

**TOWARDS (TRANS) LOCATING THE ADIVASIS IN THE INFORMATION  
SUPERHIGHWAY JUNK SPACES (MALLS)  
GLOBALIZED (POST) MODERN WORLD OF JUNK SPACES (MALLS)**

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If we look at the media headlines today, the following spectacles and phenomena dominate the information barrage:

- Bullish stock exchanges
- Crowded McDonalds and swarming beach resorts
- Swinging discotheques
- Sparkling Queen's Necklace (Marine Drive, Mumbai)
- Malls, multiplexes, software parks, 'smart cities', swanky emporia, towers with all their glass and glitter.

Against this backdrop, we have the sweeping gentrification of slums, burgeoning suburbia with their pools, golf courses, custom-built vehicles, luxury condominiums, etc. The banner headlines bombard us with the news of India's arrival as an economic superpower with a phenomenal 8-9% growth of the GDP.

Before we point out the impact of this much-flaunted economic achievement on vulnerable segments like women, Dalits, ethnic and religious minorities, Adivasis, peasants and workers, etc., we would like to deconstruct the myth of 8% growth and the stock exchange boom. This economic turning point is a bloody pointer of early 21st century imperialism - with a century-long bloodthirsty trajectory of eliminating the peasantry from the face of the earth, extermination of the indigenous people from most parts of the globe - is the long tiring story of capital's insatiable hunger for profit. This 8% growth has been achieved after the ruling classes of India and their political parties ruthlessly administered the shock therapy known as structural adjustments - liberalisation packaged in the neoliberal paradigm, whose master narrative is known as 'Globalization'.

Globalization - which was capital's response to its own contradictions and cyclical structural crises after the end of the post-war boom, after the "Petroleum crisis", global economic recession, the Vietnam war etc., the world economic relations were restructured according to the neoliberal ideology. The dollar was de-linked from gold,

and then “social democracy”, “Keynesian demand management” and the chimera of the “welfare state”, “import substitution” were given up. Washington consensus was adopted to bail out global capitalism in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The comprador rulers of the third world gave up their shallow rhetoric of socialism, self-reliance, and the whole discourse of decolonisation was reduced to the desensitized moribund terrain of history textbooks and development studies.

In the 1980s, as a direct fallout of the debt crisis, structural adjustment policies of globalization were ruthlessly imposed by the Brettonwoods institutions, at the behest of the imperialist masters - especially American imperialism on Latin America (which it considered its own fiefdom). These policies devastated and pauperised the entire working masses and indigenous people of Latin America - while the local elites and the multinational corporations made money, there was 'boom'. A radical economist of Latin America had then remarked, "The economy is doing fine, but the people are not". Then there was the crash, now the word globalization invites a hostile reaction from the common people of Latin America, and this situation led to the formation of popularly elected left-wing governments. China and India are having the present economic boom because capital has found new virgin areas to exploit. Most of the senseless leaps are results of foreign institutional investment of speculative finance capital coming in to make a fast buck, and will withdraw at the first signs of the crisis. Then the entire edifice of aspiring Asian economic superpowers will collapse like a house of cards. One should not forget the meltdown of the economy of the so-called 'Tigers of South-east Asia'. On one side the depoliticized academia, and the culture-vultures who romanticize tribal culture and their way of life, the governments objectify and museumize them, and the government of India showcases tribal culture in state-sponsored official *APNAUTSAVS* in London and Paris, while on the other hand shocking news of starvation deaths of Adivasis pours in from different parts of the country every day.

Adivasis - native people, indigenous people - were condescendingly called 'tribals' by the colonial masters, while the anthropologists made lucrative academic careers by objectifying them through their studies, as if they are a different species to be showcased in the museums. There was decimation in the name of the white man's burden, arrogantly portrayed as the civilizing mission of the imperialist west. Human beings without private property or power hierarchies had existed for millennia, time immemorial. We started our journey from the caves, hunting, gathering, and struggling to save ourselves from the forces of nature. We were originally a part of nature, coexisting with it in a mutually liberating symphony - without polluting and devastating

the environment like the present day multi-national corporations, in their relentless drive for profit maximization and commodification.

