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# Development-induced Displacement: An Ethical and Theological Reflection on protection of the Rights of the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur, India

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**Development-induced Displacement: An Ethical and Theological Reflection on  
protection of the Rights of the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur, India.**

A Thesis Submitted to

The Faculty of the Jesuit School of Theology of

Santa Clara University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of

Master of Theology

by

**Amit Roshan Lakra S.J.**

Berkeley, California

May 2019

Committee Signatures

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Date

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Date

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## Abstract

Land for the Adivasis is not just an economic resource but a spiritual resource as well. Displacement of the Adivasis from their land in the name of “national development” is unjust and unethical. Therefore, it is a violation of the rights of the Adivasi.

In this thesis, I will first present the life of the Adivasis looking through their history until the present. Particularly, I will present their relationship with the land (earth), humans and the non-human world. In doing so, I will argue that the Adivasis are both victims of oppression and models of protecting the earth and nature.

Secondly, I will present a theological reflection on creation using *Laudato Si'* and Pope Francis' interpretation of creation. Thirdly, I will critically analyze the present development approach of the Jharkhand government through the lens of rights-based ethics and Catholic Social Thought. Finally, I will present an alternative to the present-day approach of the government that is a “people-centered development,” or an “integral development” for the state of Jharkhand.

## **Acknowledgements**

Accept my poor attempt at using words to express the depth of the gratitude I feel.

So many people have contributed to who I am today – Professors, friends, my brother Jesuits (especially the good men at Shalom Community), and those I have come across in my Jesuit journey. I am particularly grateful for the constant support from my sisters for their prayerful support. I am also very thankful for the assistance of Derek Nutt (my writing coach), Andrew Laguna S.J., Jeff Dorr S.J. and Jerold W. Linder S.J. for patiently proofreading.

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## General Introduction

Displacement of the Adivasis from their land in the name of development is incorrect and unethical. It is the violation of the rights of the Adivasis as human persons. The Adivasis have been the victims of several kinds of exploitation, and they have been marginalized for many years in their history. It is nothing but the denial of human rights and dignity of the Adivasis.

In the land of Chhotanagpur, the Adivasis are both victims of oppression and models of protecting the earth and nature. Since many parts of the world today have reached the point of an extreme climatic change and environmental degradation, the Adivasi communities of Chhotanagpur, India could stand as ideal people/community from whom the whole world perhaps needs to learn. Perhaps these Adivasi have much to teach to a world that is running after satisfying insatiable human desires while in the process devastating nature and their consciences.

Pope Francis, on the vocation of being a “protector,” makes an appeal to all those who are in positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life to be “protectors of creation, protectors of God’s plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and the environment.”<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Pope Francis said, “whenever we fail to care for creation and for our brothers and sisters, the way is opened to destruction and hearts are hardened.”<sup>2</sup> Through his homily, Pope Francis relates this call to be protectors with his ministry to

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<sup>1</sup> “Text of Pope Francis Inauguration Mass homily”, Catholic Voices Comment, posted March 22, 2013, accessed on February 15, 2019, <https://cvcomment.org/2013/03/22/text-of-pope-francis-inauguration-mass-homily/>

<sup>2</sup> “An introduction to Laudato Si’”, International Catholic Center of Geneva, posted June 26, 2015, accessed on February 23, 2019, <http://www.ccig-iccg.org/?p=1356>

protect the whole of creation, to protect each person, especially the poorest, and to protect ourselves. With *Laudato Sí*, Pope Francis develops in a deeper and more nuanced way what he said in the inauguration Mass homily of his papacy.

The lives of the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur reflect Pope Francis' call of being "protectors" in so many ways in their life. One of the important aspects of the lives of these Adivasis is that they live in harmony with nature. Even though they themselves are poor and victims of many types of hardship, one can see from their lifestyle that they are the real protector of nature.<sup>3</sup> Time is not very far off when all indigenous people will "come to be widely seen as guardians of nature."<sup>4</sup> They take from nature for their "need rather than greed," which is why their relationship with nature is symbiotic.<sup>5</sup> Greed in the Adivasis communities is prevented through formalized restraint and taboos. These Adivasis from ancient times have remained rooted to the earth, and they retain a culture based on sharing and caring for one another. Non-Adivasis, especially the mainstream society at the present time, could learn a lot from them. The Adivasis are also emotionally attached to their land, water and forest. They consider these as part and parcel of their life.

This thesis, therefore, will argue through the analysis of the lives of the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur that the injustices done to them in the name of development by the state government, central government, and the corporate world are unjust and constitute a

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<sup>3</sup> The *lifestyle* of the Adivasis will be discussed in detail while displaying the identity and characteristics of the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur.

<sup>4</sup> Gladson Dungdung, *Mission Saranda: A War for Natural Resources in India* (Bihar-Jharkhand: Deshaj Prakashan, 2015), xxx.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii



violation of human rights.<sup>6</sup> It will also make a point that the life of the Adivasis demands justice for them and better treatment/hospitality of them as citizens of the country. From the Christian perspective, the cry of the Adivasis is the cry of God's very self, who demands hospitality and a faithful account of our Christian discipleship. Any violent response to the cry of the Adivasis is the violation of God's image in the Adivasis and an affront to their human dignity. This thesis will make a claim that the Adivasis are both victims of oppression and models of protecting the earth and nature.

### **Thesis Statement**

Development-induced displacement of the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur from their land, as well as injustices of several kinds inflicted on them throughout the centuries, raise concerns and questions deeply related to their intrinsic dignity as human persons. The issues mentioned here raise ethical, theological and anthropological questions as the Adivasis are the living image of God. Therefore, this thesis will present a critical appraisal of the government's injustice done to the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur in the name of national development. Using Catholic social teaching and Pope Francis' understanding of creation found in *Laudato Si'*, this thesis will also show how the government's actions are unjust and offer an alternative way for the integral development of the Adivasis.

### **Methodology**

First, this thesis will adopt the method of social and anthropological analysis to understand the problem and its seriousness. Secondly, it will present Pope Francis' understanding of creation and his interpretation of creation accounts of the Bible according

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<sup>6</sup> The injustices to the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur include displacement and alienation of the people from their land, atrocity done by the police and military personnel such as physical and sexual harassment, killings of the innocent Adivasis in the name to Naxals, etc.

to the encyclical, *Laudato Si*, and demonstrate the relationship of the Adivasis with nature and fellow human beings. Thirdly, it will use Catholic social teaching to provide an ethical analysis of the human rights violations and integral development of the Adivasis.

According to the methodology, the chapters will unfold as follows. Chapter One will describe the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur. It will explain the identity and characteristics of the Adivasis by presenting their brief history. It will also have more focused attention on the present situation of the Adivasis under the plans of “national development” of the country.<sup>7</sup> Chapter two will present Pope Francis’ understanding of creation described in *Laudato Si*’ and his interpretation of creation accounts of the book of Genesis, as well as examine how the life of the Adivasis aligns with Francis’ view of creation. Chapter three will analyze the present approach of development by the Jharkhand government and the central government of India, and present some alternatives for the true development of the Adivasis. It will present its critiques based on Catholic social teaching with more focus on human dignity and rights of the Adivasis.

### **Purpose and Significance**

One of the purposes of writing this thesis is to re-write the history of the life and characteristics of the Adivasi people of Chhotanagpur. The majority of the literature available so far about the Adivasis is mostly written by non-Adivasis, which tends to present a distorted account of the Adivasi people. The readers need to be aware that the Adivasis have been people of oral tradition. They did not have their histories accounted in written form. As a result, a lot of the Adivasis’ traditional practices and the stories that shaped their lives are slowly disappearing in the present time. It is unfortunate that some

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<sup>7</sup> I Savarimuthu, “Jharkhand: Current Issues and Challenges,” *Sevartham* 34 (2009): 11.

of the available literature about the Adivasis portrays them as “forest dwellers,” “barbarians” and “backward people.” Due to some of these reasons the present (younger) generation of the Adivasis do not want to call themselves “Adivasi.”<sup>8</sup>

Another purpose of this study is to awaken people to the realities of the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur who have been constantly victimized by the government of India and those of mainstream society (i.e., those who have enjoyed social, economic, and even religious benefits at their expense). This study makes a claim that these Adivasis who were and are still considered “primitive” and “forest dwellers” are the real “protectors” of the earth and nature. If one looks at the lives of these Adivasis closely, one would find that these Adivasis have always been the protectors of the earth and nature. They have always been in constant “care for our Common Home,” as Pope Francis writes in his papal encyclical, *Laudato Si’*.<sup>9</sup>

Even in an age where anything and everything is treated like a commodity, the Adivasi people still respect and treat nature as a sacred entity and venerate it as a ‘mother’ who provides everything, fulfilling the needs of not only Adivasi people but the entire human family. This thesis will also include the ethical implications of the developmental work that the Indian government and the state government are promoting. The way the natural resources are being exploited from the lands of the Adivasi people have detrimental effects on their lives, especially with respect to their health, and the government shows

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<sup>8</sup> Gladson Dungdung is a prominent social activist in the state of Jharkhand, who himself is an Adivasi intellectual. He has written quite a number of books on the issues of Adivasis and continues to write about the Adivasis and injustices inflicted on the Adivasis. He is also one of the few Adivasis who raises a voice against the incorrect portrayal of the Adivasis in Indian history and literature. The link provided here is a youtube video by Gladson Dungdung who explains why he started writing about the Adivasis and encourages more and more Adivasis to write about their life and history. It is in Hindi. Accessed May 1, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfkyWLQ0Yuc>

<sup>9</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home* (Our Sunday Visitor, Inc. Huntington, IN, 2015).

little concern. It seems that the government is only concerned with extracting as much natural resources as it can without paying attention to the adversely affected lives of the Adivasis. The main goal of big business and corporate families is only profit, and they are hardly concerned for the real development of these people.

Hence, the significance of this work is to shed light on the life of the Adivasis and to tell the world, especially the Jharkhand government and the central government of India, that the protection of the human dignity and rights of the Adivasis are of prime importance because they continue to lose their land and livelihoods in the name of “national development.” This thesis will help the non-Adivasis and the governments better understand the Adivasis’ life and cultures that in turn will help them create better developmental projects for the Adivasi people.

## Chapter One

### **Adivasi and their present situation in Chhotanagpur**

#### **1. Introduction**

This chapter will present an account of the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur—specifically, who they are as a people. It will also show that how they have been marginalized by mainstream society. To achieve this purpose the chapter will be divided into three main parts along with a conclusion. First, the chapter will present a brief history of the Adivasi and their worldview that has set them up as vulnerable people. Second, it will display the economic and social marginalization in the history of the Adivasi. Third, the chapter will also present the violence that the Adivasis have faced over the centuries from the government and the corporate world. Finally, it will present a summary of the life of the Adivasis, especially emphasizing their communitarian identity and their care for the land, which is both problem and gift.

#### **1.1 Who are the *Adivasis*?**

*Adivasi* is a Hindi word that comes from the Sanskrit language. It is a combination of two words: *Adi*, which means “first” or “early,” and *vasi*, meaning “dwellers,” “settlers” or “inhabitants.”<sup>10</sup> Together it means the first settlers, early inhabitants or early dwellers. This word is used to refer to groups otherwise categorized as “scheduled tribes” in the constitution of India.<sup>11</sup> For quite some time the *Adivasis* were called “forest dwellers” and

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<sup>10</sup> Bineet J. Mundu, “On the Future of Indigenous Traditions: The Case of Adivasis of Jharkhand, India” (master thesis, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tromsø Norway, 2006), 15, accessed March 22, 2019, [https://www.academia.edu/15552448/On\\_the\\_Future\\_of\\_Indigenous\\_Traditions\\_The\\_Case\\_of\\_Adivasis\\_of\\_Jharkhand\\_India](https://www.academia.edu/15552448/On_the_Future_of_Indigenous_Traditions_The_Case_of_Adivasis_of_Jharkhand_India)

<sup>11</sup> The Constitution of India, Article 366 (25), accessed on March 14, 2019, [https://www.india.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/npi/files/coi\\_part\\_full.pdf](https://www.india.gov.in/sites/upload_files/npi/files/coi_part_full.pdf)

most often in a negative sense. Today, to call *Adivasis* “forest dwellers” is considered a derogatory term. It is true that most Adivasi villages are in forests or their villages are situated in close proximity to forests, and there are various reasons for their settlement in and around the forests. The first and foremost reason is that Adivasis are agrarian communities, and they support their lives through farming. The second important reason is their dependence on forest and its produce. ‘Mother Nature’ sustains these Adivasis by providing seasonal forest produce.

