

## ADIVASIS OF THE CRUSHERS OF BIRBHUM: A DISMAL STATE OF STATE-LED DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Debasree De\*

Abstract: A survey was conducted in the stone quarries and crushers of Panchami of Birbhum (West Bengal, India) have unveiled some unknown truths before us, truths that were always denied and ignored. The *adivasis* are languishing in a tremendously poisonous environmental condition. Several years passed and nothing happened to the promises made by the government to them. The promises are forgotten as usual. But the brewing discontents of the *adivasis* can anytime burst into movement, a movement led by their 'faceless saviours' – the sons of the soil. This is a dismal story of a small district where the indigenous people are doomed to survive in a sorrow state of utter negligence and are preparing for taking up arms to protest against all sorts of injustice and oppression perpetrated by the state government. The present article is based on personal interview and field work method and hardly contains secondary source material.

Key words: Tribe, Development, Crusher, Movement, Environment

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\* MA, MPhil, UGC Senior Research Fellow, Department of History, Jadavpur University, Kolkata-700032, India

**1. Introduction:** The quarries of Panchami of Birbhum (West Bengal, India) are functioning for more than fifty years. By removing the upper layer of the earth high quality basalt stones are lifted. First it requires to blast inside the quarry and then the stones are brought to the crushers for crushing and making stone-chips. The stone chips are very cheap in this region than that of Pakur. All these quarries and crushers work under the State Mineral Development and Trading Corporation which is a government organisation. But it is quite strange that within their notified area the prohibited quarries are functioning. In fact, the government did not compensate the *adivasis* for the acquisition of their lands to excavate quarries.

Quarries require unskilled workers rather than skilled workers. The unskilled workers are generally found around the whirling machine. Since the *adivasis* are hard working and physically strong, they fulfil this requirement to a great extent. Large numbers of quarry workers are Santhals who are drawn from the desperately impoverished areas. The *adivasi* women take jobs in these quarries at a very tender age. They are made to work 10 to 12 hours a day, are paid a pittance and are not provided with mandatory safeguards such as masks. They receive no medical treatment and no compensation if they are injured in the course of their work. The *adivasis* working here suffer from serious health problems, such as asthma, as a result of inhaling stone dust. All existing environmental laws and status of West Bengal are violated by the quarry owners.

There are two parts of the stone crushing industry. First is the quarry, where the minerals are lifted from the mines by blasting. The second step is to crush the big stones by the whirling machines and to make stone chips of various shapes for various construction purposes. The skilled labourers are required for using the dynamites to blast in the quarry. This causes less pollution due to less outflow of the stone dust. In the next step the unskilled labourers make small pieces of stones with the whirling machines and this causes serious contamination both to the environment and the health of the labourers. Many other miscellaneous industries have established centering on the stone crushing industry. The *adivasi* women of different age groups work as the unskilled labourers. They are called '*cheli*' or '*chalana*'. The *adivasi* labourers directly come into contact with the stone dust and get affected by lethal diseases. Other labourers, such as loaders, manager, office workers, cook more or less get affected by the stone dust as well.

The air pollution has already been proved in two scientific investigations conducted by West Bengal Power Development Corporation (WBPDCL, approved by the Government of West Bengal) from 1999-2001. The investigations were conducted into two phases, one, pre-monsoon, i.e. from April-May, and another post-monsoon, i.e. in December. It was found that the average Suspended Particulate Matter (SPM) and Respirable Particulate Matter (RPM) concentrations have exceeded the standard limit in the stone crushing areas of Panchami (in pre monsoon 4-5 times and in post-monsoon 4-8 times).

