US company Kaiser.

As opposition to Utkal hardened, so did local politicians' anger with the Adivasis who stood in the way of development plans. On 16th December 2000, police opened fire on a gathering of Adivasis opposed to Utkal in the village of Maikanch. Days earlier there had been meetings in Rayagada organised under the World Bank's scheme of Business Partners for Development, while the DFID had commissioned a report on Utkal from the Centre for Development Studies at Swansea University, whose team witnessed the tension in the build-up to this event: armed youths blocking the road to Maikanch, and politicians of all three main parties calling those supporting the company "patriots", and those those who opposed the project "traitors", who should be "taught a lesson".⁶

On the 15th people from many villages had gathered at Maikanch, Konds, Jhorias (*Jharnia*), Dalits and others. A group of politicians and journalists from Kashipur and Rayagada tried to pass Maikanch and cow them. They came off worst in the fight and evidently (pulling Ministry strings) called out the armed police to come the next day. When the police lorries approached the entrance towards Maikanch, the large crowd of men retreated up the hill, afraid of provoking a fight, leaving the women and children as a pacifying factor between themselves and the police. But the police got into a fight with the women, "laid their hands on them". So the men came nearer, down the hill. The police retreated out of the village, and opened fire. Two Jhoria men and a youth died at Maikanch, and a dozen were seriously wounded.

Far from cowing opposition, the movement against Utkal had won the moral high-ground and hardened its resolve. Norsk withdrew, under pressure from human rights activists in Norway, leaving the consortium to two different companies from the original three: from Tata + Indal + Norsk, it had become Alcan + Hindalco – and yet it remained inscrutably, the same Joint Company venture.

Also, an Enquiry into the causes of the Maikanch killings was set up. This was headed by a Judge named P.K.Mishra, who took extensive evidence, and altogether 3 years to file a report. Witnessing one session of this Enquiry on 29 May 2002, we saw a senior executive of Utkal who professed ignorance about company accounts and a missing sum of 70 crore rupees, allegedly used by Utkal officials for bribes. We also saw an Adivasi woman and a Dalit woman taking the stand. Each kept her hands clasped in *Johar/Namaste* in an appeal for truth and justice, as they recounted how the police had attacked them that day. Mishra's verdict in the Report was ambiguous, censoring certain police officers, but condoning the project.

Vedanta started up while Utkal was stalled, compensating for earlier company defeats by moving swiftly to start construction of its Lanjigarh refinery. The company's original name was Sterlite. It already had a major share of India's copper and zinc industry when it bought up Balco in March 2001 in a notoriously undervalued privatisation sell-off of a PSU.⁷ Sterlite bought a controlling 51% share in Balco, which gave it a new centre at Korba in Chattisgarh, where Soviet assistance had helped build a refinery and smelter back in the 1960s-70s, supplied with bauxite from several mountain-top mines in central India (especially Amarakantak and Mainpat).

The great prize for all the aluminium companies is Orissa's bauxite, which is of a better quality than Chattisgarh's (higher alumina content in relation to silica and iron), allowing it to be refined at a lower temperature, saving costs. Sterlite had let go the leases on Gandhamardan and Sosubohu Mali (Mother-in-law Daughter-in-law Mountain) on the east of Kshipur (where it had also met opposition), but retained Niyamgiri's north-west ridge. Orissa's recent history is a patchwork of MoUs (Memoranda of Understanding) between the Orissa Mining Corporation (OMC) and a large range of Indian and foreign mining companies. All the biggest mountains in south Orissa have now been the focus of such deals.

Vedanta is not primarily an India company. In December 2003 it was launched on the London stock exchange as Vedanta Resources Plc (VRP), through the services of the world's highest paid mining executive, Brian Gilbertson, in order to raise funds for modernising its Balco facilities at Korba and building the Lanjigarh refinery, whose design was entrusted to an Australian firm named Worley. By the end of January 2004, the Collector of Kalahandi, Saswat Mishra, had persuaded half a dozen Kond villages to accept financial compensation and a concrete house on Vedanta's behalf, and these were given a sudden order to vacate their villages, which were immediately bulldozed along with their embedded sacred stones. *Amoro devata bi nasht kole* ("they even destroyed our gods") as one woman said. These villagers were moved in police trucks to "Vedantanagar", a new colony, where they became a captive labour pool, living without land between refinery and mountain.

So technically, the Lanjigarh refinery is being built by an Indian company, Vedanta Alumina Ltd (VAL), based in Mumbai. But actually, VAL is a subsidiary of the London company, Vedanta Resources Plc. During the '90s, several cases were brought against Sterlite for non-payment of taxes and conjuring its profits out of India via a holding company in Mauritius, Twinstar Trading. Now the route for collecting profits abroad is streamlined.

The head of Sterlite-Vedanta is Anil Agarwal, who owns a multi-million house in London and is on Forbes' list as one of the world's top billionaires. The other Directors of Vedanta Resources included some people of great influence: Sir David Gore Booth had been Britain's High Commissioner to India (1996-8), Jean-Pierre Rodier had been a senior executive in Pechiney (France's aluminium company, which had helped set up Nalco and was now merging with Alcan), Naresh Chandra (India's Home Sec. 1990, Cabinet Sec. 1990-2, Senior Adviser to the PM 1992-5, and India's Ambassador to the US 1996-2001), and P.Chidambaram, who left to become India's Finance Minister in the Govt. elected in May 2004.

The major investors in Vedanta include Barclays, Deutsche Bank and ABN Amro. Financial investment is pouring into what was a remote area of west Orissa, much of it, according to common knowledge, in the form of bribes. The refinery is nearly complete.

An enquiry and strong report from the CEC (Central Empowered Committee, advisory body to India's Supreme Court), recommending closure of the whole project on environmental grounds has gone unheeded by the Supreme Court, which has repeatedly delayed judgement in the case during the very space of time when the refinery is fast nearing completion. It will be hard to order the dismantling of a modern, brand new alumina refinery, however dangerous for the environment its siting may be, right at the

start of the Bamsadhara river. Adivasi opposition under the *Niyamgiri Surakshya Samiti* (Niyamgiri Protection Society) was at first relatively muted in the face of violent attacks and arrests by police and goons. These culminated in the alleged murder of Sukra Majhi, a Kond leader run down alone in the evening of 27th March 2005, on the newly metalled road to Lanjigarh.⁸

Recently though, opposition to the refinery has swelled, as local people witness the corruption which Vedanta has brought to the area on many levels, and awareness increases of the environmental effects on what has been an extremely fertile area. The refinery's red mud pond (a notorious source of pollution, where a ton of toxic waste is dumped for every ton of alumina produced) is sited right beside the Bansadhara, one of Orissa's major rivers, near its source. Adivasi families have been torn into opposing factions. There have been numerous, though unrecorded cases of rape, work deaths in the harsh conditions at the refinery site, suicide and even murder in an area that previously had a low crime rate.