According to the 2011 census of India, the total population of Adivasis (Scheduled Tribes as per the Constitution of India) is 26.21 percent of 32.98 million of the total population of Jharkhand state, which covers all parts of the Chhotanagpur plateau.<sup>12</sup> The Adivasis of Jharkhand would not accept this figure as there have been enormous changes in the population growth in the recent past. It is obvious that the manipulation of the census has taken place in order to deprive the Adivasis of their right to “reservation” in *Lok Sabha* (Parliament of India), Legislative Assembly, educational institutions and employment sectors, in addition to destroying the character of Scheduled Area that gets special provisions by the Constitution of the country.<sup>13</sup>

One of the ways through which the Adivasis express their identity and culture is through celebrations of different feasts, such as Sarhul, Karma, Baha, Maghe, to name but

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<sup>12</sup> Jharkhand Population – Census India 2011, accessed on March 10, 2019, <https://www.censusindia2011.com/jharkhand-population.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Article 335 of the constitution provides that the claims of the members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes shall be taken into consideration, consistent with the maintenance of efficiency of administration, in making appointment to posts and services in connection with the affairs of the union or a state. Article 16 (4) permits reservation in favor of citizens of backward classes, who may not be adequately represented in services. In pursuance of these ‘provisions’ the government has made reservations for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in the services under their control. Accessed March 14, 2019, [https://www.india.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/npi/files/coi\\_part\\_full.pdf](https://www.india.gov.in/sites/upload_files/npi/files/coi_part_full.pdf)

a few. These feasts are celebrated by all the major tribes of the Adivasis: Oraons, Mundas, Kharias, Santhals and Hos. The Adivasis' celebrations of festivals bring awareness of their cultural identity and enables them to realize their unity as one people who have struggled a long time in order to receive recognition of their humanity both at the national and state levels.

Over the years, Adivasi culture has attained a distinctiveness by fostering a balance between nature and culture. Economically, natural resources, which are gifts of nature, are shared in common among their tribal groups. The Adivasis do not belong to the caste society. They have their own mother-tongues (dialects), life styles, social structures, rites and ritual values, etc., and thus they differ in many ways from those of the non-Adivasi social groups in the country. Many of them today are settled agriculturalists, but the forest still forms much of their economic resource base. They have a society/community which is a 'society of equals.' They have a *Gram Sabha* (village council) through which they administer the whole community. *Gram Sabha* gives equal voice to people in the community. The head of the council is not a 'chief,' but he is the first among equals.<sup>14</sup> The *Gram Sabha* makes decisions after listening to all the opinions presented in the village council and on the basis of consensus, not on the principle of majority-minority. This *Gram Sabha* is an important aspect of the life of the Adivasis because most present-day institutions depend on the ruling elite and not on the people.

The Adivasis are a "peace loving and God-fearing people by nature."<sup>15</sup> They are simple, innocent and often submissive in their approach to life. Many times, non-Adivasis

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<sup>14</sup> Agapit Tirkey, "Cultural Identities and Education," *Sevartham* 26 (2001): 33-34.

<sup>15</sup> Sudhir Kumar Kujur, "Are Tribals Hindus?," *Sevartham* 29 (2004): 104.

victimize these people due to their simplicity and the submissive nature of their life. Consequently, the Adivasis suffer oppression from mainstream society and various kinds of injustices—be it socially, economically or religiously. But there have been times in their history when the Adivasis took arms (traditional arms such as bows and arrows, axes, sticks, etc.,) and revolted against the ‘outsiders.’<sup>16</sup> Some of the revolts that took place are the Kol Rebellion (1831-32), the Santal Rebellion (1855), the Sardar Movement (1858-95), the Birsa Movement (1895-1900) and the Tana Bhagat Movement (1914-15).<sup>17</sup>

The earliest revolt against ‘outsiders’ (that is, against the British and landlords) was by the Adivasis in 1772, led by Tilka Manjhi. He united the Adivasis and started a movement against the land tax imposed on the Adivasis by the British and landlords. Tilka Manjhi was hanged in 1784, and with his death the movement was also suppressed. He was a charismatic leader. Today among the Adivasis he is known as *Baba* Tilka Manjhi.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, the Indian history has almost forgotten his contribution to the country’s freedom movement.

According to the theory of Aryan invasion, when the Aryans first came to India around 1500 BCE, these Adivasis were already there in many parts of the Indian subcontinent.<sup>19</sup> The Aryans invaded and attacked the Adivasis and their culture. Those

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<sup>16</sup> In Adivasi society all non-Adivasis are considered ‘outsiders.’

<sup>17</sup> Agapit Tirkey, “Cultural Identities and Education,” *Sevatham* 26 (2001): 34.

<sup>18</sup> *Baba* is a Hindi word for ‘father.’ To show him respect and reverence he is addressed as ‘*Baba* Tilka Manjhi’ among the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur.

<sup>19</sup> World Civilization, “Early Civilization in the Indian Subcontinent,” accessed on March 12, 2019, <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-hccc-worldcivilization/chapter/the-indo-aryan-migration-and-the-vedic-period/>



Adivasis who survived ran for their life, dispersed into the deep forests and settled among the trees, plants, rivers and animals. For a little comparison, the stories of the Adivasis of India are quite similar to the ‘Indians’ of the United States of America. But the one big difference between the Adivasis of India and the ‘Indians’ of the United States is that the Adivasis still dwell in various forests of the Indian subcontinent whereas “Indians” of the United States dwell in “reservations.”<sup>20</sup>

Chhotanagpur is a plateau situated in northeast, central India in Jharkhand, which also covers the adjoining districts of Chhattisgarh, Odisha and West Bengal.<sup>21</sup> The Adivasis of Chhotanagpur, as mentioned above, are an agrarian community and live on the land and forest (nature). Most of the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur still use traditional methods of cultivation. They use bulls, cows and buffalos to plough their fields. Some use machines like tractors, but others who cannot afford to hire tractors still rely on the traditional ways of cultivation using bulls, cows, etc. One of the reasons they still rely on the traditional method of cultivation is that the Chhotanagpur plateau is very uneven. It has lots of hills and valleys that make the adaptation of modern technologies for cultivation almost impossible in many parts of the plateau. It is rich in natural resources like coal, mica, copper, limestone, bauxite, iron ore, asbestos and apatite.<sup>22</sup> For example, in the country of

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<sup>20</sup> The indigenous peoples of the United States; application of the term “Indian” originated with Christopher Columbus, who, in his search for India, thought that he arrived in the East Indies. By “reservations” I mean a legal designation for an area of land managed by a federally recognized Native American tribe under the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs.

<sup>21</sup> Varghese Palatty Koonathan, *The Religion of the Oranos: A Comparative Study of the Concept of God in the Sarna Religion of the Oraons and the Christian Concept of God* (Shillong: Don Bosco Centre for Indigenous Cultures, 1999), 101.

<sup>22</sup> Department of Mines & Geology: Government of Jharkhand, accessed March 6, 2019, <http://www.jharkhand.gov.in/mines-geology>

India, the state of Jharkhand, which comprises 2.42 percent of the land area of India, possesses the largest coal reserves, the second largest iron ore reserves, and the third largest bauxite reserves in comparison to the other Indian states, as well as being the sole producer of prime coking coal.<sup>23</sup>

Even after 71 years of independence from the British, and even though the Indian people have gained the right to govern themselves, the Indian government has not done enough to help the Adivasi people. On the contrary, the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur have been sidelined by the Indian government; religiously they are disenfranchised. They worship god in nature, and they call this worship “*Sarna*.”<sup>24</sup> The Indian government has still not accepted and recognized *Sarna* as a religion.<sup>25</sup> Their religious disenfranchisement and lack of religious identity, as well as their economic and social situation, made many Adivasis align with other religions such as Hindu, Christianity and Islam.

Economically, some Adivasis are very poor. They lack many basic human needs such as education, health, food, clean drinking water, etc. Land, cattle and forests are their only source of livelihood. Up to the present day, the majority of the Adivasis rely on agriculture. Their land is quite fertile. They produce rice, maize, potato, wheat, cereal and edible oil. The lack of storage facilities makes preservation of goods impossible. As a result, Adivasi farmers must quickly sell these goods at below-market prices before they

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<sup>23</sup> “Indian State by Area,” Statistics Times, <http://statisticstimes.com/geography/area-of-indian-states.php>; Department of Mines & Geology: Government of Jharkhand, accessed March 6, 2019, <http://www.jharkhand.gov.in/mines-geology>

<sup>24</sup> Malini Srivastava, “The Sacred Complex of Munda Tribe,” *The Anthropologist* 9, no. 4 (October 2007): 327–330.

<sup>25</sup> Gladson Dungdung, *Whose country is it anyway?: Untold stories of the Indigenous Peoples of India* (Kolkata: adivaani, 2013), 5.

perish, and this means that they cannot receive enough money to cover their investment, much less make a profit. Furthermore, due to irregular monsoons, the agricultural products and agricultural activities barely support them for the whole year. Therefore, apart from the farming season, there are almost no jobs in the villages. There is a huge influx of people to towns and cities in search of jobs. This misfortune makes poor Adivasis easy prey in the hands of the landlords and moneylenders, and sometimes they have to give away their lands to the landlords and moneylenders in order to pay their debts. There is no doubt that the lands of these Adivasis are rich in mineral resources, but the government's lack of real political will to help them economically puts the Adivasis in a helpless position. One could describe the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur as the 'poor of the richly rich land.'

The highly dense forest of Saranda—famous for its Sal trees, which are sometimes known as 'green steel' in the Asian subcontinent—is located within the state of Jharkhand. It is the largest Sal forest (*Shorea Robusta*) in Asia. Saranda is very rich in biodiversity with an extraordinary variety of wildlife. It is also a home to 'Ho' and 'Munda' Adivasis, and it has large iron and manganese ore deposits.<sup>26</sup> As Gladson Dungdung describes it, "Saranda forest is to eastern India what the Amazon rainforests are to the world."<sup>27</sup> The state of Jharkhand, which covers the major part of the Chhotanagpur plateau, produces 160 million tons of various minerals annually (worth approximately 2.5 billion US dollars), and Saranda forest is one of the richest and largest reserves of mineral resources of

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<sup>26</sup> Gladson Dungdung, *Mission Saranda: A War for Natural Resources in India* (Ranchi: Bir Buru Ompay Media & Entertainment LLP, 2015), 22.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 36.

Chhotanagpur.<sup>28</sup> All national and even multi-national mining companies focused their attention on this forest. According to the reports of the Indian bureau of mines & mining map published by the Government of Jharkhand in 2011, 50 or more mining companies have mines there.<sup>29</sup> Saranda forest contains 25 percent of the total iron ore of the country.<sup>30</sup> While the mining companies extract these vast amounts of minerals, the Adivasis of Saranda forest receive little to no benefits from this resource. On the contrary, Adivasis are paying the price in terms of environmental degradation; their rivers and streams are polluted, and forests are destroyed because of mining activities. They have no option but to drink water from the polluted rivers and streams. As a result, they suffer from various diseases—many lose their eye sight early in life, and lungs diseases are common among the people.<sup>31</sup> Although the government of India is benefitting immensely from their forests and lands, it is hardly concerned about the welfare, safety, and development of the Adivasis in Saranda forest.

Despite all the difficulties and challenges over the centuries, the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur have survived until today. By nature, the Adivasis are innocent, peaceful and peace-loving communities. According to their sacred myths, handed down orally from generation to generation, the origin of the Adivasi tribes as a peace-loving community is attributed to *Dharmes* (the Creator God or the One Supreme Being/Spirit).<sup>32</sup> But in recent

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 45-46.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 46.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 62.

<sup>32</sup> Sudhir Kumar Kujur, “Are Tribals Hindus?” *Sevatham* 29 (2004): 103.

times, and even in the present, the Indian government in cooperation with the corporate world has acted unjustly towards the Chhotanagpur Adivasis, and this is greatly affecting their life and future existence. The government, especially through the activities of police and army personnel, is doing great harm to these Adivasis. The government keeps killing these Adivasis in the name of “Naxals,” and the corporations keep devastating their forests and continue grabbing the government-acknowledged Adivasi lands.<sup>33</sup> As a result, these Adivasis continue to be a vulnerable people in their own land. They are being alienated from their home and land which are an important part of their identity as Adivasi communities.

## **2. Present Situation of the Adivasis**

In order to exploit the natural resources, the Adivasis have been displaced by the government from their land and habitat without proper compensation. The displacement of the Adivasis continues until today. There is a massive influx of outsiders or non-Adivasis

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<sup>33</sup> Gladson Dungdung, *Mission Saranda: A War for Natural Resources in India* (Ranchi: Bir Buru Ompay Media & Entertainment LLP, 2015), 125-126. Naxals or Naxalites (or Maoist) are terms used to refer to militants who believe in the ideology of Communism (or Maoism) and operate in various parts of India, mostly in those having large forest cover. The term ‘naxalite’ or ‘naxals’ come from the village named Naxalbari which is in West Bengal, India. That is the place where a violent uprising of laborers was organized by a section of the then Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPI(M) under the leadership of mostly three people: Kanu Sanyal, Charu Mazumdar and Jangal Santhal. This uprising took place in the year 1967.