After learning agriculture, class societies emerged with enslavement of women, and feudalism became the dominant social structure based on exploitative agrarian relations between the 'Lord of the manor' and the peasants. Many parts were still left out, and there were the remnants of democracy and collectivism known as Adivasis or indigenous people, with their sustainable lifestyles and production process. At this point, the historical watershed called capitalism emerged from the interstices of feudalism. This new economy and social relation wanted colonies for raw materials and natives as slaves. This is the ruthless story of global capitalism. Continents were colonized in search of raw materials and markets. This story of primitive accumulation or forced imposition of capitalist relations, violently dispossessing and displacing peasants and Adivasis was repeated in India by British colonialism through the East India Company. India was a multi-ethnic, diverse society. It contained rich natural resources, hundreds of languages/castes and different Adivasi people were sucked into global capitalism by the guns of British Imperial invaders. Adivasis, who were 8.08% of Indian population, are classified into 500 scheduled communities. Administrators, law-makers, anthropologists and constitution give various definitions of the Adivasis. The constitution lists these communities to be:

- a. A traditional occupation in a definite geographical area.
- b. A distinctive culture, which includes the whole spectrum of a tribal way of life, i.e., language, customs, traditions, religious beliefs, arts & crafts, etc.
- c. Primitive traits depicted in their occupational pattern, economy, etc.
- d. Lack of educational and technological development (Rahul Sen, Tribal Movements During the Colonial Period: 1770-1947, pp. 206).

On the other hand, anthropologists in India are still to come to an agreement on a definition of the term. G.S. Ghurge made a distinction between tribals and non-tribals on the basis of religion, occupation and radical elements (1962). Desai elaborated on this by listing the following general characteristics:

- They live in unapproachable places, away from civilised people.
- They belong to one of the following groups – Negroid, Austriloid or Mongloids.

- They use a tribal language.
- They follow a primitive religion, which is based on principles of animalism.
- Their economy is of a primitive nature, such as collection, hunting, etc.
- They are mostly non-vegetarian.
- They have nomadic habits and have a special interest in dance and wine.

(Rahul Sen)

According to S.C. Dube, a tribe is:

"an ethnic category defined by real or putative descent, characterized by a corporate self-identity and a wide range of commonly shared traits of culture... they believe they have a common descent, consciously hold a collective self-image, and possess a distinctive cultural ethos, many elements of which are shared by the collectivity".

(See S.C. Dube - Tribal Heritage in India, Vol. 1 - Ethnicity, Identity and Interaction, Vikas Publishing House, Delhi, 1977).

Majumdar, in his definition of a tribe, incorporated such traits as territorial affiliation, endogamous, ruled by tribal officers, common language or dialect, following tribal traditions, beliefs, customs, etc. (See D.N. Majumdar and Madan, An Introduction to Social Anthropology, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1956.)

The legendary Dutch anthropologist Haimendorf, who sympathetically studied the Adivasi communities in India, especially in Andhra Pradesh for more than four decades, defined Adivasis as: "autochthonous societies which persisted until recently in an archaic and in many respects primitive lifestyle", characterized as hunters and gatherers or rudimentary agriculturalists, using the slash-and-burn method of cultivation, and distinguished by their isolation in hills and forests and their separation from the wider civilization of India. (See C. Von Furer-Haimendorf - Aboriginal Rebellions in the Deccan 'Man in India' (Rebellion Number) Vol. 25: 208-218.)

That none of these definitions, including the constitutional one, fit all communities identified as tribal is well-recognised (Hardiman, 1987:11-14; Beteille, 1896). Both Hardiman and Beteille have emphasized the trait-listing nature of all these definitions as their main shortcoming, and argued for a more historical and ethnic basis for identifying a tribal community. Yet, both have failed to propose a convincing historical

definition themselves. (D. Hardiman, *Coming of Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Colonial India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi. A. Betelle - *The Concept of Tribe with Special Reference to India - European Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 27: 297-318 - as quoted by Rahul Sen.)