The problem is not only with the *adivasis* who work in the crushers, but also with those who work in the fields and live in the contiguous areas of the quarries. The stone dust vitiates the soil of their land, big pieces of stones harm their huts when blasts happen and sometimes causes serious physical injury, it even does not spare their cooked food. The *adivasis* of Talbandh, Jethia, Habrapahari, Sianbandha have complained several times to the authorities, but no steps have so far been taken by any of the representatives of the government. The *adivasis* of Panchami of Muhammad Bazar block are compelled to live in this situation. The tension arose when on February 5, 2010 in the evening a big blast took place and harmed six houses of the village of Talbandh. On the very next day a group of goons on bikes attacked the village with hand grenades. According to the villagers, the quarry owners hired goons in order to threaten the *adivasis* who were protesting against the illegal crushers since 2008 under the leadership of Birbhum Adivasi Gaonta (BAG) which was formed at Suri. After this incident, the *adivasis* of Talbandh, Bharkata and Hinglo gram panchayat assembled with the beatings of *madal* (*adivasi* drums) in thousands of numbers. *Adivasi* women also joined the protesters and closed all the crushers where they themselves had to work. And since then the movement is going on unabatedly.

The stone quarries are not new in these areas. It started in the seventies, when the then government issued licence and bank loans to the newly released Naxals for constructing quarries as their rehabilitation package. These Naxals could not cope with the situation and left the quarries for ever, but the quarries remained there and spread gradually to the adjoining areas as well. The government departments have practically no records about how many crushers are there? How many lands have been acquired so far to construct crushers? What kinds of materials are used to blast the stones and from where are they supplied? How much blasting materials an owner can import and use and do they have licence for that? Since the entire plot is declared as

tribal land, which cannot be sold according to the Indian constitution, then how come they are able to get the permission from government to construct stone quarry? The government do not get any royalty from these crushers. In Panchami 28-55 tons of stone are being carried by 1200 to 1500 trucks everyday.

The *adivasis* of Birbhum have mobilised under their own organisations like ‘Birbhum Adivasi Gaonta’ (BAG) and ‘Manjhi Pargana Baisi’ to launch a protest movement against the illegal stone crushers. The *adivasi* culture is completely different from ours and so their mode of protest. They initiated a procession and gave the slogan of ‘*dhiripoka bang bang*’ (go back stone worms), against the quarry owners whom they think the culprits. Gaonta has initiated afforestation programme by planting *sal*, *mahua*, *neem*; they have started celebrating the *adivasi* festivals like *Gobardhan* fair, *Sohrai*, *Karam*, *Baha*, encouraged the rehearsals of Santhali dance, songs and language in village to village for the rejuvenation of Santhal culture and tradition as an integral part of the movement; they have succeeded to demolish the hooch posts, send their children to school, encourage fishing, maize cultivation, and so on. In Dholakata and Sholagoria village they have started cultivation on two thousand *bigha* land with the stored water of the closed quarries. They are also planning to start looms to weave their own clothes. They have taken the Pneumoconiosis patients to the health department of the National Human Rights Commission. Later a new *adivasi* organisation named *Hihidi Pipidi* was formed and joined the movement.

On February 22 the district magistrate called for a meeting with both the quarry owners and the *adivasis*. The *adivasis* attended the meeting and demanded that the owners have to maintain all the governmental rules and regulations regarding the stone quarries and crushers. They said that the quarries that have legal sanction both from the government and the court will continue and those who do not have will be closed immediately, the quarry workers have to be provided with legal identity cards, the owners have to collect licence for using and preserving the blasting materials, i.e., dynamite, and all the papers are to be submitted to the panchayats. These were the main demands and the authorities committed to the *adivasis* of fulfilling all their demands within a month. But the situation still is the same. The workers of the *adivasi* organisations are often threatened, allured, and if it does not work then their just movement is tagged as ‘Maoist’.

According to my field observation, the stone quarry industry severely contaminates the topsoil as well as the ground water. The level of water has already decreased upto 15 feet and the small ponds and water bodies have dried up. The dense forests stretches of Kanksa, Ganapur to Rampurhat are already under threat. The *adivasis* depend on these forests for fuel, fodder, medicines, fruits and tubers, mushrooms and so on. The indiscriminate cutting of the forests is causing soil erosion and the misuse of the water and land resources will cause a massive devastation of natural equilibrium in this region. The *adivasis* are forced to live in starvation and malnutrition. The villagers fall prey of deadly diseases like Tuberculosis, Fluorosis and Silicosis. The symptoms of Silicosis are similar to that of Tuberculosis. There is no treatment of Silicosis known so far in medical science. Any negligence can give birth to Pneumoconiosis and then to Cancer. If the disease is not identified then no compensation is paid to the workers. The owners do not ensure the safety of the workers. They neither obey the Labour Act nor the Minimum Wage Act. The workers are severely underpaid.