Part IX of the Constitution of India concerning the *Panchayats* has been extended to the *Scheduled Areas* with suitable changes with effect from December 24, 1996, with the assent of the President of India. This marks the beginning of *Adivasi* self-rule in the *Scheduled Areas*. The provisions of the new Act are integral part of the Constitutional provisions concerning tribal affairs and self-government. The functioning communities in the *Scheduled Areas* as well as the *Gram Sabhas* are endowed with specific powers by the above Act. These powers include management of community resources, resolution of disputes, approval of plans and programs as also mandatory consultation before the acquisitions of lands. Conferral of certain other powers on the *Gram Sabha* concerning vital matters such as ownership of minor forest produce, enforcement of prohibition, restoration of unlawfully alienated lands, control over money lending and marketing has been made mandatory. There are government made laws to protect tribal lands, such as Chotanagpur Tenancy Act (CNT) 1908, and Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act (SPT) 1949.

(*dikus*), and as a result of this, the Adivasis are now being reduced to a minority in their own homeland.<sup>34</sup>

Scholars say that when the Adivasis came to the plateau of Chhotanagpur many years ago, the place was unsuitable, rough and dangerous to live in.<sup>35</sup> But with their years of hard work, they made it a beautiful habitat. Some of the earlier Adivasi leaders realized that their ancestors' "hard-prepared tribal lands" were being taken away by the various means of the non-Adivasis.<sup>36</sup> This was one of the main reasons for revolts against the outsiders at different points of Adivasi history in Chhotanagpur.

The Adivasis of Chhotanagpur are also in great number in the states of North Bengal, Assam and in the Andaman Islands.<sup>37</sup> Chhotanagpur, their homeland, is a place of pride for the Adivasis. At the present time, when people talk about Chhotanagpur, they generally talk about the State of Jharkhand. Usually people understand that when one talks about Chhotanagpur, it is all about 'Jharkhand' and not about the "greater Jharkhand" which includes adjoining districts of the neighboring states.<sup>38</sup> In fact, today the term

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<sup>34</sup> In the Chhotanagpur-Adivasi context, the entire Hindu world outside Chhotanagpur appears to be the world of the *dikus* (outsiders/foreigners) who threaten the socio-economic and cultural security of the Adivasi groups. The image of the *dikus* in the Adivasi mind is generally that of 'looters, trouble makers, deceivers, exploiters, unreliable, those who have a sense of superiority and inspire fear,' Agapit Tirkey, "Understanding Tribal Cultures for more Effective Education: Chotanagpur Scenario," *Sevartham* 28, (2003): 55.

<sup>35</sup> Varghese Palatty Koonathan, *The Religion of the Oraons: A Comparative Study of the Concept of God in the Sarna Religion of the Oraons and the Christian Concept of God* (Shillong, India: Don Bosco Centre for Indigenous Cultures, 1999), 101.

<sup>36</sup> Franklin Baxla, "Birsa and Freedom Struggle," *Sevartham*, 28 (2003): 41

<sup>37</sup> Varghese Palatty Koonathan, *The Religion of the Oraons: A Comparative Study of the Concept of God in the Sarna Religion of the Oraons and the Christian Concept of God* (Shillong, India: Don Bosco Centre for Indigenous Cultures, 1999), 54.

<sup>38</sup> Agapit Tirkey, "Understanding Tribal Cultures for more Effective Education: Chotanagpur Scenario," *Sevartham* 28 (2003): 54.

‘Jharkhand’ is used synonymously with Chhotanagpur. Hereafter, I will use both the terms interchangeably.

In the following section, readers will have a clearer understanding of the Adivasis and in the way these Adivasis have been marginalized socially and economically throughout history until the present. This section will explain some of the important topics that affect their life for better or for worse, such as land, mining activities, education and healthcare—beginning with the socio-economic aspects of their life.

## 2.1 Socio-economic

The entry of the non-Adivasis, including the state administration, into Chhotanagpur was an intrusion into the peaceful and harmonious life of the Adivasi people.<sup>39</sup> They considered the Adivasis as “forest dwellers.”<sup>40</sup> They also considered them as “savages,” “*rakshas* (demons),” “uneducated,” “primitive,” and some even treated the Adivasis as less-than-humans.<sup>41</sup> The arrival of the ‘outsiders’ affected the whole lifestyle of the Adivasis.<sup>42</sup> The non-Adivasis started destroying the unity of the Adivasis, dividing them into fragmented communities using various superficial social constructions, such as differentiating people from one community to another based on occupations, dialect, eating habits and cultural practices. Even today, Adivasis in the villages are easily manipulated

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<sup>39</sup> Ratnakar Bhengra, “Development Not Destruction,” *Sevartham* 30 (2005): 74.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>41</sup> Franklin Baxla, “Birsa and Freedom Struggle,” *Sevartham* 28 (2003): 39. Gladson Dungdung, *Whose country is it anyway? Untold stories of the Indigenous Peoples of India* (Kolkata: adivaani, 2013), 3. Agapit Tirkey, “Understanding Tribal Cultures for more Effective Education: Chotanagpur Scenario,” *Sevartham* 28 (2003): 54-55.

<sup>42</sup> Cyril Hans, “The Adivasis of Jharkhand: Contemporary Issues and Responses,” *Sevartham* 36 (2011): 46-47.

and exploited due to a lack of social and political awareness. As a result, the poor and simple Adivasis become easy prey for the rich business people and money lenders who are mostly ‘outsiders.’ It is important to note that the trend of exploitation of the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur is not a present issue only, but the Adivasis have been “exploited in the past by the ‘outside exploiters’—moneylenders, revenue farmers, landlords.”<sup>43</sup> The ‘outsiders’ came to Chhotanagpur ‘in sheep’s clothing,’ but they were actually wolves who only came to devour the sheep, that is, the simple Adivasi people and the natural minerals of the region. Anyone with true concern for the poor, be it Adivasis or non-Adivasis, who is born and brought up or has lived in an Adivasi village for some time would clearly see the cunningness of the lifestyle of the ‘outsiders.’

At this point, one needs to be cautious in assuming that all those non-Adivasis who came to Chhotanagpur were exploiters; that is not the point here. Not all ‘outsiders’ were exploiters and cheaters, to be sure. One exception was the Christian missionaries who came to Chhotanagpur. In fact, the “dawn of Christianity and the arrival of the missionaries proved to be a blessing” in the life and history of the Adivasis.<sup>44</sup> No one can disagree with the significant change and development brought by the Christian missionaries in Chhotanagpur. Apart from spiritual interventions, the missionaries promoted education, health and various livelihood programs, not only for Christian Adivasis but for non-Christian Adivasis as well.<sup>45</sup> The credit goes to those Christian missionaries who lived

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<sup>43</sup> Agapit Tirkey, “Understanding Tribal Cultures for more Effective Education: Chotanagpur Scenario,” *Sevartham* 28 (2003): 56

<sup>44</sup> Cyril Hans, “The Adivasis of Jharkhand: Contemporary Issues and Responses,” *Sevartham* 36 (2011): 47.

<sup>45</sup> Anant Kumar and Pramil K. Panda, “Ethnicity, Religion, and Identity Politics among Tribes in Jharkhand,” *Economic & Political Weekly* 39 (2018): 25.



among the Adivasis, worked with them and saved millions of poor Adivasis from the hands of the landlords and rich money lenders.<sup>46</sup> It would not be an exaggeration to say that the whole of the Adivasi people would have been wiped out by now from Chhotanagpur, or at least they would be at the verge of extinction, if the Christian missionaries and Christianity had not been present in the region of Chhotanagpur.

After gaining independence, India, under the Five-Year Plans, showed rapid economic development and social change. During this period, to achieve their goals the government began massive exploitation of minerals and natural resources in rich mineralized regions of the country, using the strengths of both the public and private sectors. Chhotanagpur, which is among the richest in the country with respect to mineral deposits, witnessed the establishment of many large factories of engineering goods, iron production, and many big and small mining and hydro-electric projects.<sup>47</sup> Due to economic developmental projects, even inalienable lands of the Adivasis (*Khuntkati or Bhuihari*) were grabbed by the government, after which the lands were allocated to big businesses and industrialists.<sup>48</sup> The land alienation, displacement and marginalization did not end there. On the contrary, the urbanization, industrialization and globalization of the modern world has accelerated and increased even more the plight of the poor Adivasis of the Chhotanagpur plateau.

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<sup>46</sup> Varghese Palatty Koonathan, *The Religion of the Oraons: A Comparative Study of the Concept of God in the Sarna Religion of the Oraons and the Christian Concept of God* (Shillong, India: Don Bosco Centre for Indigenous Cultures, 1999), 114-115.

<sup>47</sup> Agapit Tirkey, "Land Question in Chotanagpur: A Historical View," *Sevartham* 30 (2005): 16.

<sup>48</sup> The pioneer families who cleared the forests and brought suitable lands under the plough and the lands cleared by them were known as *Bhuihari/Khuntkatti* lands.

## 2.2 Land

For the Adivasi, land is much more than just a means of livelihood. Land has a significant place in their social, cultural, spiritual and economic existence. They believe that land is a gift from God which they have received from their ancestors. The Adivasis consider themselves only as custodians of land and nature, as well as all that is included in nature, such as hills, forests, rivers, plants and rocks.<sup>49</sup> Land is considered as a ‘mother’ in the Adivasi communities, and so out of reverence and respect, the Adivasi communities refer to their land as ‘*dharti-mata*’ (mother-earth). After the land, the forest is of second most importance in the lives of the Adivasis. The forest not only provides abundance of seasonal produce, but it also provides a shelter or a refuge for the Adivasis. The forest is their natural or original habitat—a home. The Adivasi life is depressed in the absence of land and forest. To some extent, without land and forest, Adivasis are like fish without water. Except for a few Adivasis communities who still belong to hunter groups, usually each family owns a small piece of land for its support and survival, and the lands that they use are theirs—the *khunkati* or *bhuinhar* lands.

Though there is no written account, one can see that the Adivasis believe that agricultural operations and related occupations carry religious significance, which one cannot find in non-Adivasi society. Unfortunately, today the spirit of urbanization and globalization are both destroying the traditional economic system and organization of the Adivasi communities. They are unable to keep up their traditional practices in the realms of society and culture. It is also a sad part of the reality of the Adivasis that the people of the younger generation are less and less interested in their own culture, and they are more

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<sup>49</sup> Vincent Aind, “Tribal Culture of Chotanagpur at Peril,” *Sevartham* 33 (2008): 23.

attracted and even obsessed with the glamor of the urbanized and globalized lifestyle of the world. In the past, *jal* (water), *jungle* (forest) and *jameen* (land) were the traditional sources of livelihood, but now they are slowly and gradually giving way to modern means of sustenance.<sup>50</sup>

One of the main reasons for the economic and social problems of the Adivasi people has been their “gradual displacement from land.”<sup>51</sup> Over the last century the Adivasis have been fighting for their right to land ownership, but they have been denied. Displacement from their land has brought to some Adivasi groups such a state of life that they are now even struggling to retain their economic and social identity. Today, displacement and land alienation are the biggest problem for the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur, posing serious threat to their identity, survival and existence in life.<sup>52</sup> Whenever these Adivasis were displaced from their land, the compensation they received was extremely small and unjust for the most part. As an example, one can look at the arbitrary rates of compensation given by the coal mining company in the state of Jharkhand.

A private company (Penem) in Pakur district, which has been given license by the Jharkhand government to do coal mining. The company has announced its rehabilitation policy and offered 50,000 to the first acre of land, 30,000 for the second acre and 20,000 rupees for the third acre.<sup>53</sup>

One is left wondering about the logic of this offer by the company. This is just one among many, similar examples. The most troubling thing in the above example is that all

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<sup>50</sup> Cyril Hans, “The Adivasis of Jharkhand: Contemporary Issues and Responses,” *Sevatham* 36 (2011): 39.

<sup>51</sup> “India: Adivasi,” World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, accessed March 25, 2019, <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/adivasis-2/>

<sup>52</sup> C. Lakra, “Urbanization and Tribal Identity,” *Sevatham* 25 (2000): 36.