Huge bribes have reportedly been offered to facilitate environmental and forest clearance for the mining lease on top of the mountain. Yet this has not been forthcoming: the Supreme Court's delay in passing judgement has not allowed Vedanta to start bauxite mining, while it has allowed the refinery to be finished, for the case involves environmental clearance to mine Niyamgiri, as well as whether to allow the refinery. If this clearance is given and Niyamgiri starts to be mined it is a clear violation of India's legal system on several counts. What heightens this symbolism is the name and deity associated with this mountain range. *Niyam* means Law or Rule, and the local god, worshipped by Hindus and Adivasis, is Niyam Raja: Lord of Law. As a Dongria shaman tells his story:

"There are five brothers, and the youngest one is Niyam Raja..."

Niyam Raja wondered what to do and decided to become the guardian of the streams and mountain range. So he decided to stay on the top of the mountain, and created mango, jackfruit, pineapple, orange, banana, and seeds. He said to us "Now live on what I have given you." Actually Niyamgiri is the first Dongria, he is one of us, but he wants to stay at the top. We like to be here at his feet.

*At the top you have all the herbs and plants creating a magnetic force which keeps us healthy. We worship Niyam Raja by sacrificing goats and pigs. We have to offer him the first taste, otherwise he won't accept our offering. That is why we don't disturb anything on the top part of the mountain. Niyamgiri is sacred for us."*⁹

It seems that Dongrias have a clearer understanding about the life-giving role of these mountains than most scientists. The majority of experts in bauxite have long since limited their expertise to studying how to extract it and measure its properties for the al.co.s. Yet it is generally known that the bauxite cappings on top of mountains promote exceptional fertility in a wide surrounding area. Large tracts of the tropical forests of Brazil and the Guianas, west Africa, and north Australia are associated with a wealth in bauxite. Aluminium is the commonest mineral in the soil, forming around 8% of the earth's crust. Its bonding properties play an important role in the soil's ability to retain moisture. Bauxite's percentage of aluminium is the most concentrated of any rock, at up to 50% or higher. The layer of bauxite, usually 10-30 feet thick just below a hardened outer crust, retains moisture near the mountain summits even in the hot season, releasing the

monsoon rain throughout the year in numerous streams that form on the mountain's flanks. It is this water-retaining capacity that is under threat. Where bauxite is mined, the surrounding area hardens and fertility-promoting qualities go into reverse. The results can be seen around Panchpatmali, where a process of desiccation has taken place all around the mountain. The Dongri's taboo on cutting trees on Niyamgiri goes deep in their culture and religion. Who are we to say their concept of a "magnetic force" created by the wild plants and trees on top of the mountain is superstition?

And the environmental degradation that is certain to follow if Niyamgiri is mined is replicated in numerous other *Malis*, whose fate hangs in the balance. Near Karlapat to the west, Khandual Mali is now leased to the world's biggest mining company, BHP Billiton, which is sponsoring social work in Orissa to pave its way with "good works". Utkal is all set to go ahead and build its refinery in Kashipur to be fed by a mine on Bapla Mali (Bat Mountain), and a police post has been built near Kucheipadar to intimidate Kond resistance, alongside numerous arrests and other forms of intimidation. Just to the south, Hindalco has got clearance to build another refinery at Kansariguda, applying for clearance to mine Kodinga Mali; Larsen and Toubro has plans for similar mines on Kuturu Mali and Siji Mali; Jindal plans a mine on Mali Parbat; Nalco reportedly has plans to expand its operations onto Deo Mali, Orissa's highest mountain; a company called Jimpex has carried out a survey of the mountains in the remote area of the Kuttia Konds in southwest Kandhamahal district, where several villages are known to have been marked for displacement; and a Canadian company called Continental Resources has taken over the lease for Gandhamardan.

And without waiting for clearance to mine Niyamgiri, Vedanta is already starting construction of the new smelter it plans to supply from Lanjigarh. This is near Jharsaguda. Hindalco too plans another smelter in northwest Orissa. The DFID has given a grant for expanding the use of water and hydro-power from the Hirakud dam for multiple industries. New dams are also planned: a Lower Suktel dam (Balangir district) has already met determined resistance, which in turn elicited ferocious police repression.¹⁰ There is likewise both heavy investment in and resistance to plans for a massive new dam called Polavaram south of Orissa in Andhra Pradesh, where one element is likely to be Jindal's plans for bauxite mining at Anantagiri and a refinery and smelter near Vishakhapatnam.

Several of Orissa's biggest reservoirs have a close association with the aluminium industry. The Upper Indravati project involved seven dams. It reversed the Indravati's flow from south to north, where part of it is channeled along canals, where richer farmers have bought up land for intensive fertilizer-based farming, and part of it joins the Tel river. Vedanta has had a pipe constructed to bring water from the Tel near Kesinga to its Lanjigarh refinery, a distance of about 50 kms. The pipe is in place, but leaders in Kesinga have called a series of strikes, and are unwilling to allow their water to be taken to Vedanta's factory.

Indravati displaced about 40,000 people. As in all of Orissa's big dams, no proper record was kept of those displaced, and few if any were properly resettled while their compensation at a rate of Rs.14,000/- per acre for land taken has never been paid. Surrounding villages who were promised electricity from the huge hydro-power to be generated are still without any. Two of the four turbines got silted up and stopped working after a short time. The loss of forest alone has been horrific: the reservoir's sides

are a ghost-city of dead trees, and displaced people have felled much of the remaining forest all around the reservoir, simply to sell the wood as a means to survive. The project was funded by loans from the World Bank. As a tribal woman said to a WB official visiting a site to be affected in April 1993, "If we starve, you also bear a responsibility". A movement against the dam had been crushed by mass arrests in April 1992.¹¹

For Orissa's indigenous and cultivating population then, all these projects spell worse poverty and a destruction of their accustomed lifestyle. Hence the movements of indigenous people and activists, facing great odds and taking risks, but a steady stream running through Orissa's history since Gandhi's time and before. These movements across Orissa are increasingly well co-ordinated and supported both by intellectuals and activists in India as well as from abroad. The Kashipur movement in particular has long been seen as the cutting edge of People's Movements in India.