A major part of livelihood of the *adivasis* of the region is directly engaged with the stone crushing industry. But yet they are in against of the illegal mining. They have maintained some restrictions such as the work of stone crushing will remain closed after evening, the non-*adivasis* are denied to have access in the villages after evening, etc. There are about 156 quarries and 1200 crushers only in one block of the district and amongst them about 35 quarries and 230 crushers are legal and notified to the government. The government do not get any taxes from the illegal quarries and crushers, but even then these are not stopped. According to the villagers, it simply means that they are bribing the political party leaders for their sustenance.

In April 2010, a stone dealer was murdered in Baromesia village. On this pretext the armed cadres entered the village and 50 huts were set on fire in Baromesia and Sagarbandi villages. They also killed an *adivasi*. In protest of this incident BAG started a blockade and decided to shut crushing units and quarries for an indefinite period. There are nearly 83 stone quarries in thousand acre land of Panchami and Talbandh village areas, which were closed for about five months. There are nearly 400 crushers and 1500 trucks for the supply-work, which were also stopped. According to the owners 20,000 workers have lost their jobs in course of the protest movement. They were meeting a loss of near about few hundred crores every month.

In Salbadra region there are about 58 quarries and 160 crushers, which were also closed since April. The quarry owners used to sell stones amounting to nearly 50-60 lakh rupees daily.

The quarries are situated in the Marsha gram panchayat area. There are 33 *adivasi* villages in this area. More or less 1500-2000 workers used to work in the quarries and all of them were *adivasis*. These *adivasis* have lost their jobs and are forced to migrate in search of work in the quarries of Nalhati. Chandni is a Santhal village of Salbadra region. The Santhal women of the village are now working in the quarries and crushers of Nalhati. Boropahari of Nalhati is dotted with stone quarries. In spite of working in a far way area they do not get half of the minimum wage. The daily wage of the quarry workers is 70-90 rupees. But now they are unable to earn even that meagre amount.

The Chief Minister himself visited the area and promised that within hundred meter of *adivasi* settlement no quarry and crusher will be allowed to function. The *adivasis* of Patharchala village of Muhammad Bazar said that a big stone quarry is presently situated very near to their mud-hut. They thought that after Chief Minister's visit this quarry would be declared illegal and would be closed. But after few days they found that the closed quarry had again started working! And not only that the quarry owner and the stone dealers had frequently forced them to leave the place by offering some money. There are more or less 30 *adivasi* families in the village who are facing similar kind of threats from the quarry owners. The 'Jaher Than' or the sacred groves of the *adivasis* have already started disappearing under the quarry pit. The *adivasis* of Sagarbandi village have also complained against the illegal crushers. They told to the Chief Minister that the poisoning dust of the crushers has contaminated thousands acre cultivable land of the *adivasis*, where they also have lost their own. But since then there is no improvement in the situation. Hence, twenty thousand *adivasis* of the thirty villages have compelled to launch a united protest movement against the quarry owners.

The survey reveals that the *adivasi* women of the area do not get any widow pension or old age pension, BPL cards have not been issued, and the *adivasis* are not even getting rice of two rupees in spite of government declaration. The money allotted for purchasing machines to control pollution is being spent on hiring quarry mafias from Yamuna, Bisia, Borotudigram villages of Mayureshwar. Despite that the *adivasis* are not fighting against their deprivation. They have launched the protest chiefly because they have been dispossessing from their ancestral house and land, the poisonous dust is taking their lives away. They are struggling for their survival. They are not asking for any new development, rather they themselves have made

alternative programme of economic development of their own region which was turned down by the government as well.