<sup>53</sup> Stan Swamy, “Forcible Displacement and Land Alienation is Unjust: Most of the Forcibly Displaced in Jharkhand are Adivasis,” *Sevatham* 30 (2005): 62.

three acres of land are in one place lying side-by-side, with equal quality and producing capacity, and yet they are rated differently.<sup>54</sup> One needs to carefully see and understand the cunningness of the administration in creating “legal obstacles” to deny compensation to the displaced people rather than making laws suitable or people-friendly.<sup>55</sup> One of the obstacles is procedural. Normally according to law, the compensations are paid for individually-owned land, whereas most of the Adivasi lands are either owned by the community, or the land is in the name of a deceased person within the family. Furthermore, many of the people displaced from their land are not well educated about the laws and unaware of the procedures required to receive or demand their compensation; the officials are even unfriendly and rude to these people when they come to the concern office for their right to payment. As a result, government and companies go ahead with their plans and projects unquestioned and do whatever they wish.

Displacement is painful for anyone. To let go and leave a home that was everything, where one was born and brought up, where one built their house with one’s own sweat and blood, can be even more painful.<sup>56</sup> Yet even worse is when no alternatives have been worked out and one has nowhere to go. When the Adivasi, for whom land is a “spiritual sustenance” and more than an “economic commodity,” experience displacement, it can bring heart-breaking moments in one’s life.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> “India: Adivasi,” World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, accessed March 25, 2019, <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/adivasis-2/>

<sup>56</sup> Stan Swamy, “Forcible Displacement and Land Alienation is Unjust: Most of the Forcibly Displaced in Jharkhand are Adivasis,” *Sevartham* 30 (2005): 61.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

A very conservative estimate indicates that during the last 50 years approximately 21.3 million people have been displaced in the country due to the creation of large projects like mines, dams, industries, wild-life sanctuaries, field firing ranges, etc.<sup>58</sup> Out of this, at least 40%, approximating 8.54 million, are Adivasis, and among all the displaced people, only one-fourth have been resettled.<sup>59</sup> The rest of the people were given some cash as compensation arbitrarily determined by local administration and the companies involved. The displaced people were forgotten. Neither state (local) administration nor the companies ever demonstrated real care for the poor, displaced people. There are also minor projects such as lakes, small reservoirs, construction of roads and parks that have caused displacement for several villages which are not counted by the administration.

Independent studies have been done on the issue of displacement due to developmental projects owned by both state and private companies during the mid-1990's. These studies reveal that in Jharkhand about 1.5 million people have been displaced and about 1.5 million acres of land has been appropriated, mainly from Adivasi people.<sup>60</sup> There is a lack of available data and facts for the last 20 years, during which much more displacement of people and appropriation of land have taken place. During the years since independence where the process of industrialization for national development was worked out, no government or corporation has taken seriously the rehabilitation of the displaced.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

The table below presents the demographic situation of actual and proposed displacement and land appropriation in Jharkhand (1950-1995).<sup>61</sup>

<b>Name of Projects</b>	<b>Number of villages</b>	<b>Number of persons</b>	<b>Area (Acres)</b>
Netarhat Field Firing Range Project	245	2.35 lakhs persons	6,25,000
Koel Karo Dam	250	2.5 lakhs (90% Adivasi tribal)	66,000
Sankh Dam	208	46,694 (35,187 Adivasi Tribal)	19,000
Wild Animal Sanctuary Chandil Dam (Singhbhum District)	79 Mouja 120	6773	45,790 43,500
Icha Dam (Singbhum)	5600 families	28,000	21,000 acres land in Jharkhand, 10,500 acres in Odisha, including 10,000 acres forest land.
<b>Coal Companies</b>			
CCL (central Coalfields Limited)	32,751 families	163,755	1,20,300 Acres
ECL (Eastern Coalfields Limited)	-	-	80,000
<b>Past Projects</b>			
TISCO	7000 families	35,000	3,564 acres – Jamshepur 34,432 acres - Adityapur
HCE – Ranchi	12,990 families	64,950	9,200
Bokaro Steel Plant	12,487 families	62,435	34,224
Subernarekha Multihs-Purpose Project	68,400 families	3,42,000	85,000
Tenughat Thermal Power	76,300 families	3,81,500	97,843
<b>Total =</b>		<b>17,10,787 persons</b>	<b>24,15,698 Acres</b>

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 61-62.

The above table displays the record only up until 1995, but there have been many families and people who have been displaced from their land and habitat which have no mention in the government records. There are many proposed projects like minor mines, and there are no estimates for the number of people that will be affected in the future. Recently, on February 13, 2019, the Supreme Court of India, which is the highest court of the country, ordered the eviction of about 1.1 million tribal and other traditional forest dwellers. This was after the court recently rejected their ancient ownership claim of jungle (forest) land. These 1.1 million Adivasi people have been living in jungles or in proximity to them for centuries after they made the unsuitable terrain a beautiful habitat for themselves. Even though they have been living in Chhotanagpur for years, the government did not acknowledge their land rights. As a result, they do not have written land documents. Hence, they are now declared by the Supreme Court as encroachers on their own lands. The Adivasis in Chhotanagpur have an especially pitiful and painful situation, but non-Adivasis do not understand this, nor they have decided to understand their plight. In taking away land from an Adivasis, “you destroy him as a social being.”<sup>62</sup>

### **2.3 Mining**

Jharkhand takes pride in its rich deposit of mineral resources. If tapping and distribution of all the mineral resources available in the region was done fairly, the state would rank among the wealthiest states in the country. Unfortunately, the reality of the state is the other way around. The annual production of various minerals is over 160 million tons, accounting for an annual worth of rupees 15,000 crores (approximately \$2.5 billion

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<sup>62</sup> Stan Swamy, “Forcible Displacement and Land Alienation is Unjust: Most of the Forcibly Displaced in Jharkhand are Adivasis,” *Sevartham* 30 (2005): 64.

USD). But a very large portion of its mineral production is either exported to other states or controlled by the industrialists who are mainly outsiders.<sup>63</sup>

There are laws to protect the land of the Adivasis such as Chotanagpur Tenancy (CNT) Act of 1908, and the Santal Pargana Tenancy (SPT) Act of 1949, according to which Adivasi land cannot be sold or transferred to a non-Adivasi.<sup>64</sup> Though these measures have been there since pre-independence, the people who want to acquire land find some loopholes to make deals with Adivasis. For example, by marrying Adivasi girls, one can buy any Adivasi land in the girl's name. However, according to recent law, once a girl contracts marriage with a non-Adivasi, she forfeits her right of ownership to Adivasi land.<sup>65</sup>

The activities of the government of Jharkhand, such as making laws, enforcing them, and amending them, seem to be systematically working for planned displacement of the Adivasis from their land. They are doing it to accommodate big industrialists, mining companies, bureaucrats and statesmen, as well as to realize their dream, which might result in the extinction of the whole race of Adivasis from the region. In the systematic displacement of the Adivasis of Jharkhand, not only is the local (state) government involved, but the central government is as well.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, as discussed earlier, in the history of Chhotanagpur, there have been various Adivasis revolts against such diplomatic

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<sup>63</sup> Gladson Ddungdung, *Mission Saranda: A War for Natural Resources in India* (Ranchi: Bir Buru Ompay Media & Entertainment LLP, 2015), 50-54.

<sup>64</sup> Gladson Ddungdung, *Whose country is it anyway? Untold stories of the Indigenous Peoples of India* (Kolkata: adivaani, 2013), 21.

<sup>65</sup> Sudhir Kumar Kujur, "Are Triblas Hindus," *Sevartham* 29 (2004): 105.

<sup>66</sup> Here 'dream' signifies the motives of acquiring land, starting industries such as mines and most importantly extracting natural resources that lie in the lands of the Adivasis.



steps taken by the state and central governments, often with open violence. Some historians of the country call such safeguarding measures “Messianic Movements.”<sup>67</sup>

One can quite clearly see that the real reason for the creation of Jharkhand as a separate state in November 15, 2000 was not so much to respect and honor the long-cherished wish and struggle of the Adivasi people to govern themselves according to their culture and traditions. The real reason was to find a way to open the vast mineral resources of Chhotanagpur to national and international mining companies. The state government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with various companies without any consultation or consent of the locals, mainly Adivasi people in whose land all this natural wealth is stored. Within a year of the creation of the state in 2001, the government of Jharkhand signed 104 MoUs for various developmental projects.<sup>68</sup>

Besides those mentioned earlier, there are other legal safeguards which are meant to protect Adivasi land from being taken by non-Adivasis. Chotanagpur Tenancy Act (1908), The Santal Parganas Tenancy Act (1949), the Constitutional provisions through the Fifth Schedule and the Provisions (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (1996).<sup>69</sup> Some significant Supreme Court judgments such as The Samatha Judgment (1997) were and continue to be ignored by the local government.<sup>70</sup> They generously award vast tracts of

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<sup>67</sup> Cyril Hans, “The Adivasis of Jharkhand: Contemporary Issues and Responses,” *Sevatham* 36 (2011): 39.

<sup>68</sup> Gladson Dungdung, *Mission Saranda: A War for Natural Resources in India* (Ranchi: Bir Buru Ompay Media & Entertainment LLP, 2015), 8.

<sup>69</sup> This constitutional provision prohibits transfer of land in Scheduled Areas by way of lease to non tribals, corporation aggregate, etc., and prevents their exploitation in any form.

<sup>70</sup> Samatha Judgement is the four-year legal battle led to a historic judgment in July 1997 by a three-judge Supreme Court bench. It was a land-mark judgment in favor of rights of the Adivasis, Accessed February 20, 2019, <https://socialissuesindia.wordpress.com/2012/09/06/the-samatha-judgment-and-the-fifth-schedule-of-the-constitution/>

land to industrialists and mining companies at their asking. According to some independent research and study on the land issue in Jharkhand, for most companies, land is allotted, and some is already given.<sup>71</sup>

As the government went on signing MoUs with prospective industrialists, people's resistance movements began to emerge. Consequently, very few industrialists could set up their industries, leading to an industrial deadlock, and most of them had to go back empty-handed. Large projects such as Neterhat Field Firing Range, Koel-Karo River-Water Project and Arcelor-Mittal project, where people resolved not to give their land, are some of the success stories of the peoples' resistance. The UPA government was in such a predicament that it enacted the 'Land Acquisition Act 2013,' which was a desperate attempt to fulfill the government's promises made to industrialists and ensure that they would face no problems in setting up industries and mines.<sup>72</sup> This action of the government was perceived as arrogant and aroused intellectuals, farmers associations, working class, *dalits* and Adivasi communities to take to the street at local, regional and national levels in order to denounce the duplicity of the NDA government.<sup>73</sup> This determined protest by the masses finally brought the government to its knees and forced it to withdraw the much-

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<sup>71</sup> "Jharkhand government manipulates new law to take over fertile land for Adani group," last modified December 1, 2018, accessed March 16, 2019, <https://www.bloombergquint.com/law-and-policy/jharkhand-government-manipulates-new-law-to-take-over-fertile-land-for-adani-group>

<sup>72</sup> UPA is another political parties' union. Its full name is United Progressive Alliance, founded by Indian National Congress party after national election 2004. According to the Land Acquisition Act of 2013, a better compensation and rehabilitation was offered. Some significant features are: (1) compensation amount enhanced to four times the market rate, (2) obtaining environment clearance for the industry/mine, (3) obligatory public hearings wherein the consent of 80% for private industries and 70% for public sector industries, (4) social audit by independent expert group to assess the economic, social, cultural impact on the communities because of the industry/mine functioning in their midst. Only on the satisfactory fulfillment of the above conditions, industries/mines would be given the go-ahead signal.

<sup>73</sup> NDA is the short name for Political parties of National Democratic Alliance. It was established in India 1998 by another political party named Bhartya Janta Party (also known as BJP).

hated ordinance. Since the central government was unsuccessful with their agenda, they shifted the burden of dismantling the 2013 Land Acquisition Act to state governments. The central government (at that time the NDA government) asked the States to enact their own laws, ordinances and amendments so that corporations could easily acquire land and start their industries and mines.

Now that the Jharkhand government is a Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) government and has been faithfully carrying out the dictates of the national NDA government, they have been able to pass an ordinance that sought to tamper with the CNT and SPT acts.<sup>74</sup> This ordinance was passed by the state cabinet without being discussed in the state assembly because the government knew that getting approval would have been difficult since the opposition would oppose it vehemently. The governor of the state of Jharkhand signed it and forwarded it to the president of India for his approval, after which it could have become a law. The President of India then forwarded the ordinance to the Central Government and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, and asked for their comments. While the central government has been silent on the matter, the Scheduled Tribes Commission responded by saying it would be highly unconstitutional to pass such an ordinance. Since then, the president has not given his approval of the ordinance. This placed the NDA government and the state government in Jharkhand in the middle of an awkward situation in which their plan to take the lands of the indigenous people could not materialize.