In view of the multiple definitions, one can safely concur with Rahul Sen that 'tribals' are those communities that historically possessed a communal, social and corporate order and lacked any concept of individual and private property ownership. This is coupled with the fact that these communities were the original inhabitants of the land they lived on, which they made habitable, before being disposed by aliens through conquests and assimilation at later times (R. Sen - *Structure and History: The Mundwari Synthesis*. Unpublished M. Phil. dissertation submitted to Department of Anthropology, Delhi University, 1991- as quoted in 'Tribal Movements During the Colonial Period'.)

The Adivasis were the original inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent, with their sustainable agriculture, fairly gender-just democratic egalitarian social order with equality and collectivism as principles governing social life. They reared animals, had subsistence agriculture and were dependent on the forest for fuel, fodder, medicines and other products known today as 'minor forest produce'. Commodification of the commons, and forests were unknown concepts for the Adivasis, until the advent of class society known as the caste Hindu social structure with graded inequality and vertical power structure as its constitutive principles, which is otherwise known as Indian feudalism.

As the exemplary revolutionary and socialist thinker, Rosa Luxemburg had taught us years ago, global capitalism needs a core and a periphery for extraction of raw materials, and colonialism is a natural corollary for capital's greed. (See Rosa Luxemburg - *Accumulation of Capital*, Rosa Luxemburg Reader Monthly Review Books, New York.)

Colonies like India were the jewel in the crown for the growth of British capitalism, and the ushering in of bourgeois modernity in British politics and social life. Indian agriculture had to be restructured to supply cotton for the cotton mills of Manchester. Forests and tribal habitats (including their commons) were commodified for the insatiable hunger of British industrial capitalism. Large-scale commercial felling of forests was undertaken by the British rulers to build sleepers for the railways, to

extract cheap raw materials, minerals and other natural resources - most of which were in the tribal areas. For a permanent reserve, colonial industrial growth, draconian acts like the Indian Forest Act and the Land Acquisition Act were enacted by the British rulers to grab the forests, mines, commons and other natural resources. Adivasis were further pauperised, criminalized, marginalized and pushed to the fringes by the imperialists. The permanent settlement, Ryotbari and other forms of land tenure, created a legal structure for the Britishers to maintain a complex, exploitative order vis-a-vis the Adivasis. Their customary rights were infringed upon. This predatory encroachment on their habitat and livelihood created widespread discontentment amongst the Adivasis - there were rebellions all over the country, which are one of the most glorious chapters of the anti-colonial struggles of India and the third world.

The eminent tribal historian and anthropologist K.S. Singh captures the mood of the time in his work on the Santhal rebellion and other tribal uprisings, and explains that: "Vested with such revolutionary intent, all these movements, inspite of their diverse context, territory and actions, possessed one unitary objective - the re-establishment of the indigenous order with the concurrent rolling-back of the alien system. The essence of these movements is clearly delineated by Singh in his description of the Birsa Ulgulan as "...agrarian in root... and in its end. Birsa in his speeches, emphasized the agrarian factor and sought a political solution to the problems facing his people, i.e., the establishment of a Birsait Raj..." (See K.S. Singh - The Dust-Storm and the Hanging Mist: A Study of Birsa Munda and his Movement in Chotanagpur.)

According to Rahul Sen, "The indigenous communal social order of the tribes was in conflict with the private proprietary land tenurial system introduced by the colonial administration. This was the root cause of the repeated insurrection by the tribals. Consequently, the political solution invariably arrived at by the insurgents was reversion to the indigenous system, whether through rebellion or revivalism."

(Rahul Sen, Tribal Movements During the Colonial Period: 1770-1947)

There were hundreds of revolts and uprisings against the British all over India - where the tribal concentration was more there were protracted battles. K.S. Singh broadly outlines three regions of India where these struggles went on. They are:

- a. Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana and the adjoining areas of West Bengal and Orissa, peopled by Chotanagpur tribals;

- b. Bhil-Koli-Ramoshi belt of South Rajasthan, North Gujarat, West Madhya Pradesh and North Maharashtra; and
- c. South Orissa-Andhra-Bastar region

One of the main historical reasons for the tribal uprising in Chotanagpur was explained by Rahul Sen as follows:

In 1765, the then Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam II, granted the *diwani* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to the East India Company. With this, Chotanagpur, a part of the *subah* of Bihar, passed into the hands of company administration.

