

# Eradicating Naxalism and Developing Jharkhand: A Depiction through "The Hunt" Documentary by Meghnath & Biju Toppo

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## Abstract

*Jharkhand is a state in eastern India, carved out of the southern part of Bihar on 15 November 2000. The state is rich in mineral resources and covered with forest. The state has developed in the last two decades. But the non-developmental activities of rural areas caused poverty. The harassment of individuals and society caused many to own naxalism to fight for. The research analyses a documentary film 'The Hunt' made by Meghnath and Biju Toppo's which explores the lives and consequences of being sons of the soil. Film 'The Hunt' explores the condition of human rights in the Naxal affected areas of Jharkhand. The research includes the steps taken by state govt. to eradicate naxalism for the development of Jharkhand.*

**Keywords:** *Jharkhand, Naxalism, Documentary, Governemnt.*

## Introduction: The Glory of Jharkhand

The 28th state of the Indian Union was brought into existence by the Bihar reorganization Act on November 15, 2000 - the birth anniversary of the legendary *Bhagwan Birsa Munda*. According to legend, *Raja Jai Singh Deo* of Odisha had declared himself the ruler of Jharkhand in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It largely comprises forest tracks of *Chhotanagpur* plateau and *Santhal Pargana* and has distinct cultural traditions. In post-independence era, the *Jharkhand Mukti Morcha* started a regular agitation which impelled the government to establish the Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council in 1995 and finally a full-fledged State. Jharkhand is famous for its rich mineral resources like Uranium, Mica, Bauxite, Granite, Gold, Silver, Graphite, Magnetite, Dolomite, Fireclay, Quartz, Feldspar, Coal, Iron, Copper etc. Forests and woodlands occupy more than 29% of the state which is amongst the highest in India.

Birsa Munda (1875-1900) and Sidho and Kanho are the legendary heroes of the tribals of this state who fought against the oppressive rule of the British government. Birsa Munda, now regarded as god, fought for the tribals natural right over forests and land that was mercilessly being acquired by the British for exploitation. After a long fight, Birsa Munda was captured by the British authorities and died in prison. Sidho and Kanho were another set of revolutionaries among the tribals, now regarded as a tribal heroes.

Around 91 percent of the tribal population in Jharkhand resides in the rural areas. Of this tribal population, 81 per cent of the ST rural households continue to live with a monthly income below Rs. 5000. Also 34 per cent of the rural ST households have no literate adults above 25 years. As per the Census of India, 2011, the population of Scheduled Tribes in Jharkhand is 8.65 million, which is 26.2 per cent of the total population of the state. Of the total Tribal population, 4.32 million are males and 4.33 million are females. The decadal growth of ST

population in the state was 22 per cent. Among the states and union territories of India, Jharkhand ranks 6th in terms of Scheduled Tribe population and 10th in terms of percentage share of the Scheduled Tribe population to the total population of the state. According to the Census of 2011, the population of Jharkhand comprises of 32 tribes presently, that were originally classified on the basis of their culture; for instance, Hunter- gatherer- Birhor, Korwa, Hill Kharia; Shifting agriculture- Sauria Paharia; Simple artisans- Mahli, Lohra, Karmali, Chik Baraik; Settled agriculturists- Santhal, Munda, Oraon, Ho, Bhumji, etc. The Scheduled Tribes of Jharkhand are: Munda, Asur, Chero, Kora, Santhal, Baiga and others.

### **Naxalism and State**

Naxalism was prevalent in the area even before the birth of Jharkhand in the then state of Bihar. Presently 18 districts out of 24 districts in Jharkhand are affected by Naxalism where Lohardaga, Palamu, Chatra, Gumla, Simdega, Khunti are most Naxalite affected areas. After the partition of Bihar, Naxalite violence, especially that of the MCC, has shifted to Jharkhand, which is rich in mineral and forest wealth. Jharkhand, provides higher prospect for raising funds for the Naxalite activities. There were many fruitful reasons to grow naxalism. Political issues like support of CPI, influence of the Chinese Communist Party and Mao Zedong, Arms oriented movement, insensitive political system, poor governance are the main causes for it. Although poverty and economic inequality, liberalization of Indian economy, negative role of MNCs, slow implementation of land reforms are economic reasons for the growth of naxalism. The emergence of difference between perceptions or expectations of the past or future situations of individual creates dissatisfaction among them. The tension can be further aggravated when they see that relevant reference groups make disproportionate gains in comparison with their own groups. Aggression is the product of frustration. The social structure of society, lack of adequate knowledge and education, lack of leadership and support from Central Govt. and state government, large tribal population and its backwardness, failing law and order are the other causes of flourishing naxalism. Naxalism has affected the development of state Jharkhand. Due to problem of Naxalism the government is spending a big amount on security and development is getting ignored. Hence, lack of developmental activity, destruction of infrastructure, loss of lives, terror, disturbed life, irregularities in transport, loss of welfare activities, political instability are caused by them.

To eradicate and counter naxalism from the state, Govt. has made different amendments. Where the security system has been improved to counter them as also more schemes have been initiated for Naxals too.

### **The main measures to counter Naxalism for the development of state**

- a) Modernization of state police by the supply of modern weaponry, latest communication equipment and mobility equipment.
- b) Identification of vulnerable police stations and outposts and take up their fortification.
- c) Flow of Funds under the Security Related Expenditure (SRE) Scheme of February 2005 have been revised. The level of reimbursement under the scheme has been raised from 50% to 100%.
- d) Insurance scheme for police personnel.
- e) Rehabilitation of surrendered Naxalites.
- f) Expenditure incurred on publicity to counter propaganda of Naxalities.