During our survey we interviewed a manager of a crusher of Muhammad Bazar who refused to tell his name in front of our camera. He said that everyday 4-5 women and same number of men labourers come to work in each of the crusher. They belong mostly to the *adivasi* community. They are contract labourers and are being paid Rs. 100-150 per day. But there is some discrimination between men and women regarding their wages. Men are paid with higher wages than the women, though we observed that both men and women are doing the same kind of work, i.e., crushing and headloading. He also asserted that masks and helmets are given to the labourers and proper arrangement of water has also been done. When asked that why not a single labourer is seen wearing the mask or helmet, he replied that they have put them off intentionally. When asked why there is no arrangement of water is seen, he said that since it is monsoon water is not required to be arranged. It is well known that *adivasi* land cannot be sold, mortgaged or leased out to any non-*adivasi*. But interestingly most of these crushers are formed on *adivasi* lands. The manager said that the secret of this illegal act is that a group of *adivasi* is hired to take the lands from the poor *adivasis* on lease and then hand it over to the crusher owners. Thus the illegal means is becoming legal.

The *adivasi* women respondents of the same crusher talked to us quite freely. Sumi Hembrom, Tulsi Tudu and Joba Hembrom said that they are paid on daily basis. The work is too labourious, though they are paid only Rs. 100 a day which is too little to run the household. They, in fact, have not seen how a mask looks like! They laughed when I asked them why you have put off your helmets. They have no land and are compelled to migrate from their village Mathmuluk to the crushers in search of work. The dust was suffocating for us and we moved to the adjacent village to collect information on their movement and Gaonta.

So, the *adivasi* lands are being sold in meagre amount while the *adivasi* workers are ill-paid. The quarry owners are profiting crores through these deceitful means. They never spend a rupee in order to develop the region. They even do not provide proper helmets, masks, and rubber-boots to the workers. According to the pollution control system when the crushing work is going on, sufficient water should be arranged in front of the crushing machine so that the dust cannot be spread. But the quarry owners also neglect the rules. A large number of workers are brought from the tribal areas of Jharkhand. They have no legal documents, no salary bill, no

security, and no compensation for injury. For the *adivasi* women the hurdles are many more. They have to face sexual harassment of the quarry owners.

We entered the village Sagarbandi (PO. Bharkata, PS. Muhammad Bazar) once participated in the movement launched by BAG. Parul Mandi also works in the crushers. She gets Rs. 100-130 per day. She said that no mask or helmet has been provided by the owners. Neither compensation nor expenditure of treatment is provided if any labourer gets injured which is very common in the crushers. If he or she cannot join the work for injury, no payment is made. But quite surprisingly she refused to talk about Gaonta and their movement. After being convinced about our identity and the purpose of our coming, she started talking about Gaonta. She said that when their houses were set on fire by the goons of the owners of the crushers, Gaonta gave them shelter to stay, and later helped them to erect their houses again. If Gaonta was not there, the owners would have driven them out from their villages. She said, in the initial period of the movement there was no organization, but later Gaonta was formed which championed their cause and fought for them. Puti Murmu and Kalamoni Hembrom also supported her and said that the goons looted everything from their houses while Gaonta stood beside them and led them to retaliate strongly. It made very clear that the women of the village once participated in the movement and are still ready to fight against any kind of injustice.

Top-soil is burnt to construct brick kilns, small water bodies are filled up to erect big buildings, factories are established across the paddy fields, and natural flow of streams and rivers is stopped to build highways – all these require stone-chips. By destroying the field-forest-land and other natural resources these crushers were built. In the year 2000, roads and bridges were badly affected by a devastating flood in West Bengal. The demand of stone-chips got increased unprecedentedly. Within fifteen years, the nature of the economy as well as the environment of Nalhati-Mururai-Rampurhat-Muhammad Bazar-Panchami-Hinglo of Birbhum was transformed drastically. Paddy fields, water bodies, people of the contiguous villages, everything was covered under the dust and the loud noise of the quarries. Big trucks are passing by the road the entire day loaded with heavy stones. It terribly affects the national highway. The non-tribals are intruding the tribal areas with the support of this industry. The forests of Sonthsai-Kashthagada-Habrapahari-Harinsinga are lost. During blasts the houses of the adjacent villages tremble. The invaluable earth water is pumped and used in the crushers. Having deprived of good harvest, the *adivasis* are impelled to work in the quarries and the crushers. In spite of all these injustices, the

*adivasis* of Birbhum are not fighting for what they have lost, but to protect what they have. The *adivasis* of the country are fighting for *jal-jamin-jangal* since time immemorial. The most important feature of these movements is that these are always led by the local leaders, the sons of the soil. Movement in Nandigram and Lalgurh did influence the *adivasis* of Birbhum to a great extent. But from the very time of its inception the *adivasi* movement of the crushers of Birbhum remained unknown to the intellectuals.