Although Chotanagpur came under company administration in 1765 itself, company officers first entered this region in 1770, when a troop of soldiers led by Captain Camac came to Chotanagpur to suppress some local *zamindars* who were fighting each other. Captain Camac, thereupon, went on to reduce both Palamau and Chotanagpur Raj to tributaries of the company. As mentioned earlier, the administration of the region during this period was left in the hands of the Raja and his *zamindars* under a military collectorate set up in 1771 and later under the supervision of a joint Judge-Magistrate-Collector, with the constitution of the Ramgarh Regulation District in 1780.

The Mundas, Hos, Oraons, Santhals, Mal Pahariyas (Malers) were some of the tribal groups who lived in this region. (Rahul Sen, Tribal Movements During the Colonial Period: 1770-1947)

The other important tribal rebellions of this region were: Maler Revolt, Ho rebellion, the great Kol insurrection, the Santhal Hul, the Kharwar movement, the Sardar larai, the Birsa ulgulan, the Tana Bhagat movement.

The tribal uprisings in the south-west Orissa-Andhra-Bastar region were: the Kandh rebellion of western Orissa, Gond rebellion of Adilabad, etc.

The tribal movements in Rajasthan-Gujarat-Maharashtra region were: Bhil revolts of Rajasthan, the armed uprisings in Khandesh, Bhil revolts in western Madhya Pradesh, the struggle of Gond in central Madhya Pradesh and present day Chattisgarh, the Devi movement of Surat, etc.

These uprisings produced inspiring martyrs like Birsa Munda, Sidhu and Kano, Rani Durgavati, Tantya Bhil, Khajya Nayak, Motia Bhil, Chhitu Kirad and many others.

This fierce resistance of the Adivasis from Rajmahal hills in the east to Khandesh in the west against the predatory encroachment of their habitat and the commons led to various compromises of the British colonial administration. To strike up different compromising arrangements with them, including some nascent tribal land protection acts, various administrative arrangements like 'The light areas act' and agency area administration in Andhra Pradesh were the results of tribal revolt against colonial depredations.

When the power was transferred formally from the British imperialists to the Indian rulers, almost all the colonial laws were kept intact. Draconian acts like the Indian Forest Act, the Land Acquisition Act, etc., stayed on in the statute book. The Indian constitution recognized the pretentious autonomy conferred by the British by incorporating them into the fifth and sixth schedule of the constitution, and acts like Chotanagpur Santhal Pargana Land Protection Act, and Agency Area Acts, continued in post-colonial India. This was the contradiction of the new Indian rulers' commitment to the marginalized social and ethnic groups.

The biggest betrayal of the 20th century was the shameless burial of the democratic aspirations of national liberation movement by the third world rulers at the behest of world imperialism, led by the Britishers, and now succeeded by the USA, which is the current leader of the imperialist camp. Decolonization was the biggest joke of the 20th century. Under the structural relations of the neocolonial arrangements, presided over by the Brettonwood institutions like the World Bank and the IMF to perpetuate the imperialist order, this was necessary for the continued exploitation of natural resources of the third world by the core capitalist countries.

Export of primary commodities like cheap minerals and agricultural products were the main income of the newly liberated countries in the post-WWII world. This was the material basis for the continuation of the colonial laws like the Indian Forest Act and the Land Acquisition Act in post-colonial India, and this suited the imperialist masters and their agents in the third world. This neocolonial arrangement was necessary for the continuation of global capitalism. This betrayal led to the renewed struggle of the oppressed masses in the third world, in the much talked-about, post-colonial era.

The Adivasis who faced this new exploitative structure and continued intrusion into their customary social and natural rights, continued their struggle against the new Indian ruling classes for political autonomy rights over natural resources,



commodification of commons, etc., while the rulers kept on subverting the autonomy provisions of fifth and sixth schedules of the constitution.

As a result of the cold-war polarization, Indian rulers maneuvered their way through the superpower rivalry to build what can be called 'India-specific capitalism'. To divert the subaltern masses' discontent against this post-colonial exploitative order, the Indian ruling classes used various populist socialist rhetorics while giving half-hearted concessions to the struggling masses, including the Adivasis.

