

# BASTAR

DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY



PEOPLE'S UNION FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES / MADHYA PRADESH / JULY 1989



Bastar, located on the south eastern corner of Madhya Pradesh, is India's third largest district. It is larger than the state of Kerala. More than 1000 of its villages have less than 200 population. Altogether there are 3388 villages and 7033 sub villages and hamlets that are spread across the district in 32 development blocks or 42 police station areas, which are grouped into eight tahsils identified above.

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Bastar neatly fits into any one of the many caricatures that are built about adivasis living in the interior forests of our country. To the elite of the society they are 'savages', yet to be brought into the folds of civilization. To the liberal critiques, they along with their forests are to be 'protected from any effects of development'. To many anthropologists the area is 'an unblemished tribal heaven' that needs to be retained as a living museum. To progressive civil servants, serving or retired, what the adivasis need is government officials who can serve 'as models of rectitude.....as lonely sentinels of the forests'. But to the authors of one of the Madhya Pradesh Five Year Perspective Plans the Bastar adivasis are 'habitual to drink and remain idle. They do not want to work to raise their living standards'. And to the Madhya Pradesh State Forest Development Corporation Bastar is 'the El Dorado of modern times.....the Ruhr of the East'.

These inherited images acquired over years of mystification are now confounded by the rise of the Naxalite Movement in Bastar. Isolated and somewhat sensational accounts of their activities are appearing in the media with regular frequency in recent times. State violence, where policemen are taking the law into their own hands, is also increasing to alarming proportions. Currently the district with the lowest density of population in the state is also the one with the highest density of armed police. Concerned with this situation, the Madhya Pradesh unit of the People's Union for Civil Liberties (MPPUCL) appointed a team to investigate specific allegations of state violence in the context of the social origins of current tensions in the area. Hence this report on Development and Democracy in Bastar.

The team consisted of Dr. Anjan Ghosh (Centre for Study of Social Sciences, Calcutta), Dr. Urijit Jainik (Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay), Dr. Rajiv Lochan Sharma (Gandhi Medical College, Indore), Ms. Renu Mittal (Indore University, Indore), C.V.Subbarao (Delhi University, Delhi), Ms. Sadhna Saxena (Kishore Bharati, Bankhedi) and Joydeep Gupta (Statesman, Delhi).

## I. BACKGROUND

The popular images of Bastar are rooted in the unique coexistence of a wide range of agrarian technologies that came to prevail from time to time in the history of the region and the country. For instance, in Abhujhmar (see map), a natural division of irregular hills and valleys, people are still engaged in producing kodo-kutki (coarse millets) by shifting cultivation (11% of the total area under cultivation, and only 0.00018% of the total area is under irrigation). For most of the year they sustain themselves with food gathered in the forests. Just to the north of them lie pockets of Kanker and Narayanpur tahsils where the most modern farming techniques can be seen in operation. In these undulating plains, drained by the river Mahanadi, lies much of the two percent irrigated area of the district. A part of it also falls under the Dandakaranya Development Authority (DDA) where displaced refugees from East Bengal, known for their farming techniques, were settled. Here 67% of the area is under cultivation, of which 17% is under irrigation. If today even Bastar can boast of consumption of chemical fertilizers (1.4 kg per hectare), tractors (87 in the district) and oil and power operated pumpsets (1275 in the district), it is mostly because of these small pockets. But to the north and east of these pockets you will find people engaged in settled agriculture without the use of ploughs. South of the river Indravati, in the interior of Bijapur, Konta and Dantewada tahsils, people cultivate just one crop in an area drained by two perennial rivers Sabari and Indravati. They depend upon the vagaries of rainfall. The community maintained tanks, once the pride of the region, have gone into disrepair after the state took them over. Yet the tanks and ponds are the only sources of water for their fields (in the district as a whole about 3500 tanks and ponds cover 82% of the irrigated area). People use the plough here, but it is the wooden and not the iron plough (there are 2610 wooden ploughs for every iron plough in use in the district). Perhaps in no other district of the country do such a wide range of technologies coexist, with or without peace.



### BASTAR : AGRICULTURE

Area under cultivation :	802556 ha
Percentage under irrigation :	2%
Cropping intensity :	103
Main crops :	Rice, kodo, kutki, maize
Breakup of working population -	
Cultivators :	72% (80%)
Agricultural labourers :	17% (15%)
Others :	11% (5%)

(The figures in brackets relate to scheduled tribes)

But then these are not merely different technologies but also different social arrangements, different cultural systems and in fact different communities. Bastar remains an ethnological enigma for many. To the outsiders the people belong to just one stock, called the scheduled tribes, who constitute 68% of the district's population. But within them, there are a range of communities. In the north are Halbis, to the east are Bhattra and Dhurwa and in the south are Dorlas. All the rest are Gonds, who are the majority. The names given to them by the earlier generations of civil servants and anthropologists stuck to them. And the various Gond groups are now called Raj Gonds (*Koitur Gond*), living mostly in Jagdalpur, Konta and Dantewada tahsils; Bison-horn Marias (*Dandami Maria*) in Bijapur and other parts of the south; Hill Marias (*Mota Kitoo*), an identified primitive tribe in Abhujhmar and Murias in most parts of north Bastar.

If these adivasis have remained as they have it is because there are no options available to them. Each time a new system is imposed or a new technology is unleashed, it has closed the options for another set of people in another area. For instance, during the colonial period, people in Kutru and Bhopalpatnam Zamindaries had to abandon their fields due to the Zamindari oppression. They fled to neighbouring areas. After Independence and Zamindari abolition, they returned to find that their fields were now notified as forests, under the newly introduced Forest Act. Development projects in the present period have also restricted their access to the land and forests. In addition these projects have degraded and depleted the forest cover. The practices and customs of these people, which they were initially allowed to continue as 'privileges' and 'concessions' granted by the state, are now treated as 'crimes', to be punished. (The common people refer to them as *POR jurmana*, a reference to the fines levied on the basis of Preliminary Offence Reports under the Forest Act.) But having been left with no other option, they 'encroach' upon the forest, bringing it under cultivation with the help of their axes, or they just go hunting in the lean season. Thus, these people, along with their techniques, social relations, and culture, frozen due to the process of development, came to be termed as primitive. In a village inside the Abhyaranya Tiger Reserve, for instance, we found that the Telugu-speaking weaver caste, Netakanis, and the Marathi speaking dalit caste, Mahars, now go once in a while with their Maria brethren on hunting expeditions!! If the development process becomes predatory, then primitivity becomes their only means of survival, their form of development.

#### BASTAR AND ITS PEOPLE

Area :	39060 sq km
Population :	1.85 million
Density per sq km :	47
Females per 1000 males :	1002
Scheduled Tribes :	68%
Gondi speaking :	36%
Halbi speaking :	24%
Others :	40%

The technological and economic developments also have a cultural and political dimension on the basis of which the administration regulates their lives. Physiographically, Bastar is part of the larger Dandakaranya region. In the colonial period the region was under

a range of administrations. Direct colonial rule existed in the Central Province (Chandrapur) and the Agency areas of the Madras Presidency (East Godavari and Koraput). Hyderabad, the largest Indian state, governed parts (Adilabad, Karimnagar, Warangal and Khammam) while the Gajpat states of Orissa governed the rest (Kalahandi). Bastar itself was under Bastar (Jagdalpur) and Kanker states. Historically, however, the movements of people were never governed by these divisions. The cultural enmeshment of different adivasi communities thus remains an enigma. In the region as a whole 72 identified dialects are now in vogue.