**2. Alternative Economic Development Programme of the Adivasis of Birbhum:** In the course of the movement of Gaonta the representatives of the West Bengal government frequently asked them that if the crushers are closed then how they will survive, because their livelihood is largely dependent on this industry. But the *adivasis* replied that crushers have been functioning since early 80s, before that their economy was quite self-dependent. But the need of an alternative was required when it comes to the negotiation between the owners of the crushers and the protesting masses in the present situation. During the Chief Minister's visit on 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2010 at Muhammad Bazar block office a meeting was held where the Chief Minister told them to plan an alternative agriculture-based economy to the crusher-economy and source of employment. The *adivasis* accepted the challenge and made the alternative on the basis of agricultural experiments conducted by the local *adivasis* and the Self Help Groups which was for the preservation of land-forest-water resources. It was a long-term, concrete and stable economic plan which was sent to the Chief Minister as a draft. Let us focus on what they proposed to the government.

1. To create employment within 15 days to one month, landless peasants, unemployed crusher workers and marginal farmers from 30 villages of 3 Gram Panchayats should be engaged in planting 10,000 plants so that 25,000 work-days can instantly be created. In the month of October they may build small wells in order to store the rain water, excavate ponds, and form at least 10 rearing places of the plants by storing the water of the closed crushers, etc. It will provide them another 25,000 work-days.

2. How to use the water of the closed crushers in order to provide employment:

- a. The average depth of the quarries is 90 feet. Average width of the quarries is about 8-9 acres. Within a year or so, the rain water and the stream water coming out from the apertures of the stones get stored in the 60-75% of the quarries. The water is perfect for fishing, and the bark of *mahua* helps the fishes to grow faster within one or one and half year. Initially in the time of lifting of the fishes, some structural problems arose. But Madhumita Mukhopadhyay, an official of fisheries department, advised the adivasis to lift the fishes by dipping a bamboo or iron made cage into the water. Now, it helps them to lift 4-5 ton varieties of fishes a year which are nutritious as well as exportable. A self help group will be formed for each of the quarry consisting of 30-35 members selecting from the landless and marginal farmers. For the transportation and sale of the fishes another 10 workers for each of the quarry will be selected from the neighbouring villages. It means that at least 40-45 families will get jobs in the fishing sector for an entire year and can earn Rs. 4000-5000 monthly. Therefore, the government has to give loans to these self help groups so that 480-540 Santhal families can earn a stable livelihood per year from 12 closed quarries.
- b. The bamboo or iron made cages that were used for lifting the fishes can also be used for livestock rearing. The faeces can be used as food of the fishes. By doing this a self help group of 7 people can earn Rs. 3000-3500 monthly. Therefore, in those 12 quarries another 84 families will be made self dependent financially.
- c. The 'overburden' (in mining jargon 'overburden' means the hip of the muddy layers of the quarries) will be used for cultivating wild crops and vegetables. Each self help group consisting of 5 people will be given one 'overburden' area to cultivate seasonal cereals, fruits and vegetables. These groups will supply the food of the livestock for the entire year. The cereals will be sold in the local markets. A least 60 people can earn Rs. 2000-2500 monthly from these 'overburden' areas.
- d. The stored water of the closed quarries can also be used for irrigational activities in the adjacent cultivable land stretching from 150 to 200 acres. Since the adivasis are giving priority to the organic farming with minimum water, three times crop a year will neither minimise the stored water nor harm the fishing activity in the quarry water. High breed paddy, wheat, mustard or sugarcane that requires a heavy supply of water will not be encouraged at all. In that case it has been observed that in 200 acres mono-crop land