Jawaharlal Nehru formulated the famous Panchsheel policies of non-interference for the tribal masses, which were shamelessly subverted by the post-colonial political class and the bureaucratic apparatus. Schemes like the 'Integrated Tribal Development Programme' and various land protection acts were used to co-opt the political aspirations of the Adivasis. Due to the structural logic and bureaucratic apathy of the Indian state, all these pretentious, ameliorative measures were a total failure.

Reservations in the legislature, academia and the bureaucracy were used cleverly to indoctrinate and co-opt the emerging post-colonial tribal leadership, to get assimilated and support the new colonial order and the semi-feudal social structure. However, this does not mean the wholesale rejection of the idea of reservation. In a semi-feudal society where democratic tasks are incomplete, the progressive and democratic forces should support all the struggles for reservation and positive affirmation. In a brahminical order, where the Adivasis, Dalits and majorities of OBCs are left out, the struggle for reservation has a democratic content and has to be supported while demanding to fill up all the backlog of the SC/ST posts. The reservations and other rights did not come as a charity from the so-called liberal capitalist order of the West or third world regimes. They were achieved after what Ralph Milliband had written that these are the products of centuries of unremitting struggles of the underdogs against the ruling classes. (For a detailed theoretical analysis of various peasant and other subaltern revolts in Medieval England and India, see 'Customs and Commons' and 'Whigs and Hunters' by E.P. Thompson and 'Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India', by Ranajit Guha in *Subaltern Studies*, Vol. 1, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.) Construction of this neocolonial and semi-feudal socio-economic order is one of the main causes of tribal land alienation and commodification of Adivasi culture and ways of life. Most of the Adivasis were pauperised, driven into debt and bondage due to ruthless usury, rack-renting and cheating; were used by money lenders, dishonest merchants and landlords to usurp tribal land with active connivance of the

corrupt politician bureaucracy, police and forest officers' nexus. All this happened in spite of the land protection laws, constitutional provisions of autonomy, and pro-tribal rhetoric of the post-colonial state and the political class.

The developmental trajectory of the post-colonial state was nothing too different from their colonial masters. Tribal habitats were considered lucrative sites for natural resources, commercial forestry, cheap labour for the new capitalist path of development, masquerading as the development path of a welfare state. This neocolonial order further reinforced the extractive economy, squeezing the tribal areas of their lifeblood.

This path of capitalist development displaced millions of Adivasis by mega-dams, factories, mines, industrial townships, etc. Millions were displaced by national parks, sanctuaries and reserve forests. A substantial number of displaced tribals are forced to migrate due to the loss of livelihood, and ruthlessly cut off from their cultural moorings and sense of security, and become part of the urban underclass squeezed into the slums, swelling the ranks of the urban unemployed and underemployed, a totally brutalized and dehumanized existence, and treated like doormats by the depoliticized right wing metropolitan elite. This process leads to a precarious existence - to be ruthlessly displaced again through the gentrification drive of municipal corporations and the builder mafia. (Sympathetic scholars like Dr. Walter Fernandez, Enaksi Ganguli Thukral and others have meticulously documented the displacement and other effects on Adivasis from different mega-projects.) There are more than forty million people, including vast majorities of Adivasis and Dalits displaced by mega-dams and mines, and other industrial projects. (See the report of the World Commission on Dams, and Greater Common Good by Arundhati Roy.)

As a reaction to this usurpation of habitat and livelihood, and the shrinkage of their commons, tribal people have been offering resistance in the Narmada valley, Koel Karo, Kashipur, Kalinganagar, Hoshangabad, western MP and all over tribal areas in India. The tribal resistance movements of post-colonial India are also phenomenal. In the early decades after independence, tribal mobilisations and uprisings took off in several parts of India. One of the prominent movements was the struggle of the Adivasis in Dahanu and other areas of Thane district of Maharashtra. Here the Adivasis built up a strong resistance against local money-lenders, merchants and landlords against

usury and other forms of bondage. The eminent radical leader of Maharashtra, the late Godavari Parulekar played a prominent part in the tribal movements of Thane.