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<sup>74</sup> BJP is one of the major political party in India which often comes up with extreme Hindu majority ideologies.

Saranda is one of the most extensively forested areas of Jharkhand. It has a total area of 860 square kilometers, and it is rich in mineral resources and bio-diversity.<sup>75</sup> From 1882 onward, a large part of the forest was cleared for mining. Since then, government and privately-owned companies have been ruthlessly exploiting various mineral resources.<sup>76</sup> Saranda forest is home to Ho and Munda Adivasis whose population totals 125,000 inhabitants.<sup>77</sup> All of the Adivasis in Saranda forest depend on an “agro-forest-based” economy.<sup>78</sup> The forest plays a vital role in so many ways for these Ho and Munda Adivasis. One vital aspect of Saranda forest is that it is still rich in bio-diversity with dense forest, and the credit goes to the Adivasis living in the forest who have preserved it for so long. The forest defines their identity, autonomy and social security. They maintain a unique relationship with the forest. A renowned intellectual and leader of the ‘Save the Forest Movement in Jharkhand,’ Dr. Sanjay Bosu Mullick describes the Adivasis as follows: “There is a symbiotic relationship between the Adivasis and the forest, which is officially recognized by the Forest Policy 1988. Without forest, the Adivasis are like a fish without water.”<sup>79</sup> However, the situation of the Adivasis in the forest is no longer idyllic. Life in the forest is terrible for the Adivasis of Saranda forest due to the presence of mining companies, police personnel and naxals. After the creation of the new state of Jharkhand,

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<sup>75</sup> Gladson Ddung, *Mission Saranda: A War for Natural Resources in India* (Ranchi: Bir Buru Ompay Media & Entertainment LLP, 2015), 37.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

exploitation of natural resources has doubled, and the forest and people living there have both been adversely affected.

Jharkhand state has a total iron ore reserve of 4036 million tons, which is about 92 percent of the national reserve. Saranda forest is estimated to contain 25 percent of the total iron ore of the country.<sup>80</sup> There are other minerals deposit available in Saranda forest, but it is the “single largest iron ore deposit in the country.”<sup>81</sup> Industrialization activities occur extensively in the state of Jharkhand. There are many national and multinational companies keeping their eyes fixed on Saranda because of its rich mineral resources. However, despite all the mineral resources available in their lands, the Adivasis are among the people who get the least benefits from these resources. According to the Fifth Schedule Area of the Indian Constitution, the owner of the mineral resources is supposed to be the one in whose land the mineral resources are stored. Unfortunately, this has never been the case in the state of Jharkhand. The mining companies owned by the government and by individuals benefit the most from the mining activities in Jharkhand. Hence, the mines and mining activities in the Adivasi land have not resulted in real benefits for the Adivasi themselves but mostly for outsiders.

## **2.4 Education**

The poor economic conditions of the Adivasis make education difficult and even impossible at times. In some cases, the poor economic condition of the family is definitely the primary reason, but there are other reasons too, such as lack of schools in the area, lack of awareness among the parents, lack of facilities, etc. These are some of the common

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 45-46.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 48.

difficulties in the way of educating children among the Adivasis. The Adivasis still consider their children as assets in terms of economic welfare because more hands to work in the fields bring more benefits to the family. So, when they have children, they do not send them to school. Instead they send them to the fields to work and help out the parents and elders of the family.

The literacy rate among the male and female Adivasis in Jharkhand is 54.1 percent and 27.2 percent, respectively.<sup>82</sup> There are quite a large number of Adivasis who do not have basic reading and writing skills. The literacy rate among the Adivasis is not consistent. There are some Adivasi groups like Oraon, Kharia, Munda, Ho and Santhal who are becoming increasingly educated. Among these communities (who are major groups of Adivasi in Chhotanagpur), Oraons have the highest literacy of 52.5 percent for men, and 40.8 percent for women.<sup>83</sup> These facts indicate a lack of education that makes them vulnerable to many kinds of exploitation.

A few years ago, the government of India started a country-wide movement called *Serva Shiksha Abhiyan* (education for all) under the ‘Right to Education Act.’ In some states the movement worked well and continues to perform well, but in others the movement was met with great failure due to many reasons, such as a lack of qualified teachers and unreasonably delay in teachers’ salary.

Under the ‘Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009, or the Right to Education Act, children of ages 6 to 14 were entitled to free and compulsory education everywhere in the country. But the ‘no fail policy’ under the Act weakened the

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<sup>82</sup> Anant Kumar, “Universal Primary Education among Tribals in Jharkhand,” 3, accessed March 26, 2019, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED500704.pdf>

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 4. (this data is according to Census of India 2001. Source: Office of the Registrar General, India).

whole education system, especially in rural areas, since parents have little education. The parents could not motivate their children and guide them in the proper way. The reason for the weakening of the education system under the ‘no fail policy’ of the Act was that the schools were not supposed to keep the student in the same class or grade (from 1 to 8) if the student performed poorly. Due to the ‘no fail policy,’ students became less hardworking and less serious in their studies. The students developed a mindset that at the end of the academic year, all would be promoted to the next class. It is important to know that the children of such policymakers study in private schools where the standard of education is very good, and on top of that, children studying in private schools go for tuition (extra coaching classes) after school.<sup>84</sup> Yet children studying in public and village schools are poor and cannot afford the extra tuition class. Hence, their learning is very poor compared to those who attend extra classes. Consequently, the children of the poor remain poorly educated, and the children of the rich enjoy good education and inevitable advancement in the future. Fortunately, people soon realized the adverse effects of the policy and demanded its amendment. Hence, once again schools can keep students from automatic promotion to the next class. For example, if a student is in grade sixth and performs unsatisfactorily, the school may keep the student in the sixth grade for the next year, which was not possible under the ‘no fail policy.’

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<sup>84</sup> The class that is held on a regular basis, either after the regular school hour, or on weekends, or on holidays by individual teachers or by group of teachers to help the students study better or perform better in the field of studies. Students focus on the subjects on which they are weak in tuition classes. Tuition or coaching class varies from primary to higher education levels. There are coaching/tuition classes available for students to prepare themselves for professional fields; coaching classes for preparation for job interview, etc. The coaching or tuition class functions as another school system in India, and fees for such tuition classes sometimes are even higher than school (regular) fees. Thus, poor families cannot afford tuition class for their children. It is not the same as “extra-curricular” or “elective” classes/activities which are known as such in the U.S.

Education in the rural Jharkhand is not doing well even today due to the various reasons mentioned above. The condition of the public schools is especially of great concern in comparison to the private and minority-group run schools.<sup>85</sup> Jharkhand is among the worst in terms of the state-wise literacy rate in India.<sup>86</sup> There seems to be a lack of seriousness and genuine political will on the part of the government with respect to educating the rural population, which is comprised of Adivasi people.

## **2.5 Healthcare**

Living a healthy life in a healthy environment is becoming increasingly rare and an issue of concern for the Adivasis today. Yet in the past, the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur lived in harmony with one another and with nature for years. They ate fresh foods from their kitchen gardens, fields and forests. They ate healthily and breathed healthy air. They worked regularly in the fields and so physically they were healthy as well. If someone fell sick for some reason, they had natural herbs to cure many kinds of sickness both for humans and animals. In short, the Adivasis were leading a peaceful and healthy life in general, but the situation of the Adivasis is quite different today, especially in the mining zones.

For centuries, poor economic condition was already a problem for the Adivasis. On top of that, health hazards created by the exploitation of natural minerals and forests added more problems to their lives. At present, health problems are acute among the Adivasis due to pollution in the air, water and land. The air pollution is increasing daily even in the

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<sup>85</sup> Minority-group run schools consist of schools run by a group of people, organization and religious minorities, such as those schools run by Christians and Muslims.

<sup>86</sup> Literacy rate in India in 2017-2018, accessed March 19, 2019, <http://www.pincodindia.net/literacy-rate.php>



remote villages of the Adivasis. Water is polluted due to mining activities. The farmland is becoming infertile because of toxic waste runoff from the mines.

Saranda forest is the biggest mining zone for iron ore in Chhotanagpur, and Kiriburu, a place in Saranda, which used to be a lovely place, “a picturesque hill station where the view of sunrise and sunset is famously beautiful,” is now losing its natural beauty, name and fame.<sup>87</sup> The extensive mining in Saranda presents severe threats to the very existence of both the forest and the Adivasis living there. After mining, the iron ore residues are channeled to the small rivers and streams in the forest, resulting in the streams and rivers being highly polluted. A team of the Saranda Action Plan Monitoring Mechanism, under the leadership of the Commissioner of Development for state, visited the villages in Saranda forest and claimed that “56 villages are in need of portable water because there is a serious problem of high iron content in the water due to mining activities.”<sup>88</sup> There is also a very high level of air pollution because of mining activities.<sup>89</sup> The forest that helped maintain environmental issues such as air pollutions, as well as untimely rain and soil erosion, is losing its trees rapidly, and that causes more danger to the health and life of the Adivasis. Life has become difficult for those who live in Saranda. In this way, the Adivasis’ “symbiotic relationship with nature is being torn apart” because

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<sup>87</sup> Gladson Dungdung, *Mission Saranda: A War for Natural Resources in India* (Ranchi: Bir Buru Ompay Media & Entertainment LLP, 2015), 24.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 173-174.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

of human greed.<sup>90</sup> As a result, the helpless Adivasis face serious health issues and poor healthcare facilities.<sup>91</sup>

### **3. Violence against the Adivasis**

This section of the thesis will present the violence done to the Adivasis by the state and the central governments of India. It will also present an account of the misuse of the government's administrative power to appropriate Adivasi lands for the corporate world. Finally, it will display the involvement of politics in the use of military forces within the mineral rich corridor of Jharkhand.

#### **3.1 Political violence**

India inherited a 'divide and rule policy' from the British. From then up until the present day, the Indian political system has followed this policy for the Indian masses. As discussed earlier, Chhotanagpur consisted of the adjoining districts of Chhattisgarh, Odisha and West Bengal, as well as the whole of the Jharkhand state. The Indian ruling class has tried for a long time to break the unity of the Adivasi people. According to some scholars, the creation of the Indian states of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and West Bengal was cleverly devised to break the unity of the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur.<sup>92</sup> They "distorted the many historical, ethnic, linguistic and cultural realities" of the Adivasi people of Chhotanagpur.<sup>93</sup> The ruling class and people, with vested interest, created division among

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> "Helpless" in terms of the lack of healthcare facilities in the villages.

<sup>92</sup> Vincent Aind, "Tribal Culture of Chotanagpur at Peril," *Sevartham* 33 (2008): 28.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

the Adivasis and the Sadans, who for centuries were living together.<sup>94</sup> The Sadans were presented as new migrants, the exploiters and *dikus*. Even at present, the same ‘divide and rule’ policy is being used to further divide the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur on the basis of religious differences between *Sarna* religion and Christianity.<sup>95</sup>

The Adivasis of Chhotanagpur, be it *Sarna* Adivasi or Christian, are confronted with a huge challenge to keep up their system of ‘traditional self-governance.’ For a long time, village administration was in the hands of *panches*, the members of *Gram Sabha*.<sup>96</sup> The *panches* helped harmonious justice prevail in the village. There were Adivasi systems of regional organization of governance known as the “*parha, munda-manki, manjhi-parganait, and doklo-sohar,*” through which inter-village disputes were settled.<sup>97</sup> But the imposition of the *Panchayati raj*, which is the constitutional administrative structure of government at the village level, disempowered the age-old Adivasi traditional system of self-governance system, *Gram Sabha*. The imposition of the *Panchayat* system was an irremediable blow to traditional village communities from which they have not recovered. Concerned about this situation, several tribal Members of Parliament (MPs) pressured the government to enact a law that would restore the pristine splendor of *Gram Sabhas*. A committee was set up in early 1990’s, and based on its recommendations, the PESA Act

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<sup>94</sup> “Sadans” are non-Adivasi people who lived with the Adivasis in the earlier times (and continue to live today) in the plateau of Chhotanagpur.

<sup>95</sup> *Sarna* religion consists of Adivasis who practice traditional religious practices – worshipping God through nature.

<sup>96</sup> *Panches* are the leaders of the people in the ‘Village Council’ called *Gram Sabha*.

<sup>97</sup> I. Savarimuthu, “Jharkhand: Current Issues and Challenges,” *Sevartham* 34 (2009): 27.

was passed by parliament in 1996.<sup>98</sup> Its main purpose was to empower the traditional village-communities by restoring authority to the *Gram Sabhas*.