twelve to thirteen types of harvests can be grown for the whole of the year with the stored water of a single closed crusher. The crops that are grown with this kind of small amount of irrigation are: almond, a variety of pigeon-pea, various types of seasonal leaves, maize, red mustard, millets, black pulses, *babui* grass, and so on. Ploughing the land, using organic fertilizers, sowing the seeds, harvesting, scattering seeds on the ground, removing the insects and pests and selling the products in the local markets will provide an average of 1100 working day per acre a year. Stored water of 12 closed quarries will provide 26, 40,000 work-days in 2400 acres land every year. In the agricultural sector if Rs. 120 is paid for a work-day, then minimum 250 work-days will be required for a single family a year. In that case, nearly 10,650 families will be given employment against 26, 40,000 work-days a year.

3. Fruit-gardens and food processing: The priority should be given to the cultivation of nutritious cereals, millets, pulses, *dal*, maize, etc., rather than paddy, because these crops have 300-400 times higher calorie value than rice or wheat and require dry land, small amount of water and cheap organic fertilizers and pesticides. Small food processing industry can also be created like corn flex can be processed from maize. Apart from these, cash crops such as cotton plant, cashew-nuts, *kudrum* (a kind of ladies finger), almond, guava, different types of flowers can be grown. Bandage and sterilized cotton from cotton plant, oil from cotton seeds, purified cashew-nuts from cashew-nuts, jam-jelly-quash from *kudrum*, and various other types of small industries can be established. In the entire quarry area more than thousand acres 'social lands' of the Santhals and government lands is left as waste lands. If these lands are properly utilised then 2,000 people of the district can be employed.

4. Forest resources and employment: The forest resources of the area are enough to establish a *neem* and *mahua* oil processing industry. Besides, honey processing, sal leaf plate making industry will bring employment for another 1,500 families.

5. Village wealth and employment: More or less 50 Santhal villages of the quarry area have about five thousand Palmyra trees. There are about 60 people who are efficient in collecting the palmyra-juice. Molasses, solid tablet of molasses, sugar-candy and juice processing from the

palmyra-fruits may provide employment to at least 60 families for an entire year. Apart from this, palmyra-leaf, wild grass, and different types of wild colourful seeds of plants will help in developing handicrafts. Rope is made from the skin of *kudrum* and this is required to build easy-chair of bamboo. A lot of furniture building industries can be initiated using both the rope and bamboo. Beautiful mats are made with the date palm leaf. All these are needed for a constant source of income.

Among the above mentioned programmes, some are short-term and some are long-term. For instant employment the adivasis of Birbhum have already formed 30 self help groups consisting of 26 members, including and women. They are waiting for the government fund and other necessary supports in order to establish machines and other infrastructures of processing *neem* and *mahua* oil.

The adivasis are hoping for the government intervention to prove their ability and the inevitability of the natural economy, which will help them to be free from the clutches of quarry industry. The fifty thousand Santhals are still waiting for the reply on the part of the government of West Bengal.

The letter was undersigned by, Nil Tudu, Sushil Soren, Sidhu Soren, Arun Ram, Sadi Hansda, Mihir Mandal, Mohan Mandal, Babulal Tudu, Lokhu Hansda, Pargana Tudu, Robin Soren, Pushpalata Soren, and many other members of Birbhum Adivasi Gaonta and Manjhi Pargana Baisi.

**3. The Demands of the Adivasis of the Stone Quarries of Birbhum:** On 26<sup>th</sup> July and again on 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2010 a meeting was held at Salbadra area of Mashra Gram Panchayat between the representatives of the quarry owners and the members of Birbhum Adivasi Gaonta. They both signed on an agreement and following are the clauses of the agreement:

1. Salbadra Joint Committee was formed with 16 Santhal and the Bengali villagers of Mashra Gram Panchayat, 4 people of local administration and 8 representatives of quarry and crusher owners.
2. If any kind of problem or clash broke out between the two parties, then this Salbadra Joint Committee will play the role of a mediator.
3. No new quarry or crusher will be opened up in the Mashra Gram Panchayat area.