- g) Mine protected vehicles under to counter the land mine/IED attacks.
- h) Development of Central Para-military forces.
- i) India Reserve (IR) battalions Sanctioned mainly to strengthen security apparatus at their level as also to enable the states to provide gainful employment to the youth.
- j) Community policing.
- k) Creating barriers between Nepal and Indian borders. In order to ensure that the Maoist of Nepal do not get in touch with the Indian Naxalites the SSB has been given the responsibility to guard the Indo-Nepal border with special care towards this.
- l) Employment to the youth of the area. 40% of the total recruitment in the central Paramilitary force (CRPF) can be taken up from the Naxal or militancy affected areas.
- m) Development of backward districts under the backward districts initiative (BDI) component of the Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yagna (RSVY) and scheme of backward regions grant fund (BRGF).
- n) Protection to forest dwellers by recognizing the right of the forest dwellers on the forest produce.
- o) Strengthen intelligence set up at the state level.
- p) Creation of physical infrastructure in the terms of roads, communication, power as also social infrastructure such as school, hospitals, etc. in the area.
- q) Effective and sustained intelligence driven police action against Naxalities and their infrastructure individually and jointly by the states to accelerate development in the Naxal affected areas.
- r) The government has constituted an 'Empowered Group of Ministers' to counter the problem of Naxalism headed by the Home minister and select Chief Minister.
- s) The government under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), 1967 amended in 2004 has banned the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) - People's War and all its associated formations, and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) and its front organizations.
- t) The government has also constituted a Task force which will comprise of Nodal officers from the Naxal affected areas and officers from the IB, SSB and the CRPF.
- u) There is also a Coordination Centre that was set up in 1998 headed by the Union home minister with Chief Secretaries and DGPs of the Naxal affected areas for the coordination of steps taken to control Naxal activities.
- v) The government started the Backward Districts initiative in 2003-2004 and the Backward Regions Grant Fund (BRGF) under which 55 of the worst affected areas in 9 states were to be provided with funds to the tune of Rs. 2475 crore to tackle the problem of Naxalism.

### **The Hunt: A Documentary by Biju Toppo**

Development is the most debated and doubted word in the face of tribal lands in Jharkhand, Chattisgarh and Orissa. Unfortunately, these areas have huge mineral deposits, which can satisfy the needs of India in haste to develop itself as a major power in global economy. On the other hand, tribals in these areas are denied of basic rights and directive elements of the Indian constitution. They have become the second class citizens of India in its quest for development.

With the introduction of New Economic Policy in 1990's, many new mining companies started to come to these tribal areas and after the formation of Jharkhand in November 2000, the state Government has signed more than 100 MOU's in the past 10 years with the plan to acquire 2,00,000 acres of land. There was no dialogue so far between tribals and the Government, hence, Maoism found its roots in these areas. Now, tribals are against acquiring of land by the Government which violates many laws like CNT act, PESA act which protects the rights of tribals in these areas. As a result, Government obliged by their corporate entities, is using brutal force to acquire their land by branding innocent tribal people as Naxalites.

Naxalism has spread into many parts of India. Today, the Indian Government is looking at it as a major threat to internal security and has total focus on this issue for the past few years. This attention is not just because the Government wants to eliminate Naxals from the red corridor to establish peace and good governance but to secure the mineral resources of these areas for their corporate partners. Tribal inhabitants of these areas do not want to give up their ancestral land at any cost. Tribal, who are part of the movement to save their land are being branded as Naxalites and this whole exercise is called 'Operation Green Hunt'. This operation has come down as hazard for innocent tribal of these areas.

Biju Toppo is an anthropological documentary filmmaker from Ranchi, Jharkhand. He uses film as a medium for social activism on behalf of marginalized indigenous communities. Biju Toppo and Meghnath Bhattacharya belong to *Akhra*, an agency working in the field of culture and communication in Jharkhand, India. Akhra is a pioneering group that has been making films on indigenous peoples' issues since 1995. Its many award-winning films have taken up burning issues relevant to indigenous people's survival in India. On 9 September 2011, the duo Meghnath Banerjee and Biju Toppo were awarded the prestigious National Film Award by the President of India at a ceremony held at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi.

Biju Toppo's documentary film 'The Hunt' explores the lives and consequences of being sons of the soil. Film 'The Hunt' explores the condition of human rights in the Naxal affected areas of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Orissa. These areas are rich in mineral resources as well as tribal population where Central and the state government have already signed MoU's with various national and multinational companies. These companies and the government is facing resistance from the local population who do not want to give up their land. In fact these areas are also the strong hold of Naxalites. So, in the name of eliminating Naxalites with the help of security forces, the Government is waging war against the local indigenous population by accusing innocent villagers of being Maoists and killing them in fake encounters. The Government is also illegally arming illiterate local population against each other. Social activists and agitators are also labeled as Maoists and are being put in jails. In the last decade, more than 550 people are killed in fake encounters and more than 6000 people are in jails.

The film questions the thoughtless rapid development model of the government where lives of millions of tribal in these areas are severely affected. The use of violence from the government and the Naxalites must be stopped and the alternative model of development must be introduced with the consent of people. In short, the Governance must be pro-people in these tribal areas.

Jharkhand government is trying to remove Naxalism. Several Maoists have surrendered after the state introduced an attractive surrender policy in recent years. Government has also cracked on Naxal sympathisers in our villages and our cities by attaching their properties. For any state to prosper, peace is the most important thing and any government's priority is to provide security to its masses. In last three years, government has taken steps in this regard.

More than 70 per cent of Naxalism has ended in Jharkhand. The remaining 30 per cent is expected very soon.

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