For the mainstream, non-cultivating, urban and town-based population, the industry promises a whole new era of prosperity, kicked off by huge sums of FDI (Foreign Direct Investment), where those with initiative and business acumen can make a quick fortune.

Yet the aluminium industry's history world-wide clearly shows the tendency of a struggle for profits between the companies and local governments at the expense of indigenous people – a struggle which the companies always win, backed up by the world's most powerful governments.¹² The companies' profit starts from getting bauxite cheap. Its value rises exponentially along the production line, especially with the huge subsidies the industry invariably receives in costs of electricity, water etc.

Social Structure of a Company

The situation outlined above unfolding in Kashipur and Lanjigarh is replicated in its structural features across all the continents. Probably a majority of the world's surviving indigenous peoples have faced displacement and a consequent onslaught on their culture and community from mining companies in recent years. As anthropologists, what can we offer in the way of a clear analysis of these structural features?

In its formal internal structure, a company such as Vedanta shows hierarchy in quite an extreme form from Directors and many layers of officials, down to those who mine Vedanta's bauxite (around 50-75 rupees per day at Vedanta's mines in Chattisgarh) and others who do the hardest labouring jobs.

But at the unformalized level of what actually happens, a company is not a discrete entity. Vedanta alumina (VAL) is a subsidiary of Vedanta Resources, and both form part of a conglomerate of interlocking companies. Then there are the lawyers who work for Vedanta, the Banks which invest in Vedanta, the political parties which become close to Vedanta....

And the security forces they hire to patrol their sensitive projects such as Lanjigarh. For villagers in that area, Vedanta is half-way to being their new authority, in control of jobs, housing, electricity and water supply, education, medical care, law and order.... The new factory and those in charge of it dominate their world now. Police tactics co-ordinate with the company's designs. At Maikanch and Kalinganagar, why were the police supporting the companies against those being dispossessed of their land by the company?

The way society divides when a mining company enters a new area is another structural feature. Splitting Kond villagers into those who have accepted compensation and those who have refused it is a classic divide-and-rule tactic, used by companies to divide the opposition. In Kashipur and Lanjigarh, many such tactics have repeatedly splintered the movement, though without managing to destroy it. In general, those who follow the company at any cost, rise some way up its hierarchy, while those who do not stay down. So families and villages become divided by different interests and levels of prosperity that never existed before. Commenting on this division generally within the large local area affected, people say:

Jo Loko companyro paise khauchanti support korichanti.

Jo loko companyro paise nahee khauchanti virod korichanti.

Those who eat the company's money support it.

Those who don't eat the company's money don't.

“Paise khauchanti” refers particularly to accepting bribes, and the almost universal conviction that the companies “buy people up” through various forms of donation or bribe.

In many ways, the dividing line between company and government is very tenuous. They form policy and take action together through business deals and shared interests, and also connect through “revolving doors”, as in P.Chidambaram’s transition from being a Vedanta Director (business executive), to becoming the Indian Government’s Minister of Finance. Do his business interests and aims as director of Vedanta not continue to inform his policies as Finance Minister?

And Sir David’s place among the Directors indicates a definite though discrete link with the UK Government. The DFID’s role in Orissa comes into crucial question here. They helped lay the groundwork of “liberalization” that allows a British registered company to lease land and build factories in Orissa. They are known to have helped Vedanta set up in London. The DTI (Dept for Trade and Industry of the British Government) advertised Vedanta’s Lanjigarh project as an investment and employment opportunity. The biggest question is whether the DFID’s main purpose in Orissa is really “poverty eradication” and “development”, or whether promoting British commercial interests is actually a higher priority – whether, in Vedanta’s case, there is a strong ulterior motive of gaining access, through a company financed and registered in Britain, to Orissa’s bauxite and expanding metal production?

The DFID co-ordinates its policy closely with the World Bank, whose loans are bigger to Orissa than to any other State. Orissa is India’s most badly indebted State. It can only repay its loans + interest with massive further loans.¹³ Obviously, behind closed doors, the Orissa Govt. has been persuaded that the only way out is to open up their mineral assets to foreign companies. And in a way, perhaps this is why Orissa entered the debt trap – lured there by the very projects which created the initial infrastructure for future foreign-controlled mining projects. The loans ensured it is the Govt., and even more the people of Orissa, who bear the real cost, while foreign companies are guaranteed the final profits.

A brief history of Alcan’s relationship with British industry makes these connections clear. The company was vital as a source for Britain’s arms industry during the first and second world wars. During the 1960s its interests in Guyana and Ghana were

supported by threats from the WB to withdraw loans to those countries.¹⁴ It also acquired control of the British Aluminium Corp., and now controls the major share of aluminium plants in Britain. The threats make it clear that Alcan has the strongest support from the US as well as British Governments. In Britain and the US, a regular, guaranteed supply of aluminium at the cheapest possible rate is a matter of highest concern, since it supplies one of the arms industry's basic resources, and "aerospace/defence" is central to both nations' economy. This is why aluminium is classed as a "strategic metal" by the US Administration, meaning its supply is to be guaranteed and stockpiled.

The connection between companies and political parties is another key part of the social structure. During the expansion of aluminium companies in the USA from the 1940s on, for example, Alcoa (Aluminum Company of America) was closely associated with the Republican party, Reynolds with the Democrats. Utkal in Kashipur was supported by an "All-Party Committee" from the three dominant parties from the early 1990s. Vedanta's links have been closer with the BJD and BJP parties, under Orissa's present Chief Minister, Naveen Pattnaik. In May, his administration made a joint statement with Vedanta about setting up a new Vedanta University in the State, making clear his full support for the Lanjigarh refinery. Meanwhile the Congress party has taken a firmer stand against the Vedanta deal and refinery, stressing the transgressions of the law.

But what difference do elections really make? If the Congress party come to power in Orissa, will they continue to try and prevent companies like Vedanta taking over tribal land, or will they succumb to pressures behind the scenes – pressures from foreign consultants backed by the WB and DFID, as well as "inducements" from the companies? In the US and UK too, no Government confronts the power of the big companies head-on: if a major part of Britain's revenue comes out of arms manufacture and sales, is it surprising if regulations controlling export to countries using them for internal repression have regularly been broken? And if revenue generated by exploiting Orissa's "mineral wealth" appears to be needed right now, not least to pay off the vast debt to the WB, what party elected in Orissa is going to be able to withstand the pressure and inducements, and say "No" to more mining deals?