Onto this was imposed the linguistic reorganisation of the states in the fifties, and the region was distributed between Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, and Maharashtra. But these linguistic divisions have no relevance here. In Bastar, for instance, according to the 1981 Census, 60 percent of the people do not speak any of these four languages: Hindi, Telegu, Marathi, or Oriya! Yet these serve as the basis to understand the current tensions. The most common refrain about the Naxalite movement is that it is alien, an offshoot of the 'Andhra' Naxalite movement. The counter insurgency operations rest on the premise that the Naxalites are a 'gang of dacoits moved into Bastar from the border beyond', in the words of the District Magistrate (DM) whom we interviewed. But to the adivasis of South Bastar, Kursum Rajakka, the 24 year old Naxalite woman who was killed in an encounter at Mukabelli on 4 March this year, is just a fellow Dorla tribal woman, even though she hails from Vajhed mandal (Khammam) which is now part of Andhra Pradesh. Bala Ramanna, killed along with another person, Ramesh, in the forests between Badma and Durgaon, Kaiskal range, Narayanpur on 7 June this year, is a Halbi speaking tribal even though he was not from North Bastar where most of them live, but from Sandra, Konta on the southern border!

The post independence developments also have important implications for adivasi jurisprudence. The adivasis have their own legal system to which some of the offences, although listed in the Penal Code, were delegated from the colonial period. Presently, the adivasi panchayat has hardly any legal sanction, although local policemen take its help in investigation and prosecution. The distinctive feature of their system is that in it no offence is treated as private in character. All offences are adjudicated by the community and the guilty are identified by the panchayat. Although the Indian Penal Code came into effect in Bastar almost 70 years ago, its penetration is still incomplete. The adivasis are still attached to their own ethical and penal system and regulate their lives by their own codes.

But these days activities of the adivasi panchayats get branded as Naxalite activities. For example, in March this year the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) tabled a call attention motion in the state assembly on a Naxalite attack in Geedam in which their local leader Tiwari was hit. Our investigation reveals a different story. An adivasi, Sonkuram, from village Marsegaon 10 km from Geedam, was involved in an argument with the wife of Harun Seth, a powerful trader and a local BJP leader, in the weekly Sunday market at Geedam. The son of the Seth came to the market and beat up Sonkuram. In adivasi tradition if any of them gets beaten up by a non-adivasi, then the entire village has to be treated to a feast of meat and drink, the cost of which is to be borne by the non-adivasi who beat him up. So Sonkuram, in accordance with the decision of his village panchayat, treated his entire village to the feast. Next Sunday, at the weekly market, the adivasi leaders called the Seth and asked him to pay. He refused. Not

only that, but Vijay Pratap Tiwari, President of the BJP, South Bastar and Joshi, SHO, Geedam, intervened on his behalf. Tiwari was reported to have slapped Sonkuram. Enraged, the adivasis beat up both Tiwari and Joshi. The following Sunday hundreds of adivasis, armed with bows, arrows and axes, laid a siege of Geedam. The situation was diffused without any untoward incident but without any redressal either. The adivasis remained sore about the whole affair. Three months after the incident, when we visited Geedam, a local journalist informed us that ever since this incident neither Tiwari nor Joshi can go into the villages for fear of reparaissals. But Mr. Joshi was still in charge of the police station in whose jurisdiction he was forbidden to enter. It was this incident that was described by the BJP leader in the state assembly as a 'Naxalite attack', a version duly picked up by the Bhopal-Indore media. The gap between this perception and the actual incident needs no further comment.

The gap is not merely a communication gap. Nor is it, in all cases, a willful distortion. It is located in the very nature of the development process whose interface with the adivasi society has now become the arena of violent social tensions.

## II. DEVELOPMENT AND DEGRADATION

Bastar contains one of the most deciduous forests of the country, consisting of sal, teak and mixed forests. The first attempt to bring its forests under direct state administration was in 1896. Later, in 1908, the Bastar Forest Manual came into effect. A year later the first commercial exploitation began with a lease given to Beckett and Co. for extraction of 25,000 railway sleepers from sal trees. The Second World War increased the scale of operations. After independence when Bastar and Kanker states were merged with the Indian Union, the old Forest Act (1927) and the new Forest policy (1950) were brought into force in Bastar.

In the period 1956-81, a total of 1,25,483 hectares of forest was transferred to various development projects. Notable among them was the Dandakaranya Displaced People's Project where initially 7330 Bengali refugees were allotted 60,000 hectares of forest land. They soon brought 40,000 hectares of this into cultivation. The other major project was the National Mineral Development Corporation's iron ore mining project at Bailadila. Bastar has about 10 per cent of the country's iron ore reserves. Located south of the river Indravati, in Dantewada tahsil, the mines started operating in 1968. They also led to the establishment of the district's first and only railway line from the port city on the east coast, Vishakhapatnam, to the mining township, Kirandul. Twenty five years ago, when the construction work started, Kirandul was one of the two villages from where about 40 Dandami Maria families were displaced. Today Kirandul has just about two percent tribal population. Almost all of the output from these mines is exported to Japan and the unit is now India's largest foreign exchange earning unit. Currently the annual production is in the range of five million tonnes.





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#### FORESTS IN BASTAR

Area :	54%
Reserved :	55%
Protected :	30%
Others :	15%

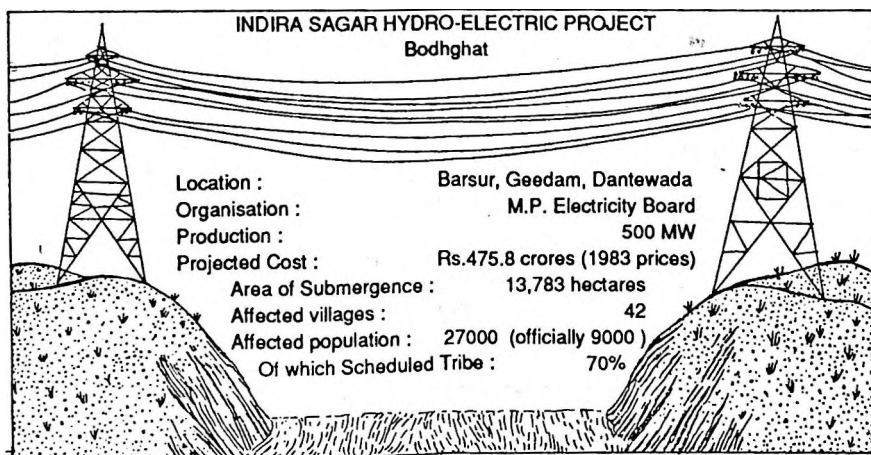
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In addition to iron ore, the area contains a number of other reserves like limestone, dolomite, bauxite, manganese, and tin. Limestone mines, with an average annual production of 1.5 million tonnes, feed the two cement factories on the outskirts of Jagdalpur town. In the early eighties large scale illegal tin mining was reported in Sukma and Dantewada region of South Bastar. Big traders and mining officials were reportedly involved in buying tin from the tribals, who smelted it and sold it in their weekly markets. Press reports and criticism led the government to initiate measures to stop this. In 1983, about 112 cases involving 141 people, mostly adivasis, were launched under the Mining and Minerals Regulation and Development Act.