All these movements were met by heavy police brutalities. This unleashing of state terror led to the death of thousands of tribal activists by police firing - thousands were put behind bars. The state oppression of tribal movements is a daily experience in post-colonial India. There have been massive and gross human rights violations of Adivasis and other ethnic communities from the north-east, Jammu and Kashmir to other struggling tribal communities. The Indian state has been enacting draconian repressive laws like Armed Forces Special Power Act, National Security Act, and a host of other black laws to trample the democratic aspirations of the indigenous people and ethnic minorities all over the country. There have been thousands of fake-encounter deaths, torture, rape and custodial deaths by the army and the paramilitary forces and the local police. There is a thriving human rights movement in the north-east, resisting state terror and further repeal of black laws like the Armed Forces Special Power Act. Sharmila Irom's great hunger strike is a signal event in the human rights struggle of the oppressed ethnic cultural/religious minorities within India. The massacre of Adivasis by police firing in Kashipur, Dewas and Kalinganagar, are serious pointers of the state of human rights in tribal areas. We call upon all the progressive and democratic forces to struggle for abolition of all the anti-people black laws. We appeal to all the radical and democratic movements to unanimously demand immediate withdrawal of barbaric medieval white terror called *SALWA JUDUM* by the Hindu Fascist Government of Chhatisgarh and supported by the Congress.

The rulers did all this under the pretence of upholding liberal discourse of political modernity, while medieval, inhuman exploitation of the tribal areas was intact. (The Indian state is signatory to the UN and international covenants and charters, including the ILO declaration on the rights of indigenous people, and other human rights charters.) In this context, we would like to expose the pseudo-liberal rhetoric of the Indian state, ruling-class political parties, and establishment intellectuals. At the time of writing this note, the news of the gory incidents in Nandigram poured in as one of the bloodiest markers of human rights violation in India in the name of industrialization and growth. This bloody trail from Kalinganagar to Nandigram explains the elimination war of the Indian state and the State Governments against the Adivasis and peasants on behalf of international and Indian big business. We call upon all the progressive and democratic forces to protest against the state sponsored carnage

in Nandigram. The cold-blooded massacre of farmers in Nandigram by West Bengal police is a stark indicator of state terror and the state which is the sole repository of violence, and has monopolized violence - both judicial and extra judicial; it is the ugly symbol of organized violence for ruthless perusal of capitalist development on behalf of its imperialist masters. We appeal to all the progressive and democratic forces to rise up unitedly against state violence and abolition of all the laws which make the state as the sole repository and of all powers with monopoly inflicting violence and murder.

The betrayal of the Indian rulers of the democratic and political aspiration of Adivasis and other ethnic groups of large tracts of the country led to the movements of separate states and autonomous regions in the tribal dominated area. Some of the important movements are the Jharkhand movement, the Gorkha land movement, struggle for Gondwana state, Karbi Anglog, and Bodoland, among many others. The tribals are playing an important role in the struggles led by different organized left parties and movements, without forgetting their heroic role in the historic Telengana uprising, which will inspire generations. We call upon all the progressive and democratic movements to support the Adivasi people's struggle for a separate state, political power and autonomy to decide their own path of development and social structure. There are many autonomous tribal movements like the Kastakari Sanghatana, Adivasi Mukti Sanghatan, Shoshit San Andolan, Kisan Adivasi Sanghatan, Khedut Mazdoor, Chetna Sangath, Waynad tribal struggle for land, Jagrit Dalit Adivasi Sanghatan, Ekta Parishad, Prakrutik Sampada, Parishad Kashipur, Bisthapan Bhirodi Janmanch in Kalinagar, etc. These struggles are for the rights of the land, forests, natural resources and commons - against eviction from dams, mines and sanctuaries - now the Special Economic Zones and Special Tourist Zones.

