

DISPLACEMENT AND UNEQUAL WAR IN ARUNDHATI ROY'S WALKING WITH THE COMRADES

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Abstract

The Maoist movement in West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha in India is among the longest and most lethal home-grown insurgencies that the world has ever seen. Arundhati Roy published a collection of essays Walking with the Comrades in 2011. The publication met with an angry trade from all sections of political parties in India especially politicians, the media and academics. Maoists loot money from the rich and help the poor is the image or villagers consider that they fought for righteousness. Their efforts or operation demanded the deployment of military and paramilitary forces with weapons and a planned group called 'salwa judum' or 'the people's militia'. They attacked and went on a mad rampage killing, burning, blasting, and destroying the whole tribal communities in the forests and deep mineral rich hills. Adivasis, the sons of the soil resisted any developments which affected the forests. Many tribals and adivasis joined Maoists. Government of India has been working hand in hand with the Corporates who wants to usurp the forests directly or indirectly. This paper attempts to analyze the displacement of Adivasis and the war against them was an unequal war. A war against the forest is considered as a war against state by media.

Key words: Maoism, Adivasis, Environmental justice, Displacement and Inequality

I. Introduction

Indian forests have many minerals like crude oil, and other natural resources which is grabbed by corporate barons and government corporations in works. Maoism, Chinese (Pinyin) Mao Zedong Sixiang or (Wade-Giles romanization) Mao Tse-tung Ssu-hsiang (“Mao Zedong Thought”), doctrine composed of the ideology and methodology for revolution developed by Mao Zedong and his associates in the Chinese Communist Party from the 1920s until Mao’s death in 1976. The first political attitudes of Mao Zedong took shape against a background of profound crisis in China in the early 20th century. Roy’s journeyed across the dense forests of East – central India reminds the importance of environmental justice. Adivasis, the original inhabitants of the hills live right in the remote parts of India. They had to struggle with arms and battle against corporate barons or the biggest mining corporations in the country. Forest is their primary means of livelihood, their basic means of sustenance and the only living symbol of their collective faith. Roy portrays a detailed and unapologetic attacks culturally and morally in this unequal war—“The antagonists in the forests are disparate and unequal in almost every way. On one side is a massive paramilitary force armed with the money, the firepower, the media, and the hubris of an emerging Superpower. On the other, ordinary villagers armed with traditional weapons, backed by a superbly organized, hugely motivated Maoist guerilla fighting force with an extraordinary and violent history of armed rebellion.” Being a popular novelist who addressed several issues, Roy explores the armed struggle and justifies that her travel into the forest is to mediate global cultural issues. She

met with tribal rebels from Gond, Halba and Muri tribes. Series of opposition to mineral and timber grabs executed by state agencies and corporate tycoons is narrated to global audience.

II. Forest Resources in India And Exploitation of Forests

Among the mineral products found in the forests are building stones, road metal, mica, lime stone, gravel, slates and iron ore, coal and other minerals in Chhattisgarh state other similar products. The collection and sale of these products is regulated by Forest Department. Collection of mineral products is done either by mining, quarrying or surface collection. According to the Forest Conservation Act, all these activities amount to use of forest land for non-forestry purpose and would require prior permission of the Central Government. States like Chattisgarh is one of the foremost mineral rich states in the country. There are more than twenty varieties of minerals found in the state including precious stones and diamonds, iron ore, coal, limestone, dolomite, tin ore, bauxite and gold. West Bengal falls into the North-Eastern Plateau region along with Jharkhand, Odisha and Chhattisgarh. Therefore it is rich in mineral resources and considered to possess coal prominently. Important minerals that occur in the State are: **Apatite, Coal, China, Fireclay** and other minerals found in the State are Apatite, Asbestos, Barytes, Base metals, China clay, Ochre, Moulding sand, Glass sand, Graphite, Mica, Titanium ore and many more. Therefore, mineral-based industries are dominant in the State. Chattisgarh is one of the foremost mineral rich states in the country. There are more than twenty varieties of minerals found in the state including precious stones and diamonds, iron ore, coal, limestone, dolomite, tin ore, bauxite and gold. The state has India's only tinea mine in Bastar district, and one of the world's best quality of iron ore deposits in the world and also it is known for high potential for mining good

quality diamonds. All these states are endowed with vast vast resources of a variety of minerals and occupy a prominent place in the country as a mineral rich state. Abundant reserves of high-grade Iron ore, Bauxite, Chromite, Manganese ore along with other minerals such as Coal, Limestone, Dolomite, Tin, Nickel, Vanadium, Lead, Graphite, Gold, Gemstone, Diamond, Dimension & Decorative Stone etc. are extensively available in the State. This has opened up immense possibilities for locating mineral based industries for manufacture of Steel, Ferro-alloys, Cement, Alumina/ Aluminum, Refractories, Thermal Power etc., along with setting up other auxiliary and ancillary downstream industries. They also sell round timber and firewood harvested from other Forest Divisions in North and South Bengal as an agent of the Forest Directorate through public auctions or tenders. Major species in North Bengal include Sal, Teak, Gamar, Sissoo, Champ, Jarul, Panisaj, Pakasaj, Chikrasi, Chilune, Dhupi, Pipli, Utis, etc. Major species in South Bengal include Sal, Eucalyptus, Akashmani, Minjari, etc. So, naturally living beings in the forests are endangered and had to struggle for life.