In other words a company's political connections and finances are extremely complicated. But in anthropological terms, at the same time, the basic power structure imposing itself on Adivasis is in some ways very simple. They understand better than any social scientist the rough end of the company's power, and how it affects the behaviour of the administration towards them.

As anthropologists we are trained to look at the difference between how a society represents itself, and how it actually behaves – the *emic* and *etic* viewpoints. Companies are an interesting case, in that their "façade of caring" often contrasts starkly with their methods of manipulation and domination. BHP Billiton has been working carefully to build up a caring image in Orissa before it starts up any mining, through workshops with NGOs and a mobile eye clinic.

Vedanta's promotional literature emphasizes their CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility), and the benefits they bring to those they have displaced in education and medicine. The choice of name is highly significant. *Vedanta* encompassing the whole body of ancient Vedic and Upanishadic knowledge. What does the name signify? What does it mean that a company with this name invades an area so ruthlessly, as part of its

plan to become India's biggest aluminium producer? That it wishes to mine the sacred *Niyamgiris*? And what is the relationship between company codes of behaviour and the Adivasi codes of behaviour of those displaced or opposing the project?

From a tribal point of view, the company is essentially invading their territory, taking over their land and common space, and bringing in outsiders who serve the company or set up many side businesses. The police are completely with the company, arresting people who oppose it, and failing to register assaults on tribal people, including the death of Sukra Majhi and others.

The most striking model for this kind of takeover of a territory is a slow invasion staged by another company, many years ago: a British company, and one of the world's first registered companies. The East India Company set a model of legal and financial manipulation, backed always by the threat of force, to gain ever more territory, until it had become the Government of India, uniting a vast area under its control. Its first priority, like any company, was to make a profit. The hierarchy it established to make its profit is essentially still in place: the Collector in charge of a District is a post inherited from when he was the Company's Tax Collector. So how did a Company become a Government back then? And is the same thing happening today, in a different, more complex form?

<u>Company</u>	<u>Indian Government</u>	<u>UK Govt.</u>
Vedanta Resources in London and its investors, including Barclays Bank		DFID, DTI & other Ministries
VAL office, Mumbai	Central Ministries of Finance, Mining, Envir. & Forests, etc	DFID, WB & UN Agencies in Delhi & Orissa & their Consultants
Korba complex, where Vedanta Controls Balco's integrated alu-industry within Chattisgarh	The elected Govt. of Orissa & the administration, Civil, Police, Forestry	
The Lanjigarh project, Hierarchy of officials & employees	The Collector, SP, DFO and the hierarchy of Police, Forestry officials etc	
Daily contract labour on bauxite mines and construction		
The displaced and affected villagers, and the movement against Vedanta		

Social Structure of an aluminium company

This diagram suggests a model for Vedanta's social structure in its internal and external aspects, with head offices abroad, and co-ordination with certain Ministries and officials in the Indian and foreign Governments. Contrast in salaries alone shows the extent of the hierarchy: from the pay of a top Vedanta official or foreign consultant for the DFID and

other agencies, down to the daily contract labour in a bauxite mine etc, for about 50/- rupees per day. And outside and below the model, those who are displaced without rehabilitation, those who are forced or choose to remain outside the Vedanta system. Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus* stressed the hierarchical aspects in Indian society, but isn't this type of company hierarchy, that grew up in the West, a type even more extreme?

The question of development

Now that we have a model of the companies' social structure, how can we gauge the effects on what anthropologists usually study – the social structure of a tribal community?

The convention in company and government discourse is to assume that industrialisation increases people's standard of living through a handful of main indices, such as income, education, mortality rate. But statistics are easy to manipulate, and even if they could be collected in a perfectly neutral way, they tell a very one-sided story. In fact, none of the big displacements in Orissa kept even the most basic statistics to show the number of displaced and where they resettled.

And the indices themselves are highly flawed: a higher income does *not* mean a higher standard of living, because prices are rising, and money has assumed far greater importance than it used to have. Tribal people in Lanjigarh villages before Vedanta came grew most of their own food, so had relatively small financial needs. A tribal family working its land for instance, needs to hire people to work in the fields at the busiest times of year. But no-one, even from the same village, will work for 30/- rupees a day any more, since the Company pays 70/- a day for stone-crushing. Tribal people in Vedanta's colony for the displaced may have got cash compensation and their children get more schooling, but does this make up for the land and sense of community they lost? And how much of this schooling is a form of indoctrination?

To indicate the effects on tribal villages in the Lanjigarh area, let's divide the social structure into the various domains conventional in anthropology:

Religion & value system: Undermined by loss of connection with the land and divisions in the community, and the penetration of money into relationships. The very act of breaking up the earth for mining and construction contradicts the traditional reverence for *Darni Penu*, the Earth Deity. Traditional values, beliefs, norms of behaviour are thus torn apart, and shared festivals for first fruits of various crops etc that traditionally bring a village together fall into disuse.

Kinship & Clan system: Strong tensions emerge within and between families according to the stand different individuals take seeking employment or opposing the company. One of the biggest splits was between the six villages who accepted compensation for their land, who were displaced to "Vedantanagar" colony, and those which refused, and were left just outside the refinery walls. The first group will never grow their own food again and have lost the spatial community of a Kond village. Their fortunes now depend on pleasing company officials. The second group are also affected at every level, and blame the first group for giving in to the pressure and allowing the company in.

Political organisation: The process of land acquisition for the company involved side-lining the *gram sabha* (village council): according to the "Panchayat Raj" (empowerment of local government), no project should buy up tribal land without a due process of consulting this council. This side-lining effectively rendered village political organisation powerless. Almost every aspect of life that a village used to decide for itself is now in the hands of the company hierarchy.

Education: Most schools in tribal villages are set up with no understanding about indigenous knowledge and values, so indirectly or directly undermine them

Economy: The most basic change is from owning land and growing their own food to dependence on the company for earning a living; a complete break from the traditional, largely self-sufficient economy that defined their lives just 3 years ago.