In the early seventies, following the recommendations of the National Commission on Agriculture, an ambitious plan was drawn up to develop industrial forestry in Bastar. Jagdalpur, Barsur and parts of Bijapur tahsil areas, constituting 25% of the district, were identified as the industrial catchment areas. It was in this framework that the famous World Bank financed pine plantation scheme came into existence. Known as the MP Forestry Technical Assistance Project, it led to the establishment of the MP State Forest Development Corporation (MPSFDC). In July, 1975, 3100 hectares of forest in Kurundi, near Jagdalpur, was cleared and replanted with pine. But stiff opposition from various quarters resulted in the termination of the project in 1981. Some of the planted pine was destroyed in a fire, suspected to have been set by some of the adivasis under the leadership of Baba Bihari Das. Baba, who campaigned for some sort of Hindu revivalist ideas was an influential figure in politics in Bastar. Later he was externed from the district. In any case much of the remaining pine was attacked by an epidemic of fungus in 1984-85. NMDC took over the office sites and quarters of the pine plantation project and prepared a plan for dolomite mining in a different forest area (about 2450 hectares). But again it was dropped due to resistance. Independently a larger scheme of establishing a series of eight or nine hydel projects on Indravati was proposed. The total submergence area of the scheme is around 31,000 hectares and the total power generating capacity is around 1500 MW. Starting from Ichampalli, Gadchiroli, these projects

were opposed by a wide range of forces. For the present they are not under active consideration by the government, except for the one at Bodhghat, which is under way.

The first survey of the project was undertaken in 1962. The foundation stone was laid seventeen years later in 1979. Initial clearing, construction of the office site, the quarters and an impressive bridge on the river Indravati, near Barasur, was undertaken in 1984. Throughout the two decades when it was under consideration no one really bothered to inform, let alone involve the people whose villages are to be submerged in the project. In recent years organised resistance has begun. The lands here, located along the river bed, have high productivity. A variety of pulses, millets and high quality rice like badshahbhog are produced, which sustains the villagers for most of the year. In the lean season they depend on the sal rich forest. The villagers, mostly Marias, do not want to leave the area. The manner in which they have been treated has generated complete mistrust of all institutions among them. They even made an abortive bid to manhandle their MP, Mankuram Sodhi (*'mushkil se ek bar aaya tha, prashasan ko leke'*). Faced with their resistance, the government is coming out with more and more attractive promises of rehabilitation. The scheme was made in accordance with the MP Rehabilitation Act, 1985 and modelled along the lines of a similar scheme of the other controversial project of the state, the Narmada Sagar Project. It has a nineteen point programme which promises, among other things, land, houses, and jobs in MPEB. The compensation, which was only Rs.1000 per acre in the six hundred acres already cleared at Barsur, is now raised to Rs.4000. A model rehabilitation village at Bodhli (Kundri), about 45 km from their place, was built to convince them. But they remain unconvinced. Their agitation is supported by Jai Kishore Sharma, a dissident secretary of DCC-I and also environmentalist pressure groups based in Jagdalpur, Bhopal and Delhi. The Naxalites have also announced their formal opposition. But all major political parties, including Congress-I, BJP, and CPI are involved in an agitation in favour of the project. The people allege that



officials of MPEB, in connivance with the thekedars, have bought all the leading political parties and personalities. In fact Mr. Sharma told us that he himself was offered Rs. 2 crores by the Chief Engineer, on behalf of the contractors! For the present, due to the pressure, the government has suspended work on the project. But the prospects still remain grim. When asked what will happen, the President of the Bodhghat Sangharsh Samiti replied, '*vo goli chalayenge, ham teer chalayenge* (They will fire bullets, we will reply with arrows)'.

The social tensions being generated by the displacement of people in the project areas is only part of the story. The environmental degradation affects people in far flung areas also. The ore fines from Bailadila, for instance, are being dumped into Sankhini river every day for the last twenty years. The river joins Dankhini at Dantewada and from there flows further south, under a different name. Now the mass of red slime is spreading through the southern river system. Some 40,000 people living in about 51 villages are its immediate victims, deprived of even drinking water.

More than the development projects, the major source of degradation of forests is the commercial forestry. Timber feeds 40 odd small scale saw mills and 62 wood based factories in the district. But more of it serves the national market. Any day one can see a number of trucks carrying logs on the Jagdalpur-Konta-Hyderabad highway. The bamboo, among other things, feeds the paper factories in Andhra. Much of the felling is also illegal felling. One of the ingenious methods adopted by the timber traders in Bastar was through the Malik Makbuja system. A precursor of the present day social forestry programmes, in this system, the tribals were given ownership rights over identified and specified trees. They alone had right to fell or sell their trees, after taking due consent from the concerned forest officer. They were also protected by the MP Protection of Aborigines (Interest of Trees) Act, 1959. The traders, in collusion with the officials, got the relevant papers signed (thumb impressions) by the tribals and felled a large number of trees. After more than two decades of this kind of organised brigandage, finally the government abolished the system in late 1975. In another infamous instance the entire Sitram forest (Bandey range, Kanker circle) was reported to have been lost in fire in April, 1980. But the fire was not brought to the notice of the DFO until fourteen months later, in June, 1981. The government has ordered an enquiry whose report is yet to see the light of the day. It is believed that the entire forest was cleared through illegal felling. Altogether, in the last two decades, the official and legal felling alone increased by five times in the case of timber and fuelwood and fifty times in the case of bamboo. The forests of Bastar contribute approximately 10 percent of the total non-tax revenue of the state.

To compensate for the depletion of the forests the government began encouraging plantations. Thus centuries old sal trees and mixed forests came to be replaced with Eucalyptus (10,000 hectares in the fourth plan period alone), Caribbean pine (on an experimental basis in 1968-69), pines (3100 hectares under the World Bank project), teak (over 1,25,000 hectares per year in recent period), and others. The replacement of rich mixed forests by monocultural plantations had disastrous implications both for the environment and the people. The forces generated by the large scale commercial forestry and plantations control the politics and even a section of the administration in Bastar.

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From about the time of the sixth plan onwards, the government initiated a variety of social forestry programmes in Bastar. Some of them are funded by the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA). Presently they include three schemes; bund forestry, farm forestry, and agro-forestry.

From the early eighties, four environmental and wild life projects came into existence. They include Kanger Valley National Park (200 sq km), Bairamgarh Game Sanctuary (139 sq km) and Pamed Game Sanctuary (262 sq km). The biggest among them is the Indravati Abhyaranya Tiger Project (3000 sq km). It is located near Kutru, Bijapur tahsil. There are 57 villages with a population of 6000 inside the reserve. The density of the population is very low, with about 9 persons per sq km and the villages are scattered both in the core and buffer zones of the reserve. These villages are proposed to be evacuated and a Rs.1 crore rehabilitation programme has been prepared by the Directorate of Project Tiger, subject to the approval of the government. But in the meantime, the reserve is becoming famous for other reasons. Naxalite activity in the former Zamindari areas of Kutru and Bhopalpatnam has attracted a lot of attention. In one of the villages inside the reserve, Mukabelli, a Naxalite woman was killed in an encounter, leading to massive armed police raids on many of these villages. In the last three years at one time or another armed police camps were set up in as many as eight of these 56 villages. In Bedre and Pileru camps are stationed more or less permanently. The police, with all the attendant paraphernalia, swamp the reserve. In a sense the activities of armed police are now adding a new dimension to the problems of the environment in Bastar.