III. Displacement of Adivasis in Certain Regions in India

Adivasi is the cumulative expression for tribes of the Indian subcontinent. They're taken into consideration native to locations within India in which they live, either as a bandit or as tribal sedentary groups. Adivasis contain a sizable minority population of India, making up 8.6% of India's populace, or 104.2104.2 million people, in line with the 2011 census. Adivasi societies are particularly outstanding in Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Northeast India, and the Andaman and Nicobar. The Indian Constitution grouped these inherited companies together as targets for social and

economic improvement. In fact, people who are termed as adivasis are very different groups with diverse histories, often in conflict with each other. Many would not have recognised themselves as adivasis until very recently. Today, many of them are not in the forest protecting their age-old civilisation, but simply attending simple works to survive by doing agriculture or non-agrarian works including construction works. They are part and partial of Indian sub-continent masses that make up almost all of the labour force in India. They attend informal and unorganised works ranging from lower to down-lower degrees of employment and self employment which pays them according to their ability and they have no chance of power or authority. As they have any specific authority or powers, they are easily susceptible to exploitation through several aspects. They can't hold their property, raw materials in their territory, money and they need to work to meet their needs. Particularly, seasonal casual labour migration in the informal and unorganised sector has been prevalent in most adivasi areas for at least the last four or five decades.

In the history, for several years, the Government has been signing Memorandums of Understanding with several national and international companies which are stepping into eastern countries and investing billions of rupees in establishing mining industries in these mineral rich areas. Directly or indirectly timber is also auctioned and marketed. These lands which belong to adivasis are plundered or occupied from the sons of the soil. Corporate barons have been making business; ultimately their lands have become a commodity of exchange between the Government and the corporate. It is the struggle against displacement and is being restructured within the movement as a consequence of some fundamental adivasi values. A leadership

steeped in the ideology of class struggle is attempting conscious efforts to protect their civilization and their class identities. Roy states, “It is lovely not to be stuck with yourself, to become someone else for a while”. The remarkable and significant social changes are emerging where the contradictions and conflicts are the consequences. As Roy justifies here, Ganapathy is one among a legion of Maoists whose mission is to protect India’s marginalized tribal peoples from the endangering threats against them by capital development. The displacement and exploitation of the poor adivasis are high by allowing private sectors to enter Indian forests. Of course, Roy backs up the violence perpetuated by tribal leaders and the other Maoists on cultural grounds, she on the other hand accurately brings out the real life conditions that are the source of this violence and particularly, some of the chronological decisions taken by the government upon tribal people and their locations.

IV. Unequal War in Arundati Roy’s Walking With The Comrades

Roy portrays a clear picture of impenitent impression of this unrighteous and unequal war. “Ordinary villagers armed with traditional weapons, backed by a super by organized, hugely motivated Maoist guerrilla fighting force with an extraordinary and violent history of armed rebellion”. Even though they consider themselves that they are fighting for their rights, they are unequal and appear like sparrows before big regiments. They have to face massive paramilitary force armed with weapons and state support and also they could not stand before the firepower and the media which is another powerful weapon. It is very important to note that they are 10% of our population who must be given jobs and have been displaced. With the help of tribal people, Maoist began to create a world for themselves which helped them to turn many into

Maoists. They wanted to have their own police as if in other states. More or less, it is not easy for the tribal people to access government benefits and they are deprived of all supports. It is understood that many adivasi women have joined the Maoists because of male control over them in the villages, for instance and at the same time, we found that men from the same village have joined. As a result, the police tightened their clutches and become more and more violent, and so the Maoists strengthen themselves and authoritative in their approach. Maoists justify themselves that they fight against people who are oppressing the poor and the needy. They believe that they can bring a political transformation through their fights following the guerrilla war tactics in surroundings of the cities from the countryside and attacking them.

V. Conclusion

It is pity to note that the innocent policemen and soldiers, who received medals, cash awards and promotions, are those who have indulged in killing the innocent people. Even they didn't realize the pain of innocent people. Roy continues, in her article "Walking with the Comrades" calls them as, 'Brave hearts'. She calls the Maoists as, "... a sea of people, the wildest, beautiful people, dressed in the wildest, beautiful ways.... They have feathered headgear and painted tattoos on their faces. Many have eye make-up and white, powdered faces. There's a lot of militia, girls in saris of breath taking colors with rifles slung carelessly over their shoulders". Nagarajan rightly points out, "The social structure in which one lives is operated based on a powerful economic structure. This powerful economic structure controls the political structure and the social structure. Marxism says, "Economic power is behind all institutions. In other words, it attempts to explain things without assuming that there is a force beyond the natural world and the society we inhabit".

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