The Indian state conceded some of the demands to legitimize itself to maintain an inclusive democratic facade. It half-heartedly enacted some acts like the PESA Act (under the 89th amendment of the Constitution) and the recent bill on the tribal forestland rights. All these acts were mostly watered down versions of the various charters of demands presented by the tribal movements. A renewed battle on this front is necessary to make these laws effective. The most horrifying aspect of the Adivasi social life in modern India is the saffronisation of tribals of Gujarat and other places, especially western M.P. The participation of tribals in the ghastly communal carnage under the direction of the Sangh Parivar in Gujarat in the year 2002 is the most disturbing factor for democratic politics. The fascist Sangh Parivar and the other revivalist organisations through liberal funding for the VHP by equally right-wing

communal NRIs from abroad, have worked over time to communalize the Adivasis through various programmes like the Hindu Sangam. These funds for saffronisation of the Adivasis are channeled through equally shady NGOs like Banvasi Kalyan Kendra. (For the retrograde role of state-sponsored apolitical NGOs in indigenous communities, see the chapter "NGOs in Service of Imperialism" in *The Globalization Unmasked – Imperialism in 21st Century* by James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer, Madhyam Books, New Delhi; and *The Funding of Hindu Fascist NGOs in India* by IDRF, published by Communalism Combat, Bombay.) The Adivasis of entire India are struggling to preserve their way of life, and cultural identity. During the 1991 census, a vast majority of Adivasis in the present day Jharkand registered themselves as followers of 'SARNA religion'. This was an important method of struggle against offensive fascist homogenizing designs of the Hindu right. In the age of late imperial culture, manifested through the 'Disneyfication' and 'McDonaldisation' of third world societies, we call upon the progressive and democratic forces to firmly support the struggle for assertion of cultural identities by the Adivasi people, which is an important site of resistance against the culture of globalization and revivalist cultural offensive of the fascist Sangh Parivar.

Under the rubric of globalization, when neoliberal offensive is devastating the culture and commons of the indigenous people of India, thousands of acres of the land from Adivasis and farmers are taken away for attracting foreign direct investment and forcibly acquiring cheap lands for the Indian big business. The accelerated phase of neoliberal economic policies is the present phase of forcible acquisition of land from both farmers and Adivasis for SEZs. What we are witnessing today in the SEZs is the ruthless early 21st century primitive accumulation through violent dispossession and intense commodification of the commons. The SEZs and those deemed to be foreign territories where no laws of the land will apply, this shameless surrender of sovereignty is nothing else but recolonisation of Indian territories for super profits making mockery of all the claims of being the largest independent democracy in the world. SEZs are grim reminders of the primitive accumulation process which happened during the consolidation of industrial capitalism in the colonial era, the creation of SEZs are similar to the dispossession of the peasantry, decimation of the indigenous people and grabbing of the resources of the third world, so vividly described by Marx in Vol. 1 of *Capital* which in the Marxist discourse is known as primitive accumulation. (See Hobbswam, Maurice Dobb, Robert Brenner, Polyani and Marx, Vol. 1, Chapter 26, *Capital* now lucidly explained in John Bellamy Foster's "Naked Imperialism - The US Pursuit of Global Dominance, Aakar Books, New Delhi.)

In the proposed SEZs in India, the various state governments propose to acquire around 1.35 lakh acres of land with a total revenue loss of around Rs. 1 lakh crores in tax concessions as said by the Finance Minister. All the pro-labour laws, which were achieved after relentless battles of the working class, will no longer apply in SEZs. This shrinkage of arable land, apart from seriously jeopardizing the country's food security, will severely pollute the environment. This forced de-peasantisation will drastically swell the growing number of the unemployed, creating a huge reserve army of labour for capital who can be exploited as cheap labour. All these are results of SEZs where land is being forcibly acquired through violence and sexual assault on women for the private profit of multinational corporations and Indian big business, ostensibly in the name of public interest as mentioned in the Land Acquisition Act. When the Indian state is boasting of transparency through the Right to Information Act, the million-dollar question is, where is the public interest in the SEZs? This is absolutely and patently an act of fraudulence by the Indian state. There is a resistance going on by the local Adivasis and farmers against the forcible acquisition of their lands, which has led to struggles in Bajera Khurd, Singur, Nandigram and Pen Tehsil in Maharashtra. These are the frontier battle lines and important sites of resistance against imperialism and Indian big business. We call upon all the radical democratic forces to rally behind these struggles. The grim episodes of state sponsored massacre and violence at Nandigram mandates for the creation of an all-India joint struggle by all the Adivasi progressive and democratic movements for scrapping the SEZ Act and halting all the processes of land acquisition for SEZs all over India.