### III. ADIVASI LIFE : IN DUE SEASON AND OUT

The depletion of the forests and its degradation informs every aspect of the life and living of the adivasis of Bastar. The land which they can cultivate has gradually shrunk as more and more forests have come under state control in some form or the other. With a few exceptions in some pockets of North Bastar, the life of adivasis here is segmented into three seasons: the agricultural season, the wage work season and the Minor Forest Produce (MFP) season.

From the advent of the monsoon in June till October people engage in cultivation. They cultivate land officially recognised as land under cultivation and for which they have pattas. They also cultivate land for which they have no pattas and which is otherwise notified as forests in the records. And then they also cultivate land which has been recently brought into cultivation by encroaching on the forest. It is difficult to estimate the extent of land under cultivation in the last two categories. For instance, in Kakerlanka (population 800, tahsil Korta, P.S. Jagargunda), our enquiries suggest that about 300-400 acres of land is under cultivation. But the Census lists only 7 acres under cultivation and all the rest of the 600 acres

## VILLAGE SAGUMETTA

The oldest man in this village appears to be in his seventies. And he says that they came here in the time of his grandfather and great grand father ('*tata muttala kalam*'). Like many of the other families in the main village, he belongs to the Telugu speaking Netakani (weaving) caste. There are more than 30 families, all Marathi speaking in Maharpara. The village is about 18 km from the naka of Indravati Abhyaranya Tiger Project Reserve, on the Farsagarh side. All the villagers subsist on monocrop cultivation for four months a year. The crops include rice, jowar, moong, and oats. Water is a big problem here as in all the villages of the Reserve. Two wells, two boring pumps, and a rivulet that dries up during the summer serve the five surrounding villages. The hand pumps break down once in every two months and they 'wait for the jeep to come and repair it'. In the long lean season, they go to collect forest produce. Or at least they used to, for, ever since the forest was notified as a national park (more than a decade now), their movements within the forest are restricted. The Chief Conservator of Forests says that Nistar rights are permitted still. But the finer distinctions are lost on them and perhaps also on the forest guards. So they have suffered harassment and intimidation for many years. Even the ceremonial community hunt during the annual festival at the end of the summer season, *ittanam panduga*, was prohibited. But recently the harassment has stopped due to intervention of the Naxalites. The adivasis in the village, *Koitur Gond*, now go hunting along with the Marias from the neighbouring villages. Sometimes the Netakanis and the Mahars also join them.

The village has a school but no teacher. He hasn't come for over a year now. The villagers applied for permission to build quarters for him. But it was rejected since the village is scheduled to be evacuated. Some of the younger boys however go to the Ashram school at Kutru, some 35 km away. The subcentre of the PHC at Kutru is also the nearest dispensary for them. But it hardly has any staff. For emergencies they have to go on foot or by bullock cart to Bijapur, 70 km away. They have applied for a water tank, a dispensary, electricity, more boring pumps, and PWD work. But the applications are rejected. Even their MLA Shishupal, according to them, says that he is helpless. The Project is part of a larger central government scheme. They do not have enough land to sustain themselves and the forest is forbidden. But there is no wage work either, since it is suspended in all national parks. Last year for three months during the winter wage work season they got Rs.11 per day for laying down the kaccha road to Farsagarh. The road facilitates SAF jeeps to come up to the village.

The armed police are now part of these villages. During the Bandh call given by the Naxalites on 30 December, 1988, some of the villagers were arrested and taken to the recently upgraded police station at Kutru and beaten up. After the encounter at Mukaballi, a Maria Gond village 3 km away the same story was repeated with increased intensity. In some cases, formal legal proceedings were launched against some of them. Are they still involved in the cases? They did not know. Possibly the cases are under Section 107 (Guarantee for good behaviour) and Section 151 (Preventive Arrest) of the Criminal Procedure Code, in which the accused may be released on personal bond and no trial is involved. Possibly not.

are listed under forests. In Karkeli, from the accounts of the villagers, it appears that about 600 acres is under cultivation. But again the Census lists only 330 acres under cultivation. In Bhattugudem not more than fifty percent have pattas for the land they cultivate. This land, we should recall, is hardly productive. Irrigation facilities are either poor or absent. A family owning 20-30 acres of land may only be marginally better off than the marginal farmers who own less than five acres of land. The gamut of governmental programmes do not always take these hard realities into consideration, leading sometimes to farcical consequences.

The government approach to the welfare of the people in Bastar is multifaceted. The programmes launched include general national level programmes such as the Community Development Programme (CDP), Community Area Development Programme (CADP), Whole Village Development Programme (WVDP), Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP), Hill Area Development Programme (HADP), Intensive Rural Area Development Programme (IRDP), etc. Some of them, in the Bastar context, such as HADP in Abhujhmar and WVDP in South Bastar, effectively become tribal welfare programmes. In addition there are programmes exclusively focussed on tribal welfare. Notable among them are the Tribal Area Development Programme (TADP) and the Intensive Tribal Development Programme (ITDP) that covers seven blocks in Bastar. Besides there is a Bastar Development Authority and a separate Abhujhmar Development Authority which came into existence in 1980. For the purposes of inclusion in the Seventh Plan, a separate Bastar Plan was also prepared. These programmes coupled with other normal activities focus on creating infrastructural services and improving the living standards of the people.

According to the latest available data, only 19% of the 3400 villages are electrified. Recently in some of the villages solar lamps were set up. None of the four lamps in Karkeli ever worked, although in Farsagarh five of the nine lamps did work for a while. These lamps are a source of amusement to the villagers. There are 5032 primary schools, 796 middle schools and 104 high schools in the district. In all of the eight schools we visited there are no teachers. In some of them the villagers have not seen the teacher for more than two years! The only exceptions are the far and few Ashram schools run by a Sarvodaya Trust, with the help of the government. There are 6 hospitals, 33 primary health centres and 80 sub-centres. There is just one dispensary per every 25000 population, on an average. The area of their coverage is also vast, over 300 sq km per dispensary. But again, except in one case, we found that the medical workers are not making their appearance. In one of the villages the *chhittiwala* (postman) also doubles as *dawaiwala* (medical worker) by getting medicines from the tahsils or nearby market centres!

The other types of governmental programmes focus on the economic life of the people. We must note that these programmes do not assign sufficient importance to land and agriculture. A particularly ignored aspect is irrigation. As the villagers in Bodhghat area put it 'Sarkar bijlee sarkar hai, sinchayi sarkar nahi' (This government is electricity government, not irrigation government). The hydel projects are an adequate testimony to that. Tanks, the main source of water, are the most neglected. Consequently the land and the income from it cannot really sustain any family anywhere for the entire year. In such a situation the Intensive Rural Development Programme (IRDP) was launched. This programme, along with

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others, was based on the well known divisions between rich, middle, small, marginal and landless farmers. But no one cared to notice the irrelevance of such a premise in most of the small villages in the interior of the forests, and the programmes fell flat.

Under the umbrella of IRDP, rural co-operative banks, land mortgage banks (financed by the World Bank) and branches of various nationalized banks give loans to farmers for 'improvement of land'. There are altogether 150 branches of different kinds of banks now swamping Bastar. Lakhs of rupees of credit is given every year. The government part of the expenditure alone came to Rs.5.74 crores last year. But what they need immediately is not credit to improve their land but scope to improve it which is closed by forest policy and irrigation policy. So they all become indebted. Some of the commercial banks also attach their property. Enroute to Korta from Sukma, when we stopped at a village on the roadside all the men sitting there ran helter skelter. They came back only when they were assured that we were not Bank officials who had come to collect dues! A study of Kondagaon, in 1976-81, established that of the 499 farmers who received loans from the Land Mortgage Bank, 476 people lost their cattle or land because of their inability to pay back. In the case of Cooperative Banks, the government took a decision in 1981 annulling all the loans taken prior to 1971. In the following 18 years the arrears have again accumulated. In fact, as the chief of the District Rural Development Agency himself summed up, these peasants simply have 'no capacity to absorb all the credit that is being pumped'. Where else it is going and what are its implications to the politics and administration of the district is a moot point. The point about these programmes is not that they generate corruption, which they do, but that they generate poverty and landlessness.