Effects on tribal social structure

If any culture on earth is sustainable in the true sense of a lifestyle that does not damage the environment and can sustain itself for hundreds of years, a tribal culture is, where people grow their own food, and interact with nature without taking too much and basically without waste. Their concept of *niyam*, as rule or law, is very strong, and so are communal values of sharing and equality. Yet company literature actually suggests they are bringing Adivasis a more “sustainable” lifestyle! The use of this word “sustainable” has actually lost any environmental content and the new concept of “sustainable mining”, disseminated in the report by the world’s 10 biggest mining companies on *Mining, Minerals and Sustainable Development* (MMSD), has come to mean simply “profitable over a number of consecutive years”.¹⁵

Corporate culture comes down to a single value: profit. Companies are legally bound to put the aim of profit for shareholders above any other consideration. Green issues are only considered important in their PR aspect.¹⁶

In the name of “development” enormous sums have been allotted to tribal areas, and almost none of it reaches the people or helps to pull them out of poverty.¹⁷ Much of the money, such as loans for the Indravati reservoir, has actually reduced tribal people to a far worse poverty than they ever endured while living on their own land.

The main concept of development which generates projects from the DFID to the DKDA (Dongria Kond Development Agency) is “evolutionist” in its concept of fixed stages of development from “primitive” to “modern, industrialized”, and based in the idea that financial investment stimulates development. Obviously, big industrial projects represent a very one-sided kind of development, neglecting community values at the expense of material change, and they follow a model of change set by the West. Social evolutionism came out of Darwin’s theory of how species have evolved, but in many ways the application to society was done badly: every species has its own line of development, there is no single path.

Obviously tribal people wish for development in the overall sense of better water supply, education, healthy care, as well as better administration and justice from the law, but they wish to be in charge of the process. To quote Bhagwan Majhi, one of the leaders of the Kashipur movement against Utkal:

“We ask one fundamental question: How can we survive if our lands are taken away from us? We are tribal farmers. We are Earth Worms. Like fishes that die when taken out of water, a farmer dies when his land is taken away from him. So we won’t leave our land. We want permanent development. Provide us with irrigation to our lands. Give us hospitals. Give us medicines. Give us schools and teachers. Provide us with lands and forests. The forests we want. We don’t need the company. Get rid of the company.

We do not oppose development. In fact we all want development. But what we need is stable development. We won’t allow our billions of years old water and land to go to ruin just to pander to the greed of some officers. We ask them not to get engaged in these destructive works. Stop this work. Give

us what we want if you really mean development. We tell this to our leaders. But the government has not even agreed to talk to us. They should think that nature is not only for just one or two, or three or four generations. Nature has created us, it helps us survive.

Being rulers, how can you adopt policies that would destroy our land in the coming 30-35 years? Stop the company. We ask these questions. They say that you are fools. You don't understand, if you did, you would not oppose the company. The collector says this. The SP [Superintendent of Police] says this.

*I put a question to the SP. I asked him, Sir, what is development? What worth is development if it ends up in relocation of people? The people, for whom development is meant, should reap benefits. After them, the succeeding generations should reap the benefit. That is development. It should not be merely to cater to the greed of a few officers. To destroy the age-old resources is not development.” (from an interview in A. & S.Das' film, *Matiro Puko*)*

In the name of development, a cultural genocide is being waged against Adivasis: a slow death of everything which made their life meaningful.

Those who die in police shootings as at Maikanch and Kalinganagar are the most blatant deaths. These shootings follow a pattern set by the colonial rulers. General Dyer's slaughter in Amritsar in 1919 is the biggest, most infamous shooting on a crowd. But similar shootings took place in Orissa during the “Quit India” movement in 1942, in Balasore and Koraput Districts. The biggest police shootings in Koraput were against largely tribal crowds attacking the police stations at Pappardahandi and Maithili, where 15 and 5 people died respectively. For leading the latter attack, Lakshman Naik was executed by hanging in August 1943.

But this bloodshed is only the highest profile deaths. Well over one million people have been displaced by big industry in Orissa since Independence, over half of them Adivasis. Few indeed ever received adequate compensation. The rules restricting sale of tribal lands to non-tribals, which form part of the 5th Schedule of India's Constitution, have not been applied properly. This is the verdict of B.D.Sharma, ex-Collector of Bastar, and ex-Commissioner for Scheduled Tribes and Castes. As he says, the dominant attitude from the present administration seems to be that “a good tribal is a displaced tribal”.¹⁸ How can we even begin to know how many people have died from this displacement, in work accidents, from starvation, suicide, murder? Bhubaneswar is full of tribal refugees living in slums. What will they preserve of their culture and society?

For Adivasis, these big projects are not development at all. If pushed to admit that they obviously have not raised most oustees' standard of living, supporters of further industrialisation bring in another argument which justifies Adivasis' displacement as a “sacrifice” they have to make “for the nation's progress”. Essentially, this is the modern idiom of human sacrifice – the “price of progress” in an endless stream of modern “consumer durables”. Until we destroy the whole earth? And why should Adivasis of all people be sacrificed?

The main trend is to depict resistance to industrialisation as “anti-development”, and the tribal people themselves as “primitive” and “backward”. One stereotyped argument that is often repeated, which was first used against Verrier Elwin, is to distort any positive view of Adivasi society or idea that they should be allowed to remain in their

villages on their own land, into the intention to “keep them in a museum” – “*Do you want to keep them in a museum? How can we let them remain in their primitive state?*”

To understand the origin of this stereotype, one needs to comprehend the role which anthropology played during British times. Many administrators and missionaries wrote books about the tribes of central India. The theoretical or ideological framework almost without exception is “evolutionist”, promoting the idea that tribal society represents a “primitive stage of development” (Padel 1995). Modern anthropology rejects this view, and looks on tribal societies as no less sophisticated than mainstream society: more developed than us in many areas, less developed in others. The areas where tribal societies are more highly developed than us include a huge sensitivity and knowledge about relating to nature – in effect, the art of living sustainably.

The same administrators who wrote ethnographic volumes defining tribal societies through negative stereotypes, also set up ethnographic museums which displayed tribal artifacts, and even lifesize models of tribal family groups (in Bhubaneswar museum for instance), which again emphasize the idea that Adivasis are “primitive”. These museums “preserve” tribal culture by taking their tools, instruments and dresses from villages and placing them in museum cases to gather dust, where their life as objects of daily use simply dies. Everywhere, ethnographic museums have supplemented a political reality of systematically destroying tribal culture. In the US countless such museums preserve beautifully the artifacts of America’s indigenous tribes who suffered genocide from European settlers and soldiers. In Orissa, this process of death-by-museum continues today. Alongside the Damanjodi and Kolab dam development projects which dispossessed thousands of tribal families in Koraput District during the 1980s, the authorities paid for an ethnographic museum in Koraput town, to preserve a memory of the cultures they were destroying.