The recent incidents of violence in Nandigram are the symptoms of the sharpening of contradiction between the peasants and world imperialism, where on behalf of the Salim group of Indonesia the West Bengal police massacred the resisting peasants; this was a shameless act of violence on toiling peasantry by a state government to forcibly acquire land for a foreign multinational corporation by a state government led by the left front. This forces us to sit up and rethink the meaning of the word "left". This sheer capitulation to imperialist interests shamelessly exposes the contradictions of the discourse of left parties running the West Bengal Government, who protest against globalization and SEZs at the centre. The violence unleashed by the West Bengal police on the resisting people of Nandigram is a stark indicator of class violence where the state forces massacre the peasantry on behalf of a foreign multinational company, this exposes the class character of the left front government of West Bengal, which declares itself to be the guardian of workers and peasants. This government murders and dispossesses the same rural under class whose interest it is supposed to safeguard.

This shows the betrayal of the interests of the *bargadars* and the peasants by the left front government. We call upon all the progressive and democratic forces to firmly rally behind the struggling peasantry of Nandigram. We should also expose the hypocrisy and class character of the ruling class parties like the Congress, BJP, Trinamool Congress and Samajvadi Party, who are dispossessing the peasantry in the governments led by them in the centre and state. The time has come for all of us to seriously formulate a strategy for a non-invasive participatory and democratic industrialisation process.

Notwithstanding the pro-Adivasi rhetoric of the post-colonial Indian state for six decades, the socio-economic indices and the morbidity pattern of Adivasis are quite depressing. The Adivasis are the most dispossessed, exploited, and marginalized social groups in India. More than 75% of Adivasis are below the official poverty line, with lowest per capita income, which is less than a dollar per day. The infant mortality rate and pre- and post-natal deaths are highest in tribal areas, with lowest life expectancy and literacy rate. Every year thousands die from diseases like gastro-enteritis in the monsoon. The incidence of tuberculosis, polio and blindness is quite high. Thousands migrate to the cities due to displacement caused by mega-projects, famines, drought, indebtedness, etc. Official schemes like the ITDP, Antyodaya and public distribution systems are total failures due to lack of political will and bureaucratic apathy. After a long struggle by the Adivasi movements and the left and democratic movements, the government was forced to enact the Employment Guarantee Act, which is quite inadequate seeing the high incidence of unemployment and under-employment. The tribal and other democratic movements should continue the struggle for the transparent, sincere implementation and social audit of the present Employment Guarantee Act, for the whole year - 365 days, covering all the districts of India. We should demand that an expenditure of 20% of the GDP be spent on the social sectors like socialized medicine & community health care, education, maternal & infant care, pensions, housing and the provision of entertainment infrastructures, healthy and clean landscape, and other forms of social wage. The struggle for forests and land rights, usury money lending, slavery, bondage and different forms of feudal exploitations, radical land reforms, political autonomy, resistance to imperialist and Hindu fascist attacks on Adivasi cultural identity and way of life, against human rights violation, displacement, and rolling-back of the neoliberal offensive, should be strengthened with renewed vigour.

In the post-Iraq world, under the hegemony of the frightening political project of "Pax Americana", in an era where under the neoliberal economic regime the contradictions between the world imperialism led by the USA and the oppressed masses and nations of the third world is sharpening, we appeal to all the Adivasi movements to firmly ally with the struggles of the other oppressed entities and identities like workers, peasants, Dalits, women, unemployed youth, and oppressed ethnic, national, religious and sexual minorities and take concrete steps for the formation of a broadest possible left and democratic united front, to struggle against imperialism, feudalism, and patriarchy. Our ultimate objective should be the creation of a society without the exploitation of man by man, by man of woman, and human beings of nature. We should all strive for a radical democratic social order, where the associated producers decide their own destiny, where the development of each is the condition for the development of all. Long live the struggle for human emancipation.

*[NOTE: This was drafted in February 2007.]*

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