From the latest report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Annexure III), to the local politicians and lower ranking policemen, everyone suggests that this explains the social origin of the Naxalite movement in Bastar. For the Naxalites provide them support to cultivate the pattaless lands, otherwise notified as forests and even organize them to encroach upon forests and bring more land under cultivation. Last year, in the harvesting season, it was reported that in the Pamed range alone, they brought 400 acres of forest into cultivation. Their front organisation Adivasi Kisan Mazdoor Sanghathan (AKMS) raised the issue of tanks repeatedly in all its memorandums, delegations, pamphlets and bandh calls.

In the winter season, October to March, they go for wage work in commercial forestry operations, roads, bridges and other construction works. A part of the IRDP that relates to the National Rural Employment Scheme (NREP) relates to this kind of work. Here the role of forests or labour contractors is notorious. Near Mallebagh, on the road from Dornapal to Bijapur, a bridge has been under construction on the Talperu river for the last five years. Last year AKMS attempted to organize the labourers for an increase in wages. These labourers struck work for a few days. According to the police, the Naxalite *dalam* (armed squad) also burnt the trucks of the PWD contractor. Eventually the wages were raised from Rs.9 to Rs.13 a day. When we visited, we found that the labourers are of two kinds. First are those who are settled just next to the river. They are about ten families who came from far off places and work round the year. During the winter season, adivasi labourers from nearby villages join them.



Men of those settled here are being paid Rs.14 per day while women get Rs.12. But men from the nearby villages receive Rs.12 per day while the women receive Rs.10. The official wage rate for all categories and for both sexes is Rs.17 per day. Last year (1988-89), the government spent Rs.3.0 crores on its Rural Employment Scheme. In addition there are a host of similar programmes which focus on creating employment in this season. But this year all eyes are set on the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana.

The summer season, March to June, is the season of minor forest produce. It must be noted that the adivasis collect some or the other produce from the forest throughout the year. *Mahua*, *imli*, *harra*, *chiraunji*, fibres and creepers are collected year-round. Some of it is collected from the reserved forest from where it is prohibited to collect. Heavy fines are levied on them. In fact, as in the case of cultivation of land notified as forests, these kinds of acts prohibited by law do not actually prevent people from indulging in them. Instead the law becomes an instrument of corruption, harassment and intimidation for the forest officials.

According to the Tribal Study Team, initiated under the World Bank's Pine Project, over 70% of the forest produce thus collected is for self consumption. The rest of it goes to the weekly market and is bartered off at absurd rates like 20 kg of *mahua* for 1 kg of rice or 6 kg of it for half a kilogram of salt. In fact, our enquiries suggest that it is only in the case of tamarind that they exchange at a decent 'price'. The government's own mobile ration vans are also involved in supplying them their daily needs. But then they demand cash. However, the organised trade in minor forest produce is more important than the collection for self consumption or exchange at local markets. Tendu leaf of course is the most important among them.

Tendu leaf collection in Madhya Pradesh is a political issue at both ends of the long chain of trade. In Bastar, the Naxalites, in tune with their strategy in the neighbouring forests of Telangana and Gadchiroli have taken up the wage question. For over two decades the wages remained at 3 paise to 8 paise per *gaddi* (a bundle of 50 leaves). From about 1982 it has risen dramatically to 30 paise in 1988, while the rate in rest of the state remained at 8 paise. Since the contractors cannot afford any strike in the short duration collection period (six

#### JAWAHAR ROZGAR YOJANA IN BASTAR

The Yojana launched in this financial year merged the two existing employment generation programmes (REGP and NREP). The three criterion selected by the Centre to allocate the money under the project to different states are: the inverse of agricultural productivity, the proportion of scheduled castes and tribes and the proportion of agricultural labourers. But strangely the Centre has asked the district administrations to *abandon these criteria* in allocating the money within a district between the different blocks. Instead, total population has been made the sole criterion. Usually the population would be more where there is more development or more employment, actual or potential. The implications of this new criterion to Bastar are ridiculous.

Bastar received, in two instalments, a total of Rs.11.83 crores. Going by the criterion of total population, the block in which Kirandul, the mining township, falls will receive Rs.65 lakhs, the block in which the Dandakaranya Development Authority falls will receive Rs.44 lakhs, while Abhujmarh will receive just Rs.12 lakhs.

weeks), they concede the demand and buy peace. It is widely believed that the Naxalites also take money in large amounts from the tendu leaf contractors to finance their activities. In fact, when Cong(I) leader Vajpayee wrote an open letter to the Naxalites in the local press charging them, along with other things, of taking money from tendu leaf contractors, the Naxalites replied, accepting the charge and explaining their reasons! (These *khule patra* between Vajpayee and the Naxalites carried by the local media are a continuous source of much amusement in Jagdalpur.)

The entire tendu scene changed this year with political intervention from above. Former Chief Minister Arjun Singh announced a cooperativisation of the trade and handed over collection to tribal cooperatives. This decision irked the tendu-beedi lobby, whose power in MP politics is legendary. A section of them support the BJP. At least four Cong(I) district leaders, five MPs including one in Bastar and two ministers in the present cabinet are acknowledged to be associated with the tendu-beedi business. One of them even owns a newspaper. It is believed that the lobby played an important role in dethroning Arjun Singh. After some dilly-dallying the Motilal Vohra cabinet went along with his policy. The wage was uniformly fixed at 15 paise per *gaddi*. More than 4000 co-operatives were formed almost overnight. Practically every government department was mobilised to make the collection a success. The MP government also hosted a team of journalists from the national newspapers to report on its programme. In Bastar, the Naxalites gave a boycott call to press for increasing the rate from 15 paise to the last year's rate of 30 paise. They reportedly threatened all the adivasi sarpanches and upsarpanches who were appointed as members of the newly formed cooperatives. All the members of all the cooperatives in South Bastar resigned just before the season began. The government mobilised hundreds of officials and jeeps, and injected 27 additional companies of the Special Armed Force (SAF). The achievement lies 40% less than the target, mainly because of the fall in South Bastar. The Collector in his interview claimed that the collection in South Bastar was 60% less than the target, but the Chief Conservator of Forests said that it was a 'hundred percent failure'. In all this the adivasis suffered. The tendu leaf contribute more than a third of their meagre annual income.

This then is the cycle of their lives every year. It ends with the famous seed festival (variously called *Bijum pandum*, *Vijju pandi*, *Iltanam panduga*) just before the onset of monsoon when the agricultural season begins.

Altogether their own production of rice, kodo, kutki and other millets sustain them from three to six months in a year depending on the area and the rainfall. The nutrient content is very low. In addition, they also brew their own liquor. According to some sample surveys, on an average Bastar men consume 1.5 litre, women consume 1 litre and children consume 0.5 litre every day. Some of the adivasis also go hunting, especially in summer. Our own informal enquiries and government sponsored sample surveys indicate that the winter wage work season contributes least to their annual income. Ironically this is the season that is the focus of many of the employment generation programmes. The rest of the income is almost equally divided between the harvesting season and the MFP season. Their per capita average annual income is estimated to be Rs.450 in sharp contrast to the national average of Rs.770.