“Genocide” is thus not too strong a word for what is happening to Orissa’s Adivasis: a slow death. Not literally the physical death of every individual, as happened in the paradigm cases of America’s and Australia’s tribes. But a psychic death: technically, “ethnocide” - the killing-off of cultures. And without their culture, seeing the sudden confiscation of the land where their ancestors lived and the collapse of their communities, no longer able to grow their own food and forced to eke a living through degrading, exhausting coolie work for the very projects which destroyed their homes, Orissa’s displaced Adivasis exist in a living death, witnessing the extermination of all they have valued. The fact that their artifacts and traditional hand-made, home-dyed bark-cloths are safe in museums adds insult to their loss: these too are preserved in a living death.

So “preserving them in museums” is part of the genocide. And their traditional lifestyle, which Adivasis are risking their lives to maintain in Kashipur or Kalinganagar, is not primitive at all. It’s highly developed and a lot more sustainable than mainstream lifestyles.

Commemorating Kalinga through Steel

The mountains in north Orissa are as rich in iron as those in south Orissa are rich in bauxite. In fact what this means is that the Iron quantity is slightly higher in north Orissa: there the alumina content goes for waste. In south Orissa’s refineries, it is the iron content

that goes for waste. Hitler, or one of his metallurgists is said to have remarked that “he who controls Orissa’s iron, controls the world”.¹⁹

The iron-ore mines are already extensive, and around 80 sponge iron factories in north Orissa process the iron-ore into a form acceptable to a steel plant. Orissa presently has 3 or more working steel plants, the biggest at Rourkela run by SAIL (Steel Authority of India Ltd). Deals recently signed plan a huge expansion, in the mining as well as steel plants: over 30 new steel plants, most of them in an area named Kalinganagar

The first event in Indian history fully attested by inscriptions was Ashoka’s conquest and slaughter of the Kalinga people in the 3rd century BC. This is because Ashoka set up inscriptions all over his Mauryan empire commemorating this conquest. These were almost India’s first inscriptions. Ashoka was adopting and Indianising what was essentially a Greek custom, from Greek influence at his father’s court. But Ashoka’s inscriptions had an element of honesty and self-criticism unique in history. Far from glorifying his conquest, he is ashamed of it, because of the thousands of Kalinga people he had slaughtered and enslaved. Two of these inscriptions are cut on rock faces in Orissa, where the Kalinga lived. To justify his rule, Ashoka describes his administration in terms of *dharma* - human law based on divine law - and promises justice for everyone, including the “forest tribes”.²⁰

Konds, who call themselves is *Kuwinga*, are probably essentially the same people as the *Kalinga*. From early British Gazetteers it is clear that as Orissa’s Rajas near the coastal areas came under British control they threw out large populations of Konds, in order to increase the revenue from their lands and make them more “profitable”. These joined the main concentration of Konds in central-west Orissa, where Konds number around a million – Orissa’s largest tribe. Konds still live in many parts of Orissa’s coastal plain. A recently constructed Arati steel plant has displaced Konds from villages close to the city of Cuttack.²¹

Whether or not Konds are one and the same as the Kalinga people, to planners the name evokes merely Orissa’s “glorious past”. Hence “Kalinganagar”, an “industrial park” 13,000 hectares in size in Jajpur District where various companies have drawn up plans for new steel plants. Another supremely ironic naming, since the outrage which Orissa’s indigenous people suffer now evokes the outrage which Kalinga suffered at Ashoka’s hands.

Orissa’s present plans for expanding iron-ore mining and steel plants are on a staggering scale. Head of the list is the Orissa Govt.’s deal with Posco, whose main objective is Orissa’s iron, but agreed to set up a steel plant in Orissa if it could import a certain percentage of iron-ore from outside India. At a range near Keonjhar named Gandhamardan (like the bauxite-range in west Orissa), Rio Tinto Zinc has been involved in tests in a joint venture with SAIL, with “illegal” unregistered mines adjacent to the Public Sector mines. The negative impact on tribal villagers is hard to convey. Streams from the mountain they always relied on are running dry, forest is disappearing, and their life is dominated by the earth-moving vehicles operating above and all around them.²²

Plans for Kalinganagar’s steel plants were formulated during the 1990s, when land acquisition was entrusted to IDCO (the Industrial Development Corp. of Orissa). Presently two steel plants are working, and two or three others are at an advanced stage of construction. The biggest working one belongs to Nilachal Ispat Nigam Ltd. It displaced 639 families, of which only 183 have members working for the company.²³

On 9th May 2005, a company called Maharashtra Seamless Steel planned a *puja* to propitiate the earth (*Bhumi*) on the site chosen for their steel plant. Film footage shows the authorities disarming seated Adivasis of their bows and arrows, before attacking them with *lathis*, the event culminating in a woman run over by a truck and killed, and many arrests. 24 women from Chandia and other villages were arrested and kept locked up for over 3 weeks.²⁴ Since then, Maharashtra Seamless has cancelled their project.

Two days after this on 11th May, another *Bhumi Puja* in west Orissa caused similar violence. This was to inaugurate construction of the Lower Suktel dam project in Balangir District, displacing at least 26 tribal villages. Already the authorities had tried to force people to accept advance compensation, though most refused. Villagers beaten by the police at this event, whom we met, were still stunned at the violence, saying, surely this is how police behaved during the Freedom Struggle against the British *Raj*?²⁵ Adivasi religion tends to honour the Earth above other deities, so they are incensed by Hindu *pujas* to the Earth performed by Brahmin priests as a prelude to dishonouring the Earth by bulldozers which level it – especially when the piece of Earth in question is their own land.

The two biggest steel plants planned at Kalinganagar are by Tata and Mittal.. Tata's attempt to set up a big new steel plant at Gopalpur in south Orissa was defeated by a popular movement in 1996. On 23 July 2005 Tata performed their *Bhumi Puja* at Kalinganagar, despite a protest by around 3,000 Adivasis. A public hearing on the issue came 4 days later on the 27th! And so the ground was laid for the Kalinganagar massacre.