It has been 19 years since the creation of Jharkhand on November 14, 2000. During these years, there have been as many as ten changes in leadership, and the state has already declared president rule three times.<sup>99</sup> Large political parties like the National Democratic Alliance and United Progressive Alliance together orchestrated ugly games of ‘divide and rule.’ The local parties and their leaders were divided among themselves, incapable of providing strong leadership in the state. This certainly had an adverse effect not only on the political scenario of Jharkhand, but also on the socio-economic life of the people who suffered a heavy setback over time. The situation of the Adivasis in some parts of Chhotanagpur has not improved much even up to the present.

### **3.2 Deployment of security forces**

According to estimates, the Naxals were active in 170 districts of nine states in the country in 2007.<sup>100</sup> These Naxals-affected areas were known as the ‘red corridor.’ Dr.

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<sup>98</sup> The Constitutional provisions through the Fifth Schedule, the **P**rovisions (**E**xtension to **S**cheduled **A**reas) Act (1996). The Act first defines how a Gram Sabha has to be composed: ‘a village shall ordinarily consist of a habitation or group of habitations or a hamlet or a group of hamlets comprising a community and managing its affairs in accordance with traditions and customs.’ It then stipulates that “every village shall have a Gram Sabha consisting of persons whose names are included in the electoral rolls for the Panchayat at the village level.”

<sup>99</sup> India has two types of governments: one, Central Government and second, State Government. The central government, governs the whole country from the center or capital of the country and the state government, governs an individual state in the country. This type of government system, the central government control and has more power to govern. Therefore, when any state in the country is unable to function well due to some reasons such as war or political instability, the central government suppresses the state government and takes charge of the state directly, and president of the country keeps all the power to control such state until it comes back to normal function or stable. This direct rule or control of any state is called ‘president rule.’ The provision for president rule in any state in the country is given in the Indian Constitution, Article 356.

<sup>100</sup> Gladson Dungdung, *Mission Saranda: A War for Natural Resources in India* (Ranchi: Bir Buru Ompay Media & Entertainment LLP, 2015), 3.

Manmohan Singh, the Prime Minister in 2006, described Naxalism as the “biggest internal security challenge” of the country.<sup>101</sup> Therefore, in order to combat and eliminate Naxalism, the Indian government deployed a half million paramilitary forces to wage war against approximately seven thousand Naxals.<sup>102</sup>

The ‘red corridor’ is also the mineral corridor. The state, through its systematically induced displacement of people, wants to appropriate the mineral rich land from the indigenous Adivasi and give it over to mining corporations. If they succeed in their plan, the Adivasi people will be driven out of their ancestral land and will be forced to settle down in the slums and live at the subsistence levels allowed by casual and contract labor. They will lose their Adivasi identity, culture and language, as well as their communitarian character. The extermination of the indigenous Adivasi will be complete.

### **3.3 People’s Resistance Movements Against Displacement**

The Adivasis soon realized that the central and state governments were not for the people’s welfare, and that they were planning to sell off the peoples’ land and other natural resources to corporate houses.<sup>103</sup> In response, they decided to act. Wherever projects together with land requirements were announced, people mobilized and organized themselves to give a definite ‘no’ to the government and companies. People’s Resistance Movements Against Displacement sprang up in different parts of Jharkhand. Even as people stood together in the form of micro-resistance movements, the industrialists, local

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<sup>101</sup> “Naxalism biggest threat to internal security: Manmohan,” The Hindu, New Delhi, May 24, 2010, accessed March 27, 2019, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/Naxalism-biggest-threat-to-internal-security-Manmohan/article16302952.ece>

<sup>102</sup> Gladson Dungdung, *Mission Saranda: A War for Natural Resources in India* (Ranchi: Bir Buru Ompay Media & Entertainment LLP, 2015), 4.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 5.

administration, police, lower judiciary, the majority of print and electronic media, and the urban middle class joined forces. They began to sing the song of ‘development’ and accused the people’s resistance movements of being anti-development. The police started to harass the leaders of people’s movements for ‘obstructing government work’ and for having extremist leanings. This situation brought together activists, some socially concerned intellectuals, a few members of the media and some journalists to fight against the displacement of the people. It was made very clear that these anti-displacement movements would not enter into any dialogue with the government or the company to discuss rehabilitation facilities for any projects.

### **3.4 Killings of innocent Adivasis in the name of Naxalites**

By 2009, it became clear that the companies were not making any inroads in Jharkhand in terms of acquiring land and setting up their industries, even as they were all prepared with their large investments and latest technology. The only thing they needed was land to achieve their goals. The corporate houses then started to exert pressure on the central and state governments to take some drastic steps by which this deadlock could be put to an end.

The government launched a massive series of anti-naxal operations, and they named it ‘Operation Green Hunt.’<sup>104</sup> Operation Green Hunt intended to hunt down the Adivasis in the name of fighting against the naxals, and to clear their green fields and forests in order to give it to mining companies.<sup>105</sup> A new philosophy was created to the

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>105</sup> Richard Toppo, “Jharkhand: The failed promise of an adivasi state,” July 2012, accessed March 20, 2019, <http://base.d-p-h.info/en/fiches/dph/fiche-dph-9102.html>

effect that development is not taking place in the tribal belt of central India because of the ‘menace of naxalism.’ They said that if the Naxals/Maoists can be eliminated, the government will undertake systematic development programs, and the tribal population will catch up in the developmental process. Hence, hundreds of police and CRPF personnel were sent into the villages within the so-called ‘red zones.’<sup>106</sup> They did not have the courage to go deep into the jungles and confront the Naxals. Instead they vented their frustration on the helpless, innocent village folk. They harassed them, beat them up, ransacked their houses, humiliated the elderly, dishonored the women and arrested or shot any young person.<sup>107</sup> They were not accountable to any civil authority. The peaceful life of village communities was shattered.

‘Operation Anaconda’ was a change of strategy in the state’s war against the Adivasi people in the mineral corridor of the country. It was unleashed in August of 2011.<sup>108</sup> ‘Saranda’ forest was chosen as a fore-warning of things to come because it was under the influence of CPI (Maoists) at that time. So now the idea was not to hunt everywhere possible, but to focus on a small area and clear the Adivasis from their place. This operation took place under the veil of eliminating Naxals, but the main purpose was to clear the area for big business and corporate families.

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<sup>106</sup> Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). The mission of the Central Reserve Police Force is to enable the government to maintain rule of law, public order and internal Security effectively and efficiently, as well as to preserve national integrity and promote social harmony and development by the upholding supremacy of the constitution. Unfortunately, the CRPF has been used in suppressing poor Adivasi people in Chhotanagpur several times.

<sup>107</sup> Gladson Dungdung, *Mission Saranda: A War for Natural Resources in India* (Ranchi: Bir Buru Ompay Media & Entertainment LLP, 2015), 98-99.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

Thousands of police and para-military forces were brought in from the different parts of the country to fight against the naxals. Even the names of these battalions—‘Greyhounds,’ ‘Cobras,’ ‘Scorpions’—were supposed to evoke a sense of fright among people. They were mostly outsiders who did not know the culture or language of the Adivasi people, and they did not have any sympathy towards the simple village people. During Operation Anaconda, three villagers were killed, some villagers were beaten and tortured by the CRPF personnel, and hence three were sent to their death bed. Several houses were destroyed, granaries burnt and school buildings in the villages were occupied. They swept through village after village, destroying the straw roofs, driving the people out of their homes, burning their clothes and valuables, stealing their money and killing their cattle.<sup>109</sup>

This cruelty by the state was brought to light and condemned by human rights activists, artists, leftist political parties, press and electronic media. An appeal was made to the National Human Rights Commission, which responded and undertook an investigation, although it has not issued its final report. The central and state governments have gone into face-saving exercise. They ended the infamous Operation Anaconda, offered some monetary relief to the victims and they are now speaking of developing Saranda villages with top bureaucrats in command. Even many years after Operation Anaconda and the government’s plan to develop the villages in Saranda, nothing has actually been done. Instead, the presence of CRPF is still there in the forest of Saranda, and the arresting of simple villagers in the name of Naxals continues.

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.



#### **4. Care for Land and Nature**

For Adivasis, care for land and nature is actually ‘care for Adivasis themselves’ because nature provides shelter for them and sustains their life. Nature and humankind are two mutually necessary parts of the complex system of life on earth. Human beings are a part of this system, and they work in harmony with nature, using its resources for their normal sustenance. Within this relationship, damage to the system remains minimal, and the system manages to repair the damage on its own. While it is true that development is essential for raising the living standards and making available a quality of life for everyone, India is facing a serious problem of environmental pollution, and Chhotanagpur isn’t untouched by the problem. So far human beings have been indiscriminately manipulating nature to fulfil their narrow, selfish interests without realizing that in this process their own activities are proving harmful to themselves.

Human beings keep violating nature’s laws to meet their needs. They should be governed by nature’s rules, but humans try to govern nature with their own rules. Fortunately, even today, some of the Adivasi groups with much less contact with the rest of the world seem to face less of a crisis of sustainability. These crises are brought on by a pattern of not adhering to the laws of nature.

The world has changed socially and technologically. Humans increasingly discover methods of resistance and keep exploiting nature for themselves. They are consuming nature’s resources at an extremely growing rate. Modern civilization looks at nature from its utilitarian perspective and treats it accordingly. As justification for destroying nature, humans provide the excuse of eradicating poverty and raising the standard of living. This social and economic order creates a crisis of sustainability due to the highly “wasteful”

lifestyle of a few, and this results in depriving necessities of life to a very large part of the human family.<sup>110</sup>

In recent years, people have become aware of the evil effects of modern patterns of development. Therefore, whenever and wherever any big projects for development are announced, people protest and demand safety and sustainability first. The issue involved for Chhotanagpur is the development of big industries and cities at the cost of the poor Adivasis who live symbiotically with the forests and hills. Since they live in remote areas, their voice is either not heard or suppressed by those people who exert influence over the government policies.<sup>111</sup> Civilization's materialistic development is causing a serious threat to the world and its sustenance. To achieve their selfish goal humans are ruthlessly destroying God-given nature.

The rural population is bigger than the urban population in Jharkhand. As the people advance towards urbanization and globalization, the urban centers there are increasingly becoming dangerous to the environment. Therefore, to understand the environmental impact of urbanization and globalization, one needs to understand the relationship between nature (land) and humans. When humans consider land as an integral part of nature and not merely an economic commodity, their interaction with the land will change and lead to harmony and peace between the two. When land and forests are properly managed, the ecological system tends towards equilibrium. Whenever land is mismanaged and exploited, there is environmental degradation that extends to the whole world.

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<sup>110</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (Our Sunday Visitor, Inc. Huntington, IN, 2015), 75.

<sup>111</sup> Emmanuel Barla, "Environmentalism and Development," *Sevartham* 33 (2008): 107.

In this chapter, it has been shown that the Adivasis are a communitarian people. They have a relationship of mutual care with nature and land. Land and nature are an important part of their life and also an integral part of their identity as Adivasis. On one hand, land for the Adivasis is a gift from God, but on the other hand, it is also a source of problems, especially in the present time. This chapter also presented the different ways in which the Adivasi people have been socially, economically, and politically marginalized at the hands of the government and mainstream society. A principal reason for their exploitation is their simplicity of life in conjunction with the misuse of administrative and political power to acquire Adivasi lands for different developmental projects. Finally, this chapter also demonstrated that care for land and nature is care for Adivasis themselves.

## Chapter Two

### *Adivasis from a Catholic's Perspective*

#### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to show how the Adivasi embody the integral ecological perspective of *Laudato Si'*. It will also present Pope Francis' understanding and interpretation of creation in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*. It will then demonstrate how the Adivasis' cultures align with the Christian theology of creation. Further, the chapter will make the point that the Adivasi community has something to offer to the rest of humanity in terms of community-living and caring for the natural world. For them nature is an important part of their lives. They consider it as an end in itself not a means to an end.

Though the life of the Adivasis and their culture has already been sufficiently explained, reiterating some of the characters of the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur is needed at this point. The *Adivasi* of Chhotanagpur live in harmony with the natural world. Nature is an important part of their refuge. Nature still forms a significant portion of their daily need and sustenance. They have a symbiotic relationship with nature. The *Adivasis* of Chhotanagpur live in close proximity to forests, which they take care of. They use the natural resources as per their needs and the rest are left for others. They strongly trust in nature's (God's) providence.<sup>112</sup> As a result, they do not typically store things for future use. In very concrete ways, the Adivasis live the ideals and values that Pope Francis articulates in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*.<sup>113</sup> In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis calls all the people of the

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<sup>112</sup> Adivasis strongly believe that nature God's creation and thus, God provides for their needs through nature.

<sup>113</sup> *Laudato Si* is the second encyclical of Pope Francis, titled, "On care for our common home." He critiques consumerism and irresponsible development. He laments on environmental degradation, global

world, whether Catholic or not, to take care of “Mother Earth,” (*LS* 7 and 92), the “common home.”<sup>114</sup> He sees the natural world and humanity as intrinsically connected to one another.