The monotonous cycle of seasons in adivasi lives is incarcerated, like their technology, culture and jurisprudence in the process of development and degradation, leading now to violent social tensions.

#### IV. THE STATE AND SOCIAL TENSIONS

It was in the context of this kind of development process that the Naxalite movement took root in Bastar, since about the early eighties. The Naxalites, in the words of the SP, Bastar, have 'no problems of assimilation since they themselves are tribals'. Their concerns have been not only land and wages, but also health and education amongst the adivasis.

##### VILLAGE BHATTUGUDEM

The village is located in the interior of the jungle, off Kondapalli, about 27 km from Basavaguda. All the sixty households are of Maria Gonds. The village was not identified in the 1951 census. In 1961 it became a small 'inhabited village'. But in 1971 it became an 'uninhabited village'. The villagers keep shifting the location of their settlement within the radius of their forest subject to the availability of water. The most recent shift was just a few months before our visit. All of them till about 4 to 5 acres per family. Recently half of them got pattas for their land. That's about the only contact they have had with their government. There are no literates in the village. There are not likely to be any in the near future. School either as an institution or as an idea is far away from them. Nor is there any dispensary. There is an *Anganwadi* where one of their own women works. Their main contact to the main road is through trade. In due season, trading agents come and buy some of their rice. They too go to the Friday weekly market at Basavaguda to exchange *sal* seeds or *mahua* flowers with rice and salt. They have never worked in any of the employment generating works. But they know that the government provides them such work. So when a SAF camp was set up in Basavaguda, they went and asked for work, in vain. But the SAF came to them for the first time when an incident of *Narbali* (human sacrifice), that so far has remained mysterious and unidentified, took place in the jungle. They came, arrested them, took them to the police station and beat them up. Next time, when a *dalam* beat up a notorious forest ranger somewhere inside the jungle, in October, 1986, again the armed police came and beat them up. Police suspect that the adivasis shelter Naxalites. Every time a major incident takes place anywhere around, the police come. Thus, they were arrested and tortured in July, 1987 when the AKMS gave a *bandh* call; in June, 1988 when the Chintalnar dacoity took place; and on other occasions. Two of them died, they say, a few days after their release as a result of torture. Three of them are now in Jagdalpur jail, detained under TADA. They have never voted so far in any election, although before the last election someone came and registered their votes. They look completely unfamiliar with any facet of our developing democratic welfare state, except the armed police.

According to the police, at the time of her death Rajakka was carrying, apart from a gun and 'extremist literature', a rolling plastic blackboard and a few chalk pieces.

The group that operates here is known as the Communist Party of India, Marxist-Leninist, People's War Group (CPI,M-L,PWG). Their main front organisation is Adivasi Kisan Mazdoor Sanghathan (AKMS). In addition the group also has a number of armed squads (*dalams*). Current police estimates put the total number of Naxalites in these *dalams* at 170, including 35 women. They reportedly possess sophisticated weapons like AK-47 rifles.

In the initial years the AKMS systematically took up issues that relate to all the three working seasons of the people, referred to above. It appears to us that, unlike the *dalams*, the AKMS adopts only normal legal forms of activities. In the last four years the Sanghathan has organised at least six major demonstrations and delegations. In July, 1988 when the Sanghathan announced a major tahsil level demonstration at Bijapur, police were deployed in large scale all around the place. Unable to take out the procession, the AKMS posted its memorandum to the Tahsildar!

But the Naxalites or their *dalams* have been involved in a number of incidents of violence. According to the records of the District police, they are held responsible for twelve major incidents of arms snatching in which 17 guns were snatched. Similarly they are held responsible for the burning of at least 12 trucks and two buses in the last two years. In addition they have reportedly been involved in scores of incidents of beating up the forest officials. Finally they are held responsible for seven instances of murder in which suspected police informers or alleged notorious village middlemen were annihilated. In a widely reported incident, Dubba Kanhayya, alleged black marketeer, usurper of land and suspected police informer was killed in a gruesome manner in his village Sankanpalli near Bhopalpatnam, Bijapur tahsil on 7th August, 1988.

In addition to these killings the Naxalites are held responsible for a major incident of dacoity at Chintalnar in July, 1988. Chintalnar (Konta tahsil, Jagargunda P.S.) is one of those few villages in South Bastar where one can find an identifiable social group of landowners cum money lenders

#### SALT WITHOUT SATYAGRAHA

In July, 1988, three hundred people participated in a mass dacoity, led by a Naxalite *dalam*, in Chintalnar. The *dalam* snatched six guns of the thakurs. But the adivasis were after salt. One of the adivasis accused enthusiastically told us that he got lots of salt from the thakurs' house. Salt is a most precious commodity in the adivasi areas of Bastar. In the most common form of food, *pej*, a liquid gruel of the available cereals cooked in water, no salt is added. This, according to medical experts, is the cause of widespread diarrhoeal diseases. The low intake of salt, coupled with the raw salt marked by its iodine deficiency, has made goitre the other endemic disease. In the weekly market, where the exchange of goods takes place, six kilograms of *mahua* are given sometimes in return for half a kilogram of salt. And thus almost six decades after the right to make salt was made a symbol for freedom and nationhood, the adivasis of Bastar are yet to receive adequate quantities of salt.

and traders. Like all villages of its kind it is situated on the roadside. The thakurs of this village came from Uttar Pradesh in the early sixties. Earlier they were liquor contractors in the days when the adivasis were prohibited from brewing their own liquor. Gradually they diversified into trade and money lending and became land owners. In early 1986, the AKMS forced them to reduce the prices of the goods they were selling in all the weekly markets that they controlled. Immediately an armed police camp was set up in their village and licences for six guns were issued. Later the camp was withdrawn but not the guns. In July last year, a *dalam* led a mass dacoity on their houses. An estimated 300 adivasis participated in this incident. Apart from the six guns, gold and silver, a host of household commodities were looted.

Incidents of this kind, coupled with other instances of acts of violence invited responsive measures by the government. In 1981, for the first time, three companies of the 27th battalion of the MP Special Armed Force (SAF) were deployed in Bastar. Later, in 1983, a special Bastar battalion was created. Called the 30th battalion, the entire force is now in Bastar. In addition, five companies of the 31st battalion have also been mobilised. Presently, 11 companies consisting of about 1400 armed policemen are deployed in the district. They are stationed, in addition to main centres like Jagdalpur, Bijapur and Kutru, in some of the village camps. The latter keep shifting from village to village periodically, depending upon the police assessment of the situation.

The strength of the civil police also has increased from about a thousand in 1981 to almost two thousand now. In February this year, a new police district for South Bastar with headquarters at Dantewada was created. To the existing 11 police stations, 9 more were added. Altogether there are 42 police stations in the district now, of which 20 are in South Bastar.

There have been a number of instances of exchange of fire between patrolling SAF parties and the *dalams*. In the period 1981-85, seven such incidents took place. But since 1985 as many as 30 such incidents have taken place. In five of them, one civil constable, one police driver and three SAF jawans have been killed. Independently five SAF jawans were killed by their fellow jawans in some fracas in their camps. In one such instance that took place in Kutru camp, a major centre where about 100 men are stationed, a jawan Bhagavati Bhatham was reportedly killed by a fellow jawan on 29 April. But our investigation suggests the possibility that he was killed during an aborted attempt by the *dalams* to raid the camp. The incident, we understand from SAF sources, was suppressed. Hence there is a strong possibility that the official figure of five policemen killed may be an underestimate.