4. In case of the working stone mines, there will maximum one acre land in the surrounding area be given for further expansion of the quarry, though the decision will be finalised under the supervision of the Joint Committee.
5. During blasting if the pieces of stone spatter on in the adjacent villages, lands, grazing grounds, play grounds or roads, then the Joint Committee will take decision and the quarry will be immediately closed.
6. In the quarries proper safe-guards such as spectacles, helmets, rubber shoes and safety belt will be provided.
7. In each of the quarries trained blasters and foremen will be present.
8. The quarries and the crushers will be established at least 200 metre away from the villages, health centres, panchayats, schools, village roads, otherwise Joint Committee will declare their closing.
9. Any quarry owner will be punished exemplarily if he casts the dust of the crushers on anybody's pond, land, river, rivulet, etc.
10. Those 'overburdens' that are polluting the rivers, rivulets and lands will be cleared up within maximum three months from the day of the agreement, otherwise those quarries will be declared closed.
11. The stored water of the quarries should be used in agricultural activities and sprinkle on the dusty roads instead of leaving here and there.
12. 80-90% of the dust coming out from the crushers should be controlled. Within 7 months from the date of the agreement, all crushers have to take appropriate steps to control the dust.
13. Within a year 20 per cent increase in the wage rate of the labourers of the crushers has to be ensured.
14. If any worker dies in duty, then one lakh rupees has to be paid by the owner and also has to make arrangement of five lakhs rupees from the insurance amount for the deceased's family.
15. Within 9 months from the day of starting any unit of the quarry or crusher industry, NOC (No Objection Certificate) has to be collected from the PCB (Pollution Control Board).
16. After sun set no quarry or crusher will be permitted to function.

17. All the workers of the quarry and crushers have to be provided with identity cards and attendance cards.
18. Within a month after the opening of an unit separate toilets and rest rooms for the female labourers have to be arranged.
19. The female labourers will not be given any office work.
20. If any unit gets closed during government supervision then the Joint Committee will not remain responsible.
21. In the day of *haat*, no truck either loaded or unloaded would be parked by the contiguous roads of the *haat*.
22. No male or female labourer will be seated on the front seat of the truck by the truck driver.
23. The industry will be closed on every Sunday.
24. No new land lease will be issued for the quarry industry in the area.
25. Developmental work regarding the social education and the health condition will be done through the Joint Committee.
26. The labourers will not be brought from outside to do the loading or levelling work.
27. Without having permission from the *manjhi* of the concerned village any crusher owner or their workers will not be allowed to enter the adivasi villages or their huts. Any person of the village cannot be bribed or allured for any special privileges in order to disrupt the social interests of the larger masses. If any such incident happens then the quarry or crusher owner will be driven out from the area and legal steps will be taken against that very person who is bribed.
28. The Joint Committee will try to solve problems regarding quarries and crushers and will hold meeting once in a month.

**4. Conclusion:** Now, the question arises where is the existence of the government in this war front? Should not the government take the onus to stand by these perishing people of the periphery, the *adivasis*? The present government blames the previous one for all misdeeds, but is this government aware of the injustice and atrocities being perpetrated by the goons on the *adivasis*? Or, it needs another blow to make it feel? Should we not ask ourselves that why the

women first refused to talk about Gaonta? Do they feel some kind of fear, and fear to whom? Is it the fear of being misconstrued by the outsiders like us as 'Maoists'? Well, in our country any protest can easily be tagged as 'Maoist' without knowing their grievances, their hardships, their resentment, and of course their way of protest. And if they are *adivasis* and armed with their traditional weapons, then it is easier to define them as extremists. But we should try to understand that they have their own style of protest. They have a strong sense of privacy, they never trust the 'outsiders' who come only during the time of elections and make series of promises to be broken later. Their village is like their family. It is not that they cannot be made understood. They do not need our sympathy, but proper discussion should be made when it comes to the acquisition of their property, i.e., land and natural resources. They talked to me, and why not! But we have to keep in mind that we should not delve into their privacy, rather respect it. And if you try to violate it, manipulate them, then movement is the last alternative to be faced.