In India, *Adivasi* is a commonly agreed upon term that denotes a group of people who live together, work together, celebrate together and even suffer together. They are also known as ‘tribal people.’ Even further, they are also known as ‘indigenous people’ at the international level and are protected by laws. The International Labor Organization (ILO), defines tribal as “people whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community and whose status is regulated wholly or partly by their social customs and traditions.”<sup>115</sup> Their culture includes traditional beliefs, arts, and practices that an individual acquires as a member of the community. However, it is important to note that “India has yet to recognize tribal people as indigenous.”<sup>116</sup> Even in the presence of constitutional provisions for weaker groups or society in the country, India is systematically depriving *Adivasi* people of their basic rights.

There are different tribes in the Chhotanagpur plateau of India, including Oraon, Munda, Kharia, Santhal, Ho and Gond. All these tribes are called *Adivasi*. In other parts of India, the *Adivasis* are called ‘tribals.’ As noted, the Indian Constitution lists the *Adivasi*

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warming, and calls for “swift and unified global action,” accessed March 20, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/19/world/europe/pope-francis-in-sweeping-encyclical-calls-for-swift-action-on-climate-change.html>

<sup>114</sup> Kuriakose Poovathumakudy, “Cry for the Earth & Cry for the Poor,” *Vidyajyoti* 79 (August 2015): 25-26.

<sup>115</sup> Mahali Livins Tirkey, *Enigma of Indian Tribal Life and Culture: Philosophical Investigation*, ed. Vincent Aind (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2009), 24.

<sup>116</sup> “India’s indigenous people still out in the cold,” *UCANews.com*, February 23, 2018, accessed December 15, 2018, <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indias-indigenous-people-still-out-in-the-cold/81607>, Phoolman Chaudhary is the vice-chairperson and Asia representative on UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 2017-2019, from Nepal.

people as ‘Scheduled Tribes.’ The people who belong to the Scheduled Tribes in the extreme Northeast of India and other parts of the country, prefer to call themselves ‘tribals,’ whereas the tribals from the Chhotanagpur prefer to call themselves *Adivasi*.<sup>117</sup>

The terms ‘Adivasi,’ ‘tribal,’ and ‘indigenous,’ are used interchangeably in India at the various spheres of life by non-Adivasis as well as Adivasis themselves. One would understand as to whom these terms are being addressed as indicated through geographical and contextual use of the terms. For instance, it is important to keep in mind that when one talks about the tribals or indigenous people of the Chhotanagpur, or the northern and eastern parts of central India, he or she is talking about the people who call themselves *Adivasis*. The Adivasis are quite different from the general understanding of the term ‘tribal’ especially in the western world where the term ‘tribal’ is understood as someone who lives in a forest, walks around half-naked, is clothed in bird feathers, lives on hunting, fishing, gathering, and eats roasted foods. This is not an accurate understanding of the Adivasi of Chhotanagpur. The next part of the thesis will discuss some key points of *Laudato Si’* which will help readers understand Pope Francis’ interpretation of the biblical creation accounts.

## **2. Pope Francis’ interpretation of creation in *Laudato Si’***

The loving relationship of humankind to Creator and His creation has weakened desperately in the modern world. For this reason, the encyclical of Pope Francis *Laudato Si’* (*LS*) could be yet another source of inspiration among so many environmental issues. The encyclical explains traditional, Catholic theology and how it is relevant today for the care for creation. The first and the most important key point in the encyclical is that Pope

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<sup>117</sup> C. Lakra, “Urbanization and Tribal Identity,” *Sevartham* 25 (2000): 32.

Francis reminds of not only Catholics but all of humanity's responsibility of taking care of "mother earth," the common home. Pope Francis defines ecology as a science that "studies the relationship between living organism and the environment in which they develop" (*LS* 138).<sup>118</sup> Even though Francis' definition of ecology follows a scientific approach, when speaking of the need for an "integral ecology," he is referring to something beyond the purview of the normal definition of ecology.<sup>119</sup> This is precisely because ecology cannot be wholly separated from sociology; in other words, ecological concerns and social concerns go together. So, if an individual identifies ecology with Pope Francis' idea of "integral ecology," it signifies the broader complexity of eco-social relationships that gives order to the world.<sup>120</sup> As Francis himself writes, "we are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental" (*LS* 139).<sup>121</sup>

Today, articulating a vision for a common good beyond market freedom becomes quite difficult because even human freedom is conceptualized in a relatively narrow way. Freedom is understood primarily in terms of autonomy, or as freedom *from* responsibility to others rather than freedom to live *for* the good of others and the world.<sup>122</sup> Pope Francis is calling for the development of an "integral ecology" and this is the second important key

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<sup>118</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (Our Sunday Visitor, Inc. Huntington, IN, 2015), 93.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 93-108.

<sup>120</sup> Kuriakose Poovathumakudy, "Cry for the Earth & Cry for the Poor," *Vidyajyoti* 79 (August 2015): 31.

<sup>121</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (Our Sunday Visitor, Inc. Huntington, IN, 2015), 94.

<sup>122</sup> Michael D Barram, "Occupying' Genesis 1-3: Missionally Located Reflections on Biblical Values and Economic Justice," *Missiology* 42, no. 4 (October 2014): 390.

point for all humanity in terms of understanding Pope Francis' interpretation of Christian theology of creation. His call is to give a right order to the eco-social networks of the world so that they may serve the common good in the best possible way.<sup>123</sup> For Pope Francis an integral ecology must manifest a preferential option for the earth and the poor at every level of human activity. The earth needs to be sustained and kept for the future, and the poor need structural help in terms of governance to meet their needs and live with dignity and human respect. Pope Francis' vision of integral ecology also encourages all to recognize the "interconnectedness" between the two options—the earth and the poor because the question for one is necessarily bound up with the question for the other.<sup>124</sup> Integral ecology requires a personal and societal openness to categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology and takes all individuals to the heart of what it is to be human (*LS 11*).<sup>125</sup>

Integral ecology also requires from humans, both individuals and groups, to embrace "creaturely limitations" and humility for one's inability to repair the damage done to the earth and nature by their selfish desires.<sup>126</sup> The acknowledgement of one's limitedness with humility will allow all people to be mindful of bringing any further damage to both humanity and the natural world. In regards to the cries of the earth and the poor, human society cannot adequately respond to these cries only by intensifying

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<sup>123</sup> Daniel P. Castillo, "Integral Ecology as a Liberationist Concept," *Theological Studies* 77, no. 2 (June 2016): 363.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 363.

<sup>125</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (Our Sunday Visitor, Inc. Huntington, IN, 2015), 12.

<sup>126</sup> Stephen Schneck, "Laudato Si': On Care of Our Common Home by Pope Francis," *Energy Law Journal* 37, no. 1 (January 2016): 81.



economic growth and control over the earth's ecosystems. Pope Francis says that it is the need of the hour for all people to read the signs of the times. He encourages all to work together to realize an integral ecology with its demand for a paradigm shift away from the politics, economics, and present cultural formations that shape the global system today. According to Pope Francis, the present global system is ordered by a "false or superficial ecology which bolsters complacency and a cheerful recklessness" (LS 59) in relation to the eco-social crises.<sup>127</sup>

The earth's resources are being plundered because of short-sighted approaches to the economy, commerce and production (LS 32).<sup>128</sup> Francis writes that the economy accepts every advance in technology with a view to profit, without concern for its potentially negative impact on human beings and the natural world (LS 109). The lessons of the global financial crisis have not been assimilated, and we are learning all too slowly the lessons of environmental deterioration (LS 109).<sup>129</sup> National and international political institutions, supposedly charged with serving the common good, have been weakened by "the interests of a deified market, which becomes the only rule" (LS 56).<sup>130</sup> In the view of Francis, the structures of contemporary globalization have failed to respond or address the complex eco-social crisis that the world is facing today. According to Francis, the global system is ordered toward intensifying the problems rather than their solutions. The

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<sup>127</sup> Daniel P. Castillo, "Integral Ecology as a Liberationist Concept," *Theological Studies* 77, no. 2 (June 2016): 372.

<sup>128</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (Our Sunday Visitor, Inc. Huntington, IN, 2015), 26.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

structures of the globalization project must be transformed. However, the structural dimension cannot be changed in any meaningful way unless the cultural and psychological dimension of the globalization project is also challenged and transformed.

Pope Francis rejects the extreme position of the world so as to respond to the present, global eco-social crisis (*LS* 60).<sup>131</sup> This position maintains that by itself technological advancement in the service of economic growth is incapable of atoning for and redressing the crises.<sup>132</sup> Pope Francis refers to this extreme position as “the technocratic paradigm,” around which the whole ideology of the present globalization project is structured. This ideology is the belief “that every increase in power means an increase of “progress” itself... as if reality, goodness and truth automatically flow from technological and economic power (*LS* 105).<sup>133</sup> From this perspective, technological advancement in the service of economic growth is viewed as an end unto itself. The created order is often viewed today not so much as an end that is good in itself, but rather as a means to other ends. Within this rational mindset reason is reduced to a form of instrument that is solely limited to generating ideas for advancement and growth as quickly as possible. As a result, questions of social and environmental justice are easily ignored because of the assumption that technology and growth ultimately provide answers to all the problems of the world.

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>132</sup> Castillo, “Integral Ecology as a Liberationist Concept.”, 359.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 366.

The culture of consumerism works to dampen any inclination toward a preferential option for the poor and the earth. It is not concerned with the neighbor or the care for creation that leads to the truly meaningful life. On the contrary, the culture of consumerism proclaims that meaningful life comes from the “things one possesses.” The consumeristic world today convinces the people that to “remain fully alive,” one must consume.<sup>134</sup>

At this juncture, one can begin to grasp the immensity of the task of conversion to which Francis calls the world. Transforming the social structures of the globalization project requires a transformation of normative systems. However, the culture appropriate to an integral ecology “cannot be reduced to a series of urgent and partial responses to the immediate problems of pollution, environmental decay and the depletion of natural resources” (LS 111).<sup>135</sup> Instead, something more comprehensive is required: “There needs to be a distinctive way of looking at things...a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm. Otherwise, even the best ecological initiatives can find themselves caught up in the same globalized logic” (LS 111). The Pope poses a question to all people: in a world which is after economic progress, how does a human person, or any human community embrace a culture that is committed to make a preferential option for the earth and the poor?

Pope Francis writes that it is not easy to promote healthy humility, or the happy sobriety needed to bear witness to integral ecology. This is especially true “when we consider ourselves autonomous, when we exclude God from our lives or replace him with

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 367.

<sup>135</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home* (Our Sunday Visitor, Inc. Huntington, IN, 2015), 76.

our own ego and think that our subjective feelings can define what is right and what is wrong” (LS 224).<sup>136</sup> In the second chapter of his encyclical, Pope Francis acknowledges that the term “dominion” (Gen 1: 28) found in the first creation story in the book of the Bible has been used sometimes to encourage “the unbridled exploitation of nature” (LS 67).<sup>137</sup> Francis strongly rejects this understanding of the term. He writes, “This is not a correct interpretation of the Bible as understood by the Church...we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God’s image and given *dominion* over the earth justifies absolute *domination* over other creatures” (LS 67). He offers a counter argument to the vision that is very often attached to the meaning of complete dominion. In order to do that Francis turns to the second story of creation in the book of Genesis. For him, the human vocation found there to “till and keep” the garden of the world more appropriately captures the character of the relationship that God desires humanity to have with the earth. Francis says, “tilling” refers to “cultivating,” and “keeping, means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving” (LS 67). For Francis, this is how human beings are supposed to act in caring for creation. So, cultivating healthy humility will ultimately lead one to responsibly care for the earth, neighbor and God.

Adivasis, believe in the providence of God, and they have been cooperating with the ongoing activities of God. God’s providence does not mean that the Adivasis sit idly and beg from God for their lives.<sup>138</sup> They work hard by farming, grazing sheep and cattle, and collecting various forest produce for themselves. They observe the laws of nature,

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 145-146.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>138</sup> Here “God’s providence” means reliance on rainwater for farming, and availability of forest produce for their life sustenance.

keeping the forests alive and green and rivers clean while allowing the wild animals to grow and multiply in the forests. Unfortunately, clean water, fresh air, free movement and free access to these basic elements of their lives are becoming less and less.

The human person is created by God to love God, love neighbor, and love non-human creation. According to Francis, love of God is expressed through both love of neighbor and through love of non-human creation (*LS 77*).<sup>139</sup> Here, there is a threefold sense in which the human person is called to communion. Moreover, these three sets of relationships are so interlinked that the distortion of one affects the other two. Therefore, communion with God is realized through love of neighbor and love of soil (earth).<sup>140</sup> In the same way, care for creation, care for the human and the nonhuman is deeply rooted in love of God. It is love of God in humans that provides the human person a firm grounding from which to cultivate a culture capable of bearing witness to an integral ecology at the cultural, psychological and socio-political levels.