On 2nd January 2006 the Jajpur District authorities were determined to inaugurate construction of Tata's steel plant, which Adivasis from various villages were determined to prevent. When the authorities refused dialogue with Adivasi leaders, protestors broke through a police cordon. After a policeman was killed, police opened fire on the crowd, and firing continued a long time. The final death toll was 12 Adivasis dead (later rising to 14), and 70 badly wounded. Dead and wounded included women and children. Six Adivasi corpses were returned for cremation two days later with their hands cut off, and genitals mutilated.²⁶

From then till now (Jan.-April) Jajpur Adivasis have blockaded National Highway 200 from north Orissa, affecting transportation of iron-ore being taken for export via Paradeep. This blockade is organised by a local Adivasi organisation set up in the Kalinganagar area in 2004, *Bisthapan Birodhi Jan Mancha* (People's Platform Against Displacement), whose demands include proper land-for-land compensation and punishment for the officials responsible for the massacre, including Saswat Mishra, who had been posted as Collector here in Jajpur District after his evident "success" promoting Vedanta as Kalahandi Collector. The Adivasi blockade like the massacre has divided opinion in Orissa. Some mainstream commentators have depicted these Adivasis as "terrorists" who "asked for it" or "outsiders", since 80% of them are of the Ho tribe, who may have migrated from the area north of Orissa in the early 20th century. The Orissa Govt. has rushed a new "R & R policy" (Resettlement and Rehabilitation) through the Legislative Assembly, determined to end the blockade as soon as possible for fear of its negative impact on potential investors, and the stalling of Tata's steel plant.

This new R & R policy was effectively written for the GoO by the DFID and UN officials overseeing policy in Orissa.²⁷ It still falls short of compensating land for land lost, and its intension of making those displaced "stakeholders" in the project is little

more than nice words: it does not mean being in a position to dictate policy about what happens on their dispossessed lands.

Meanwhile, protests against iron mining and sponge-iron plants in north Orissa have been growing in strength. In one case, near Orissa's biggest steel plant at Rourkela, several of these factories had been targeted by a large crowd of protestors on 24 March 2006, complaining of lack of compensation, heavy pollution and the Govt.'s failure to ensure factories' compliance with laws restricting pollution, more employment of local people (since the tendency in all these projects is to bring in outsiders, who get more jobs than locals do). Police charged the crowd, and arrested about 100 people, many of them women and schoolchildren, who have been held for several months.²⁸ In another case, on 20th May, security forces from Bhushan Steel Company opened fire on a crowd of protestors during construction of the boundary wall for a steel plant in Dhenkanal District. Ten were injured, but this time, the Collector arrested 5 of the company officials in charge.²⁹

The history of Iron and steel is also the history of war and conquest, from the start of the iron age to the various steps in the development of steel, to the US steel magnates known as "the robber barons", who formed many of the patterns of modern company behaviour, to the steel companies such as Krupp who fuelled the first world war, to the use of local bauxite, limestone & dolomite in Orissa's steel plants. Arms companies use as much steel as they ever did, while it is as true now as in 1951 that

*"at the very core of the military-industry complex... Aluminum has become the most important single bulk material of modern warfare. No fighting is possible, and no war can be carried to a successful conclusion today, without using and destroying vast quantities of aluminum... Aluminum makes fighter and transport planes possible. Aluminum is needed in atomic weapons, both in their manufacture and in their delivery... Aluminum, and great quantities of it, spell the difference between victory and defeat..."*³⁰

The civil war in Bastar

Tata's steel plant in Orissa may have been stalled by the Kalinganagar protest, just as its plans for a steel plant at Gopalpur were stopped by a movement in 1996. In neighbouring Chattisgarh the civil war has created a climate where tribal resistance is greatly weakened, and Tata's plans for a steel plant at Chitrakut in Bastar (just beside the area's largest waterfall on the Indravati river) are moving ahead. Several MoUs for mining and metal factories have been signed for the Bastar region. Since over 60, 000 tribal people have been removed from their villages by the war, their ability to fight displacement has been seriously weakened.

Latest reports from a BBC correspondent suggest that the number of displaced Adivasis has reached 100,000, and that destruction of villages and forced relocation of their population has become a routine practice by the *Salwa Judum* and security forces, carried out with beatings, killings and rape. It is even said that villagers refusing to join *Salwa Judum* are punished with 7 lashes and a fine of Rs.700/-. From June 2005-June 2006 the official death toll in the war inflicted by the Maoists numbered 191 civilians, 25 paramilitaries (including soldiers of the Naga battalion brought to Bastar in 2005), and 12 SPOs (*Salwa Judum*). The death toll inflicted by security forces on civilians and Maoists

is not forthcoming. It is unlikely to be lower, and could be significantly higher than these figures.³¹

Bastar shows how quickly the division of society over mining issues can descend to the extreme level of civil war. Briefly, Naxalites have controlled the remoter parts of Bastar for over 20 years.³² Their base there has got stronger, and alliance with Nepal's highly successful Maoist uprising has turned them into Maoists, in the popular mind at least, so that the terms Maoist and Naxalite are almost synonymous now. Within the last year, the Indian army has launched a full-scale war against them, partly to try and prevent Maoists' power increasing to the level it has in Nepal, since the PM has declared this war against the Maoists the greatest internal security threat India has ever faced. And partly in order to impose rapid industrialisation on the Bastar region without the kind of protests which have held up projects in Orissa. The forced relocation of over 600 tribal villages has been spurred by trying to cut the Maoists' support base. It also opens up the land to be taken over much more easily by corporate ventures.

The war really took off when *Salwa Judum* ("Peace March") was founded in June 2005 as a tribal youth militia against the Naxalites. It was started by a tribal politician of the ruling BJP party, Mahendra Karma. Advertised as a "spontaneous uprising of the Adivasis against the Naxalites" it was actually a police-armed and -trained militia, which has effectively divided most Adivasi communities in Bastar, polarizing people into having to take either the Naxal or the *Salwa Judum* side. There are reports of police and army burning tribal villages suspected of supporting the Maoists, and forcing the youth among the refugees to train as *Salwa Judum* cadres, where they automatically get a salary as SPOs (Special Police Officers). This instigates the Maoists to attack and kill *Salwa Judum* people, and there have been a number of gruesome cold-blooded killings by Maoists of tribal *Salwa Judum* members. Yet the Maoists too are largely Adivasis, even if their leadership may be from outside Bastar.³³

And atrocities of the security forces and *Salwa Judum* against Maoists and civilians are not reported. The Chattisgarh Govt. passed a special Security Act earlier this year which imposes a complete censorship on reports on the Bastar war that do not follow Govt. sources, and journalists who have tried to bring out real news or reveal the real status of *Salwa Judum* have been hounded.³⁴

The dominant model of warfare now is the US-led war in Iraq, and the Bush administration's rejection of the Geneva Convention on the spurious basis that terrorists sometimes target civilians and do not observe the conventions of warfare either, brings a degeneration in the rules of war. In Bastar too, it is clear that numerous atrocities are being committed by both sides, even though only one side's atrocities are being given coverage in the media – the side labelled "terrorists". Yet both sides are clearly using terror as a weapon.

