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## VOICES OF EMPOWERED WOMEN FROM LANJIGARH IN ODISHA

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### ABSTRACT

Development is intended to address deprivation. Paradoxically the ongoing process of development in Odisha not only deepened but also widened deprivation and caused large scale displacement. In the case of Odisha's development model, displacement caused by large projects has actually resulted in a transfer of resources from the weaker section of society to the privileged ones. Mega dams, thermal power plant, mining and industrial projects create victims of development. It can be said that the bigger the development project, the greater the centralized control over it. This centralization has a bias in favour of large landholders, rich farmers, engineers, bureaucrats and politicians. The large scale development projects are basically designed to enhance the power of the state and private capital and are incapable of representing or serving the interests of the vast majority of the people. With the takeover of forests by the state, the traditional or customary rights of forest-dwellers were gradually converted into privileges and even further into concessions. This paper highlights the process of development in Odisha and its implications to deal with human displacement issue. Also, it seeks to reassert the protection of the rights of displaced peoples and what needs to be addressed today is the right to development, in which all their fundamental rights and freedom are realised. It concludes that though infrastructure development is necessary, it has to be implemented with a human face so that the effect of displacement is minimized and the goal of inclusive development will achieve.

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### INTRODUCTION

Women empowerment means women should be capable of talking decisions independently. I have here taken the case studies of tribal women of Vedanta Alumina Project Area. Here poor, illiterate tribal women. Kutia Kondha tribal women of Lanjigarh in Kalahandi district of Odisha are mostly illiterate are very poor. Development lime light is yet to reach them. But these women such as jambhu Munda, Lila Tandi, Padma Tandi, musha Munda are very much conscious of their right over land livelihood. Women took the leading role and fought against Vedanta Alumina Company to protest their interest of life. They are confronting against vested interest of the state and companies. Women are becoming victims of conspiracy of state and capitalistic proliferation

**The voices of few empowered women of lanjigarh:** Jambhu Munda says-"What will happen, when they take away the

Bauxite from the top of OUR hill? We know that our water sources are dependent on the hill.

Once you make holes in the hill and take away the bauxite, water storage will be affected. All water will down the mountain instead of being stored. You have walked up to here, you seen so many streams, you have taken baths in the streams- did you see any rain? So the water comes all through the year, regard less of the rain situations. If they mine, we are worried that this water will not be available." Lila Tandi said, who lives in one of the hamlets closest to the proposed mine site said, "Water is life... if we lose our Hills, we lose our food and water." Padma Tandi said "I am a widow, whose hardships have increased many fold ever since the company came here. I was walking around the refinery area, when I slipped and fell down, and hurt myself. The other women ran towards me to make sure that I was ok. Suddenly, several policemen arrived and started beating me. They also dragged and pulled the other women" Doini Nihal said "We had run to see if Padma was ok. Once the police arrived, they started manhandling us. There were two women police, but they were just standing by. The

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male policeman started dragging and pushing us, and pulled our hair. All of us were forcibly put inside a Vedanta vehicle. That was the most atrocious thing. Why was the state police dragging us into a Vedanta vehicle? If they had to arrest us, they should taken us in a police van, not in a Vedanta gaari We were taken straight to the Bhawanipatna court.” Kanchono Suna –“They took teo children also into jail. My son, Bulbul Nihal, two years and Aditya Nihal, son of Saraswati Nayak, also two years- were in jail with us. What crimes have these little children, who have just learnt to speak, committed? The police and company have no right to keep kids in jail like this” “We have no proper information about the court case that has been registered against us. We saw our lawyers have been bought by the company. There is no-one to listen to the cries of the poor. When the police had taken us in the Vedanta vehicle on 7<sup>th</sup> April, which was a Sunday, we were told that we should be released by the following Tuesday, the 9<sup>th</sup>. However, we stayed in jail for a whole month and three days. The police and company is trying to scare us, to intimidate us, so that they can break our will, our voice and our struggle.” Jamuna Durga- These 400 people (Approximately) with their families are in big difficulties because of the scarcity of water, air pollution,

sound, and just due to the refinery. They wish to forego their houses and want to get away from the place on refinery. But the company for its selfishness is not intending to rehabilitate this project affected villagers though their agricultural land had been taken away by the company.

### **Conclusion**

Women raised from the ground level have led the peoples movement, being at the forefront of oppressive state structure. They are united under the umbrella- of krati kari Advasi Mahila sangha- one of the biggest women’s organisation of india which has Women fought against corporate companies. Peoples movement is a continued process against imperialist and feudalistic structure and forces of the country. Equality, Development and Place is only possible through women’s empowerment and women liberation movement.

### **REFERENCE**

During field study.

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