

Resource conflict and its impact on the tribals: a snapshot from odisha

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Resource conflicts are the oft quoted phase in many policy debates, academic discussions, in activist agendas. Terminologies like resource wars, resource securitization, resource sovereignties, petro-violence, resource hijacking are the phrases which are coming into academic discourses (McNeish, 2011). Resource conflicts have appeared as the most significant source of governance destabilisation and destabilisation of intra state, interstate and international relations in the present millennium. It is getting exacerbated every day. The human society is resource dependent and resource driven in nature. Resource constitutes essence of human existence, the ultimate source of sustenance and life support element and a fuel for development. They are the backbone of every society.

Reserve of resources is limited, but its use is pervasive. The resource deposit hardly grow, but resource consumption and depletion grow at a faster rate due to growing population, development of science and technology, rising standard of living, increasing consumerism among the people, climate change impacts. Recent years have seen growing recognition of resource disputes as drivers of conflict. Natural resources such as land, water, forest, mineral deposits become the sources of livelihoods for people and communities across countries. They bring food security, hierarchy and hegemony of one locality, one community over the other. Resources are defined by the World bank Includes the strategic mineral resources, sources of energy, shared water resources, land resources. The World Bank defines natural resources as “ materials that occur in nature and are essential or useful to humans, such as water, air, land, forests, fish and wildlife, topsoil, and minerals(2007).” These resources can be classified as renewable or non

renewable. In most cases, renewable resources such as cropland, forests, and water can be replenished over time by natural processes and—if not overused—are indefinitely sustainable. Non renewable resources such as diamonds, minerals, and oil are found in finite quantities, and their value increases as supplies dwindle. de Zeeuw (2000) defines natural resources into six categories. They are: non renewable and non recyclable natural resources like fossil fuel, non renewable and recyclable natural resources like minerals, quickly renewable resources like fish, slowly renewable resources like forest, environmental resources like air, water, soil and flow resources like solar and wind energy. There are three waves of thought relating to the relationship between resources and society (Mensah and Castro, 2004). Between 1940s and 1950s there was a feeling that natural resources are the drivers for economic development of countries. Between 1960s and 1970s the feeling was there was a sinking natural resource leading to limits of growth. Since, 1980s the thought has dominated that resources is the bone of contention, between people, communities and localities. So, from resource prosperity, the world is now moving towards resource curse. In the present paper the author designs to put the search light on two types of resource conflict. They are: cultural resource conflict and natural resource conflict. These two types of resource conflict taking place between the states themselves and within the state between the state machinery and the public. The spotlight will be focussed on the state of Odisha a state of eastern part of India. The state of Odisha has witnessed both conflict over cultural resources and natural resources.

Border conflict is not new to Odisha. Orissa—then the present districts of Cuttack, Puri, and Balasore— was taken from the Marathas in 1803 and governed from Calcutta. in the administrative division in which Oriyas Politics in Orissa—IV F G Bailey 1331 September 26, 1959 T H E ECONOMI C WEEKL Y were in the great majority, the same a n d worse was happening in those tracts where Oriyas were a mino - rit y in a larger linguistic group. This was the case on all the lan d borders of Orissa. To the south the Ganjam Oriyas were administered fro m Madras, and the officials who governed them were Teluguspeakers: to the west an d north - west Oriyas had to deal wit h Hindispeaking officials: to the nort h there were large groups of Oriya - speakers in the districts of wha t is n ow West Bengal. In these areas the language and culture of the Oriyas were main - tained wit h difficulty. Oriy a children were educated throug h the medium of Bengali or Telugu or Hindi. A process, whic h is illustrate d by the Census returns for Midnapor e distric t in Bengal, must have been going on in al l the outlyin g Oriy a tracts. The tota l of Oriya-speakers in Midnapor e were returned thus: There were man y petitions and memorials about these grievances submitted to the Government in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, but a systematic campaign for the right s of Oriyas began only in 1903, when the Utkal Union Conference was organized by Madhusudan Das. The president (on tha t occasion) was the Raja of Mayurbhanj and the chairman of the reception committee was the Raja of Kanika. In the years following, the Conference met annually, usually under the presidentship of one of the Orissa Rajas. Branches were organized throughout the Oriyaspeaking area; paid propagandists (' missionaries') were employed; schools where Oriya

children could be taught in their own language were opened in such outlying tracts as Singbhum, Oriya students taking courses of higher education outside Orissa were given grants.

Memorials were submitted to various provincial administrations about the Use of Oriya as a court language, about the founding of an Oriya university, about the teaching of Oriya in schools and universities, and, as a main aim, about uniting all Oriyaspeakers into a single administrative unit. The Conference also interested itself in developing industries, mostly cottage industries, and in improved methods of agriculture. Madhusudan Das himself promoted tanning and silver filigree work in Cuttack. The long and persistent agitation of the Utkal Union Conference was met half-way by the uneasiness of the British administrators. This uneasiness sprang partly from pangs of conscience and from the knowledge that Oriyas in the outlying tracts—in Madras and Bengal and other areas—did suffer severe disadvantages compared to those who spoke the same language as the Administrators. Oriyas were at the 'tail-end' of the Administration in all these provinces, and they suffered in consequence. Partly the British were influenced by administrative difficulties: senior officials had either to stay in one area or to learn several languages. The existing provinces were large and communications were poor. There was, for instance, a belief that the horrors of the 1866 famine could have been averted had Orissa not been so far from the eyes of the Government in Calcutta. Formation of Orissa Province As far back as 1875 memorials had been submitted to the Bengal Government to have all the Oriya tracts united under one Administration. At

first the Utkal Sammilani agitated, as a minimum aim, for the inclusion of all the Oriya areas within one province, either the Central Provinces or Bengal, and they were content to see this as a step on the way to a separate Oriya province. Yet the first change was concerned not so much with bringing in the outlying tracts, but rather with relieving the Bengal Government of some of its responsibilities. In 1911 Bihar and Orissa were formed into a separate province. Sambalpur became part of the Orissa section of the new province. Oriya agitation continued and there was a regular complaint that Bihar received first share of what was to be had, and Orissa got only what was left. In 1936 Orissa became a separate province, after protracted negotiations in the course of which the Oriya leaders went to London to argue their case. The outlying tracts to the south (parts of the district of Ganjam and the Koraput Agency in Madras) were taken into the new Orissa province, Orissa then consisted of the following districts: Cuttack, Puri, Balasore, Ganjam, Koraput, and Sambalpur.