On the other side, in similar exchanges of fire, five Naxalites were killed. In one incident that took place near Gorkha, Konta, on 21 July, 1987, Podiyam Yerranna was killed. The people say that two more, both of whom were adivasis were also killed. But the DIG police denies it. In the Mukabelli incident already referred to, Rajakka was killed. Her body was kept in a thatched hut outside for a day. Post-mortem was conducted there itself and she was cremated on the spot. The latest encounter took place just a week before our visit, on 7 June in Kaskal forest, Narayanpur. Two people were killed. In addition six others lost their lives in other circumstances. Of the total thirteen who died, six were adivasis.

The government has launched scores of cases in connection with the Naxalite movement. The notorious Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) came into effect in MP in December, 1985. A designated court at Raipur was assigned to Bastar along with four other districts of the Chhattisgarh region. In July, 1986 the first TADA arrest took place in Bastar. Later, in March, 1987, Rajanna, who was believed to be the main leader of the movement was arrested. (Subsequent to our visit Rajanna, along with two other prisoners, escaped from Jagdalpur jail.) Among the 110 TADA accused in Bastar, about 100 are adivasis, fifty five of them in the dacoity case of Chintalnar. Altogether there are 300 accused in various cases, of which 250 are adivasis.

The experience of these adivasis with the legal system is heartrending. In many of the link courts, where the magistrates come from Jagdalpur and hold sittings once a month, they do not really have sympathetic lawyers. In cases like TADA it is not easy to get bail. But even if they are granted bail, they are usually unable to provide sureties. Ironically, the surety demanded is patta, the lack of which has perhaps driven them to the path of struggle. So they remain in jail for months or even years. One of them, Tellam Bandi, died in Raipur jail in June, 1987. And 33 of the 55 accused in the Chintalnar case are still in jail, even though some of them were granted bail.

The judicial administration in Bastar is somewhat peculiar. The TADA prisoners, who were originally kept in Raipur jail were later transferred to Jagdalpur when a separate designated court was created for Bastar in March, 1988. But the judge transferred them back on the grounds that the earlier case did not come under his jurisdiction. Then the Raipur judge transferred them back on the grounds that Bastar cases do not come under his jurisdiction. This shuttling went on for about three times until finally they were assigned to the court at Jagdalpur. The trial is yet to start in any of these cases. The adivasis are shuttled from jail to jail, court to court, and make long journeys, sometimes on foot (a distance of 150 km), for every adjournment. Just about the only redeeming feature is that in almost all cases the adivasi panchayats have adopted them. In Karkeli we found that every household contributes to the legal expenses of the five accused. This is also the case in Kakerlanka and Sagumetta.

But the real problem for the adivasis is not the legal proceedings but the illegal activities of the police. The presence of the large contingent of armed police in the interior adivasi villages has changed the environment completely. In the villages where they camp they take away the food, especially chicken and goats, force the villagers to cook for free for them, and compete for the meagre drinking water which is available. Thus the camps, subsidised by the villagers, are a burden to the people. In the last four years at least forty villages of South Bastar have seen such camps at one time or another. In addition to the stationary camps, there are also mobile patrolling parties which make regular rounds.

The presence of camps and patrolling by the armed police severely restricts the mobility of the people. The adivasis commute only on foot through the familiar jungle routes to the nearby centres or weekly market places. They (especially women) go to the forests to collect fuelwood and other produce, and to fetch water. But the atmosphere of terror that now prevails in the region has effectively closed or restricted such movements.



## DESTITUTES OF DEVELOPMENT

In the princely Bastar state there was a practice, called ghaitaponi, where the king used to conduct an auction in which widows of some castes were sold to the highest bidder. The practice gradually declined. In the mid sixties came the NMDC's mining project in Bailadila. The non-tribal migrant workers and officials entered into illicit relations with adivasi women, rakhel (mistress), as they say. They were promised marriage, but were invariably abandoned on becoming pregnant. Some of them became prostitutes, since the adivasi samaj does not accept them back into its fold. The magnitude of the problem reached scandalous dimensions. In 1971, a much respected District Collector, with the help of the police, raided Kirandul and forced many of the erring officials to marry their mistresses. Some of the other women and about 500 of their children were 'rehabilitated' in a Nari Niketan set up in Kirandul. Later the Collector was transferred and many of the reluctant husbands also got themselves transferred. Meanwhile the Nari Niketan was shifted to Dantewada.



And now in South Bastar the tradition continues. The armed policemen enter into relationships with adivasi women, with the promise of marriage, and then abandon them when they become pregnant. In Mudded, Bhopalpatnam, Juwa Chauttakka committed suicide after she became pregnant. The daughter of Basviraj in Sankanpalli died when the family tried to get the child aborted secretly at Bijapur. Armed policemen also molest and rape unsuspecting women when they go to fetch water in the forest. In Chinna Morupadu (Jagargunda P.S.) an adivasi woman was raped by five policemen and then driven into her village naked. The police officials acknowledge some of these rapes. In the last three years, seven SAF jawans have been dismissed, one suspended, and one rape and two molestation cases have been launched, according to the commandant of the SAF 30th battalion. But then they reflect neither the dimensions nor the intensity of the growing problem. In many villages women are used as prostitutes. In one village, we were told, the wife of the sarpanch herself is used by the twelve-member police camp. When we visited the village, we found the SAF camp right next to the sarpanch's house. The circumstances were such that we could not investigate. Altogether at least 11 cases of rape, 14 cases of forced prostitution and 35 instances of being forced into illicit and fraudulent relationships came to our notice. As it usually is in our society, these reported instances are only a fraction of the total.

Bastar is haunted by its destitute women. In the colonial period it was the power held by the rulers and their agents that was responsible. In post independence India, it is the development which is generating these women. Countless accounts of this kind have now become part of the oral history of the people. In Bodhghat one of the persons said 'Yeh project kuchch nahi layega, bus hamari bahnon ko rakhel banayega (this project will not bring anything except making our sisters into mistresses)'. Thus, not the Bailadila mines but the Nari Niketan at Dantewada has become an evocative symbol of development in Bastar. And now the armed police in the adivasi villages are generating one more such symbol.

Every time a major activity of the AKMS (like a bandh call) or of the Naxalites (like an instance of violence referred to above) takes place armed police conduct massive and frightening raids in the villages all around. A large contingent of armed police, sometimes as many as 100, descend on a village whose population is often less than that. They conduct indiscriminate beatings, take away the best catch, chicken and goats, destroy the utensils and other household goods, and throw out the stock of grains. This May, after the exchange of fire in Kakerlanka which eventually resulted in the death of the jeep driver, the police took three youths and buried them neck deep in the fields. After such violence the people, especially men, are taken to a police station. There the civil police take over. The police have their own way of administering justice, but it appears to be rather 'more advanced' than the adivasis' own system. They may hang the adivasis upside down from the ceiling, or subject them to the infamous roller treatment and beat them up for days together. Some of the detained people may be released after the elders from the panchayat or the family members come and pay them large amounts of bribe. Eventually some of them may be sent to jail.