This civil war is thus a classic example of the "resource curse", where a region's mineral (or other natural resource) wealth becomes a cause for a breakdown in social norms, leading to civil war (as in Chattisgarh) and impoverishment (Orissa).³⁵ Many countries in Africa and South America have gone down this road. In Columbia for example, the polarisation of large areas between FARC (and other communist-inspired military groups) and right-wing militias supported by the army, has long targeted anyone who makes an independent stand for human rights. And in Peru, the rise and fall of *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) serves as a close model for what has happened in

Nepal and Bastar: the high level of exploitation combined with Govt. attempts to impose projects and displace indigenous people allowed the most extremist faction of Maoists to emerge as *Sendero Luminoso*, which was as uncaring of indigenous people and their traditions as the mainstream was.

Mao himself imposed rapid industrialisation, aimed at maximizing steel production, with unparalleled ruthlessness: 30 million people are said to have died as a result of his enforced shift away from agriculture to industry.³⁶ Most of the Maoists in Bastar appear to have little respect for tribal traditions, and by undermining the old patterns of leadership and political organisation they may have weakened the very tradition of resistance which Bastar has been so famous for. Since the widespread rebellion in 1910, Bastar Adivasis have shown a strong ability to unite in direct action, which paid off in resistance to plans for a steel plant at Mavalibhata in 1992.³⁷

Bastar is India's tribal centre. The best books on tribal India are about Bastar's most famous tribes, the Muria and Maria Gonds.³⁸ Until June 2005 the position of Bastar's Adivasis was still generally free-er than elsewhere in India, in the sense of being less controlled and imposed on and less displaced, even though the level of exploitation had steadily increased.

If Bastar shows the extreme form of dispossession and de-tribalisation by civil war, Orissa shows a slower genocide. Both patterns were set long ago throughout North and South America, where settlers gradually took over almost all the land that had belonged to indigenous people, and justified doing so by a rigid set of negative stereotypes about the indigenous people, and a mindset completely closed to "the other", whose land they invaded. More tribes were exterminated than survived. In many cases, conflict was brought on by miners pursuing the mineral wealth in the mountains, gold and silver first, followed by other minerals. Often soldiers or settlers pursued a conscious policy of genocide.³⁹

Orissa's Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik, has staked much on a series of deals with mining companies, in the belief that exploiting the State's rich mineral resources will transform Orissa from poor to rich, and pay off its debts. In the Orissa Assembly on 4th Dec. 2004 he stated:

"No-one – I repeat no-one – will be allowed to stand in the way of Orissa's industrial development and the people's progress."

But who defines the people's progress? It is a striking feature of the whole controversy that the voices of Adivasis have rarely been heard. The media and staged events in Bhubaneswar give them only snippets of coverage, compared to the Ministers and others at the apex of the power structure. The same Naveen Patnaik wrote in his introduction to his book *The garden of Life: an introduction to the healing plants of India* (1993):

"The fundamental philosophy of Ayurveda says that suffering is a disease..., that man is interdependent with all other forms of life. Spirit is described as the intelligence of life, matter as its energy. Both are manifestations of the principle of Brahman, the oneness of life.

To the founders of Ayurveda... The man who recognizes how he is linked with universal life is a man who possesses a sound soul because he is not isolated from his own energies, nor from the energies of nature. But as the highest form of life, man also becomes its guardian, recognizing his very survival depends on seeing that the fragile balance of nature, and living organisms, is not disturbed.

*In Ayurvedic terms this means that man must prevent wanton destruction. What he takes he must replace, to preserve the equilibrium of nature. If he cuts down a tree for his own uses, he must plant another. He must ensure the purity of water. He must not poison the air... If a man wilfully disturbed the balance of living things, he disturbed himself.”*⁴⁰

This is a great description of the philosophy of *advaita Vedanta*. Presumably when he wrote these words in America, Naveen did not know he would one day try and impose a programme of rapid industrialisation in his native Orissa. Speaking against this programme, Kishen Pattanayak, a leader of Orissa who followed the Gandhian socialist path, summarised the argument as follows:

*“Orissa has enormous mineral reserves. This is considered to be the biggest asset to increase the prosperity of Orissa. This is really a myth. Mining areas of Orissa have never been known for being rich or developed. Now the condition is becoming much worse.....A few national/multi-national companies and their contractors and those ministers and officials helping these companies in unlawful, unethical manner become the owners of huge property. Orissa as a state is not going to get any benefit from this.....Overall the state and the people will suffer the loss, only a small class of rich people will be created. Rich will become richer, poor poorer. Mining is a curse to the indigenous people and the environment.”*⁴¹

For Adivasis then, the idea of more projects displacing them is anathema, and a case of over-industrialisation, not real development at all.

Anthropologists have often served the administration as well as mining corporations, as gatherers of data and legitimizers of imposed change.⁴² How do we help to build up a consensus in favour of allowing Adivasis their land and separate identity? How do we build an authoritative critique of the genocidal policies still being imposed on indigenous people before it is too late?

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28. About 40 sponge iron factories operate in Sundargarh District alone. Most lack proper approval or safety measures (an article in *Sambad* dated 11/4/06 names 4 factories where workers had recently been killed). Nepaz, the focus of protest, is the District's largest. It started up in 2002, without the required Gram Sabha permission. The *gherao* outside this and 4 other factories on 24th March was attended by about 5,000 people, supported by a local MLA. They were demanding statutory pollution controls, more employment for locals, and proper development of the surrounding area. According to news reports the police attacked first, and after people entered the Nepaz factory gates, police *lathi*-charged and made a first wave arrests. More followed in the evening to dispel a road block, and more the following night and morning, tracing protestors to their villages. A month after these arrests no bail had been granted, even for the schoolchildren whose ages had been falsified. Such "false charges" have been a consistent weapon used to harass those who protest against industrial projects. Information from Voice for Child Rights Orissa (vcrorissa@yahoo.com) and a freelance journalist (pradeep_baisakh@yahoo.com).
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Felix Padel is a freelance anthropologist trained at Oxford and Delhi Universities. His first book analysed the imposition of colonial structures over a tribal society. For the past 4 years he has been researching and writing a sequel to this with the Orissa writer and film-maker Samarendra Das about attempts to set up an aluminium industry based on mining the Kond's mountains, and the indigenous movement against.