This is an area of 32,198 square miles and in 1941 it had a population of 8,728,544. Saraikeila and Kharsawan In the agitations which led up to the formation of a separate province in 1936, there were two main aims: one was to safeguard the interests of the Oriyas in the existing Oriya division, by making it possible for them to compete with aliens on equal terms; the second was territorial, to bring Oriyaspeaking tracts within the boundaries of the division, or, as it later became, the province. Both these issues are alive today. In 1936, when the province was created, the main aims of the Utkal Union Conference were accomplished. Not that there was universal

satisfaction: parts of Gunjam, the whole of Singbhum and of Midnapore and other areas to which the Union Movement had laid claim, were not included in the new province. Beginning from 1936 there is a steady trickle of literature complaining of trickery, of the falsification of census returns, of the use of double standards to prevent Orissa from getting all the territory demanded, of bad faith in other ways, of victimization, and so forth. But by and large the Movement subsided between 1936 and 1947, because it had achieved its main aim and because the energies of that articulate class which had organized the Union Movement, were taken up by the struggle for Independence, either on one side or the other. But Oriya nationalism came sharply to life again in 1948. Merged with Bihar from some aspects, as I have said in an earlier article, the struggle to merge the Feudatory States with coastal Orissa was a struggle to preserve the importance, if not the existence, of Orissa. But this was not 'Oriya Nationalism', There is a distinction to be drawn between the Oriya Movement proper, and those movements in which the Congress took the lead. Neither side in the merger conflict saw this primarily as a struggle between Oriyas and outsiders. It was an internal dispute between the forces of reaction and the progressives, or, from the opposite point of view, between stable conservatism and revolution: it was a dispute between Oriyas. But in 1948 a conflict broke out which is straight in the line of descent from the earlier struggles of Oriya nationalism. In that year Mayurbhanj had not yet acceded to Orissa. Mayurbhanj lay between the new Orissa and two states which had once been within the jurisdiction of the Political Agent for Orissa.

These were Saraikella and Kharsawan. First they were allotted to Orissa along with the rest of the Feudatory States. But when Oriya officials arrived to take over, they were met with demonstrations of hostility, organised, so it is alleged, not by the people of those states, but by interested outsiders who wished the states to accede to Bihar. It is not, fortunately, our business to judge on whose side right lay, or who was responsible for the disorders: we have only to see what Oriyas believe happened. The state is into border conflicts with Jharkhand, West Bengal and erstwhile Andhra Pradesh with regards 114 villages. This was openly stated in the state assembly in July, 2014. Odisha and AP are locked in border controversy in connection with 88 villages. Parts of Ganjam, Gajapati and Rayagada districts are also in such conflict zones. In Keonjhar district, due to change in course of Baitarani, discrepancy between land maps had taken place. Water channels are source of disputes with regards to other villages - Kandapat, Limitpur and Purusottampur in Keonjhar district. The oldest border dispute between Odisha and West Bengal seemed to be on Bhurusapani village in Mayurbhanj district." In the year 1906 and 1925-26 West Bengal had demanded 12 acres of land as Abhayaranya (sanctuary). (The Hindu, July, 29, 2014). Over 28,000 acre of land of 95 villages in 10 districts in Odisha comes under border disputes with four other States. The locals of these villages are fed up of dual governance and want their issues resolved at the earliest. Without considering the argument of Odisha, both the Centre and Andhra Pradesh approved the Polavaram project. Despite Odisha's protest and opposition, the Centre gave its nod for construction of the controversial

project, which would affect over 10, 000 residents as well as the forest, farming land and homestead land in Malkangiri district.

Recently, the Chhattisgarh Government's move to construct barrages and dams on the Mahanadi and its tributaries have emerged as a headache for Odisha. If the proposed dams are constructed on the Mahanadi in Chhattisgarh, it would adversely impact the flow of water to the Hirakud Dam reservoir. As a majority of population in Odisha depends on the Mahanadi system, the State Government has opposed the proposed dams and barrages on the river in Chhattisgarh. Beside these two major issues, 95 villages with 13, 002 acre of land and 15, 331 acre of reserved forestland of the State have border disputes with Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. As many as 21 villages in Koraput district, 21 villages in Ganjam, 16 in Gajapati, five in Rayadaga, five in Baleswar, eight in Mayurbhanj, five in Keonjhar and sox in Sundargarh have border disputes with Andhra, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Jharkhand. Similarly, Chhattisgarh is imposing its authority on four villages in Nabarangpur district and one in Jharsuguda. (The Pioneer, July, 6, 2016)Odisha, according to a report by The Hindu BusinessLine, is reportedly alarmed by Chhattisgarh's plans to build 13 barrages across the Mahanadi, in a plan to extract more water. Chhattisgarh has also been constructing seven pick up weirs (small dams) across the river. The Mahanadi Bachao Manch, which filed the PIL, in a separate miscellaneous case had alleged that there were claims and counter-claims by the two state governments over keeping the people in the

loop about the projects of the Chhattisgarh government which are coming up in the upper basin of the river.