It is difficult to estimate how many villages have been raided in such a manner in the last four years. We made an attempt to list the villages, the immediate contexts of the violence, and the dates, with the help of some local journalists and press clippings. Our estimate is that approximately 90 villages suffered raids of this kind in South Bastar in the period 1985 to May, 1989. The largest number of them took place in Jagargunda, Kutru, Bijapur and Konta police station areas.

Even more difficult to estimate is the number of people who have been subjected to illegal detention. In five of the villages that we visited, for every twenty persons who were illegally detained an average of only one was booked under one or another case. And presently there are about 300 accused in different cases.

The objective of this massive violence seems to be to generally terrorize the adivasis. According to their own accounts, many people suggest that they are being punished for giving food and shelter to the Naxalites. The ostensible purpose of the more sustained interrogations is to find the whereabouts of dadalog or annas, as the Naxalites are called even by some of the policemen. The practice of using abominable third degree methods to extract information from the suspects is perhaps fairly common in most of the police stations of the country. But in Bastar it has absolutely no point since most policemen do not understand the language of the adivasis whom they torture.

#### V. THE IMAGE AND REALITY: A CONCLUSION

In 1952, in the first general elections, an adivasi Mochaki Kosa won the parliament seat with the help of his former ruler, Raja Pravir Chandra Bhanj Deo. But soon he was fed up of



living in Delhi. Among other things he complained of lack of money and resources to live a decent life in Delhi! Much later it was disclosed that his Personal Assistant assigned by the government cheated him of the allowances and perks that were due to him as a member of the parliament. He left Delhi in the middle of his term and never returned. Almost thirty seven years later, the adivasi representatives of Bastar appear to be doing well. One of them is even associated with the high profile tendu trade. Yet we found in atleast one village no one has as yet exercised their franchise in any of the ten assembly elections and eight parliament elections held since 1952 in Madhya Pradesh.

Meanwhile Pravir Chandra Bhanj Deo himself became a source of recurring tensions for the government. His assertion of authority, coupled with revivalist tendencies created a number of problems. His strength was his legendary personality. Even at the time of our visit, we found that he is still fondly remembered and revered. The maverick forced a confrontation between his former subjects and the government. Eventually he was killed in his own palace, in police firing in 1966. Along with him many adivasis were also killed.

Later Baba Bihari Das, known as *Kanthiwala* Baba, came to prominence in Bastar. He claimed that he was a reincarnation of Pravir Chandra. He gained such a large following among the adivasis that a well known Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh was even reported to have forged an alliance with him. But during the emergency (1975-77), the Baba was detained under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA). Later, after his release his activities flourished again, this time with the help of a different set of politicians. In 1983 he was expelled from the district to which he never seemed to have returned. But his influence continued. His followers were allegedly involved in the burning of the pines in the World Bank project.

Meanwhile other political parties also gained prominence in the district. Notable among them were the CPI and the BJP. The former even won an election from Dantewada assembly constituency which earlier had always voted for the Congress. That particular leader of CPI has now joined Congress-I. Presently out of eleven constituencies in the district, one is held by BJP while all the rest are held by the ruling party. In this situation entered the Naxalites.

In a sense, the political fortunes of Bastar are intrinsically linked with its development process. The adivasis' own democratic aspirations have never been given the place that is due to them, just as they had no role in the evolution of a 'development' that is thrust upon them. From Bailadila to Bodhghat no effort was made to involve them in the process. On the contrary it closed some of the available options of survival for them. Thus it only strengthened their traditional practices and the associated cults. Each time a new project, a new technology or a new law made an entry into their lot, their own system became more oppressive. As symbols of progress became sources of superstitions, rajas and babas flourished.

The permanent state of transition feeds the romantic images in which adivasis are often perceived. To outsiders it appears that the adivasis are in 'perfect harmony with nature'. But hard labour in adverse terrain is no harmony. Cruel poverty has no romance in it.

Alternately, these adivasis and their practices have also become the basis for condescending and patriarchal attitudes of the ruling elite. To them the adivasis are innocents in need of enlightenment from the benevolent establishment. But in fact they are intelligent beings with tremendous fortitude, who survive the difficult geo-economic terrain. And that is perhaps the reason why any form of political consciousness among them is treated with such brutal savagery by hitherto enlightened people.

Any attempt to understand democratic issues of adivasis must consciously attempt to transcend these inherited images and the underlying attitudes. The problems of democracy are inalienable from those of development

We have met representatives of almost all of the political parties, in addition to leading advocates and journalists. All of them are of the view that the Naxalite movement is essentially a socio-economic problem. The failure of development programmes, exploitation by middlemen and contractors, and corruption among the officials are the most commonly cited causes. Some of them even acknowledged the failure of the political parties to effectively champion the cause of the adivasis. In a similar manner, Arvind Netam, sitting MP and former member of the central cabinet, in a much publicised interview suggested that Bastar should be bought under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, on the lines of North Eastern states, to solve the Naxalite problem.

The District Collector, somewhat exceptional to all others we met, however maintained that the Naxalite problem is essentially a 'Morena problem', a reference to the chronic dacoity problems of the Chambal ravines. But again the Superintendent of Police (Bastar) suggested that it is essentially a socio-economic problem. The commandant of the Bastar battalion more succinctly said that 'our battalion was raised to solve a problem that it can not solve'. Perhaps in that sense there is a near unanimity that the Naxalite movement is rooted in the social and economic problems of Bastar and its people.

Yet just about the only thing that is happening in Bastar is the increase in police force and their violence against unarmed citizens. Today policemen have become more lawless than even the Naxalites! And now, the government has taken a decision to make police part of the co-ordination committee meetings on tribal welfare and development. Even the mobile fair price trucks, the irregular and only source of goods at fair prices to the people are soon to be managed by the police. At a time when it is important to review the role of the development process in the violation of democratic norms, this gradual and surreptitious policisation of administration is dangerous. And that will not be for the adivasis alone.

## ROLL CALL OF THE DEAD

### (a) Police :

SAF Jawans	3*
Civil Constable	1
Driver	1

(\*excludes five jawans killed in the camps by fellow jawans)

### (b) Activists :

#### (i) 'Missing' ; Those disappeared after their arrest

1. Dr. Suryadevara Mallikarjuna Prasad
2. Prakash
3. Raju

(all in October-November, 1986; Police deny the arrest of the latter)

#### (ii) Encounter Deaths :

1. Ganapati (Thadbelli, Narayanpur, 5 March, 1985)
2. Podiyam Yerrana alias Valpadas Sanker (Gorkha, Konta, 21 July, 1987)
3. Uddam Mallal } (Both in the same encounter above.
4. Unnamed adivasi } Police deny.)
5. Kursum Rajakka (Mukabelli, Bijapur, 4 March, 1989)
6. Ramesh } (Both near Kalskal, Narayanpur, 7 June, 1989)
7. Bala Ramanna }

#### (iii) In custody :

1. Shiv Kumar alias Chitti (Jagargunda, 7 February, 1985)
2. & 3. Two unnamed villagers of Bhattugudem

#### (iv) In Jail :

1. Tellam Bandi (TADA prisoner, Raipur Jail, June, 1987)

	BASTAR	MP	INDIA
Forest Area (%)	54	35	23
Per capita Forest Area (ha)	11	0.3	0.11
Density per sq km	47	118	216
Rural Population (%)	94	80	77
Females per 1000 males	1002	950	933
Scheduled Tribes (%)	68	23	7
Per capita Annual Income (Rs)	450 *	-	771
Literacy (%)	14	28	36
Electrified Villages (%)	19	52	68

\* Estimate based on sample surveys.