*Laudato Si'*, therefore, is a call for all people to renew their relationship with mother earth, by recognizing that God is active in creation. Pope Francis writes that “the universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face” (*LS 233*).<sup>141</sup> In other words, all people are called and encouraged to find God in all things.<sup>142</sup> The two key points,

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<sup>139</sup> Castillo, “Integral Ecology as a Liberationist Concept.”, 370.

<sup>140</sup> Kristin M Swenson, “Care and Keeping East of Eden: Gen 4:1-16 in Light of Gen 2-3,” *Interpretation* 60, no. 4 (October 2006): 383.

<sup>141</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (Our Sunday Visitor, Inc. Huntington, IN, 2015), 150.

<sup>142</sup> ‘Finding God in All Things’ is the very heart of Jesuit Spirituality. Ignatius of Loyola the founder of the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits, introduced a unique spirituality nearly over 500 years ago. It is also known as

care for mother earth, the common home, and integral ecology discussed above demand a radical change in the life-patterns of humankind. Specifically, the idea of integral ecology of Pope Francis asks for openness and generosity towards nature, fellow human beings, and finally to God—the creator of all things. The idea of integral ecology is especially important at this time of consumeristic and individualistic human life to have this three-dimensional care for earth, neighbor, and non-human world.

### **3. The vision of *Laudato Si'* and Life of the Adivasis**

This section will show how the identity and vulnerability of the Adivasi aligns with the visions of *Laudato Si'*. According to Pope Francis our creation in God's image and dominion over the earth is not a justification for absolute domination over other creatures.<sup>143</sup> For him, human beings have a vocation to “till and keep” the garden of the world. One can say that God gave humans a task attached with responsibility. In Pope Francis' view this is how humans are supposed to relate with creation. Next, I will show how the life of the Adivasi embodies Pope Francis' key points explained in the preceding sections, such as care for “Mother Earth,” and the concept of “interconnectedness” of the Adivasis with humans and non-human world. Furthermore, I will show that integrating symbiotic relationship with nature of the Adivasi will be instrumental in the creation of integral ecology in the world today.

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Ignatian Spirituality. Ignatian spirituality is grounded in the conviction that God is active the world. As the great Jesuit paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin wrote: “God is not remote from us. He is at the point of my pen, my pick, my paintbrush, my needle—and my heart and my thoughts.” The spiritual path laid out by Ignatius is a way of discerning God's presence in everyday lives. And doing something about it. Accessed April 3, 2019, <http://jesuits.org/spirituality>

<sup>143</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (Our Sunday Visitor, Inc. Huntington, IN, 2015), 48.

In today's world the values most commonly practiced are competitiveness, efficiency, increasing profit margin, and self-reliance which help one gain power and dominion over others and have control of not only people but also the natural world.<sup>144</sup> On the other hand, the values practiced among the Adivasis are togetherness, cooperation, care for the other, and care for the earth and nature, on which their whole life depends.<sup>145</sup> It is a beautiful life of giving and receiving, a 'symbiotic relationship' as I established in chapter one. Among the Adivasis there is no concept of 'dominion,' in the negative sense of the term as it is most often understood, not even between the communities. In the world of the Adivasis, no one is left to themselves if they need help, whether it is material or financial. There is no seeking of benefits or favor for doing service to any member of the community. It is purely for the reciprocal love and well-being of the other or for the well-being of the community. Therefore, community life is one of Adivasis' self-identity for the world. Here, one is free to think of the African philosophical idea of *I am because we are*, meaning, I exist because of you (all).<sup>146</sup>

It is good to mention here that Chhotanagpur is one of the greenest areas of the country, and it is still covered with dense forests only because of the presence of several communities of the Adivasis. These Adivasis have helped the forest survive in the midst of the ruthless destruction of forests everywhere because of human greed. If the

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 71-72.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 84-85.

<sup>146</sup> Robert A.1 Rider, "I Am Because We Are," *Tennessee Law Review* 83, no. 3 (Spring 2016): 813.

Chhotanagpur is the home to so many varieties of trees, birds, animals and flora and fauna, it is only possible because of the presence of the Adivasis.<sup>147</sup>

Chhotanagpur is a place of natural beauty with hills and valleys. There are numerous rain-fed streams, and rivers such as “Subarnarekha, Damodar, Koel, Sankh, Kanhar and Ib,” which originate and flow through the valleys of Chhotanagpur.<sup>148</sup> It has dense forests with an abundance of flora and fauna which act as a supplement to the economy of the Adivasis. As discussed earlier, Chhotanagpur is one of the richest mineralized areas in all of India. There are as many as “41 minerals and metals” found in this small region of the country.<sup>149</sup> But in recent times, under the pretext of ‘development,’ things have changed significantly. The (original) habitat of the Adivasis has been violated. The best and fertile lands have been grabbed by the non-Adivasis.

In the present economic system in the world, especially, based on a market economy, the human mission is essentially two-fold: production and consumption. Human beings participate productively in the competitive market environment for instance, through labor, service, management or investment. All are expected to be productive and create goods or services. In other words, all have to contribute to the market economy. In this market economy, the core values practiced are competitiveness, efficiency, increasing profit margins, and self-reliance; and the goal is to dominate the market to gain dominion over resources, and finally, over others. It is not surprising that those who are less

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<sup>147</sup> Gladson Dungdung, *Mission Saranda: A War for Natural Resources in India* (Ranchi: Bir Buru Ompay Media & Entertainment LLP, 2015), 23.

<sup>148</sup> Varghese Palatty Koonathan, *The Religion of the Oraons: A Comparative Study of the Concept of God in the Sarna Religion of the Oraons and the Christian Concept of God* (Shillong, India: Don Bosco Centre for Indigenous Cultures, 1999), 103.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.



productive or whose contributions are less valued in the market are left to struggle to compete with others. The market culture encourages competitors to blame the weak, the suffering, and those who are unsuccessful, and the various forms of human miseries and environmental issues are simply ignored by such a market driven culture.

According to this view of the economy, the second part of the human task is to consume. Human beings make choices that are understood in terms of a consumer market. People's consumption choices cannot be judged right or wrong, better or worse, at least from within utilitarian, market logic. As long as someone wants to consume what is produced and has the means to acquire it in the market, there is no market-based means that can evaluate the appropriateness of a product and its consumption.

The corporate world tells people that if they simply focus individually on their needs and their wants that they will effectively contribute to the well-being of humanity as a whole.<sup>150</sup> People are taught to look out for new products every day and consume continuously. They are taught to consume in such a way that is well beyond their basic needs for human survival and beyond what is needed for a good standard of living. Those who fail to consume at ever-increasing levels appear to be contributing less to wider economic growth.

As the corporate world today manipulates people to adapt their (corporate's) strategies such as focusing on individual needs, convincing the people that the strategy will eventually bring well-being to all. Individual well-being is focused more in the non-Adivasi society, whereas it is quite the opposite in the Adivasi communities. At times, community

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<sup>150</sup> Michael D Barram, "Occupying' Genesis 1-3: Missionally Located Reflections on Biblical Values and Economic Justice," *Missiology* 42, no. 4 (October 2014): 391.

well-being is first and more important for them than the individual if there is well-being of their community involved. Sometimes, in an extreme case community well-being is given more importance over individual which is a rare thing that happens.

The Adivasis are not rich people. They very much depend on nature for food and to meet other daily needs as already discussed in this thesis. Most of the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur are farmers, and their agricultural production solely relies on rain water. Since the fields where they cultivate crops of various kinds are not even or plane, to have irrigation facilities is quite rare thing among the Adivasis. Even though they live in such a situation, they live a quite good and dignified life. Here we are not to think of a dignified life in terms of modern world where life is defined by how much money and wealth one has. According to *Laudato Si'* there are enough resources available in the world to meet the needs of all people, and the scarcity of all kinds that is seen today is human-made.<sup>151</sup> Even amid scarcity, the Adivasi people live a dignified life in terms of a shared life, a life shared with one another in times of joys and sorrows, a life that is worth living in many ways.<sup>152</sup> The Adivasis are a socially, politically, culturally and historically distinct people with distinct identities. They are united by their histories as a people of a particular society, by languages, laws, by a unique spirituality, and their economic relationships with lands and territories.

Some people today are excessively obsessed with money and wealth. They often think that they can achieve and do anything with their wealth, and see themselves as the

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<sup>151</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (Our Sunday Visitor, Inc. Huntington, IN, 2015), 124-125.

<sup>152</sup> This statement is expressed here from the live experience of the author himself and being a member of one the Adivasis communities.

masters of everything, especially of the natural world. People do need money and wealth to live a good life, but too much of anything could start having adverse effects on individuals or groups. Sometimes excessive amounts of money and wealth start overpowering the humans but, it is supposed to be the other way around. People at that point think that they can manipulate anything and everything at their will. For them everything in the world seems to have a monetary value, thus it can be bought and sold in the market. However, even in this age, the Adivasis have a sacred relationship with nature and all that it contains. The relationship between their community and nature is sacred because the Adivasis consider earth as “a mother” who yields its produce to provide for the humans and other beings of the world.<sup>153</sup> Nature has a special place in the life of the Adivasis. As it has been already discussed that the Adivasi people worship God in and through nature. They call their religion *Sarna*.<sup>154</sup>

For an Adivasi, every element in nature has some religious significance and each element in nature is sacred in itself. Therefore, the Adivasis have many Gods, but they have one Creator God or Supreme Being or Supreme Spirit. For example, for rain, they pray to the God of rain, for good crops they have another god. Though they believe in spirits and venerate them, such as belief in the spirits of their ancestors, there is a belief that their ancestors are among the living members of their family in spirit form and they look after them for their well-being.

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<sup>153</sup> In Adivasi communities land or earth is considered as ‘mother’ since time immemorial, and they call it *Dharti mata* in Hindi language.

<sup>154</sup> Gladson Dungdung, *Mission Saranda: A War for Natural Resources in India* (Ranchi: Bir Buru Ompay Media & Entertainment LLP, 2015), 41.

It is necessary at this point to describe and explain here some more aspects of religion of the Adivasis of the Chhotanagpur. This explanation of religious practices of the Adivasis will shed more light on God aspect of their live. God is *the* important part of their lives. There is almost no activity that starts without invoking grace from God. The whole cycle of life is centered around God. When the time for cultivation starts, the whole community comes together and invokes God's blessings for the works that they are going to do. Likewise, there are several different prayer ceremonies such as prayers for rain, for harvesting. There are prayers before going hunting, asking permission from the God of all animals and pledging not to bring unnecessary harm to animals, trees and plants during the hunt. There are prayer ceremonies not only for work but also for their social life. For example, there is a prayer ceremony when a baby is born in a family, a prayer ceremony for marriage, for festivals and for other social occasions like death. One might have questions as to what is special about the lives of the Adivasi because other Christians and non-Christians too pray to God on different occasions in their life. They are special because human beings need to be grateful for their lives and the Adivasis are. It is even more special when more and more people are having less and less relationship with God now-a-days. While increasingly some people are trying to put themselves on an equal pedestal alongside God or at the center of creation, replacing God, the Adivasis keep God close to their lives.

So far, only positive things about the Adivasis have been discussed, especially that which fits well according to the Christian life and Christian theology of creation. But it is common knowledge that no human community is perfect, so also, the Adivasi communities of the Chhotanagpur. There are some elements in the life of the Adivasis that do not go along the Christian way of life and values, such as, the presence of a strong belief in the

spirit-world. There are times when the Adivasis have believed more in spirits than the ultimate creator of the world. There are people who still practice witchcraft.<sup>155</sup> Since they are a community-based society, individual progress is less appreciated. One can see a lot of jealousy among them, especially, as they are getting more and more education. The effect of education is supposed to be the other way around, but it is not. Those who have received a good education pretend not to be called Adivasi or tribal.<sup>156</sup> They are increasingly less interested in traditional practices whether it is religious or cultural practices of the Adivasis.<sup>157</sup> Those who are educated and those who have come up well in life do not go back to their villages to help others come up in their lives. Individualism has already crept into their communities. Even if someone who is well educated, has seen other cultures and is experienced in life wants to help the rest of the community, there is reluctance to listen to him or her.

Similarly, it would be appropriate to mention that one ought not to think that there is no good in the market economy. There is a lot of goodness in it. For example, the market economy values human labor. It encourages creativity and rewards innovations. So, market economies are not all bad, but market economies “unchecked or unfettered.”<sup>158</sup> In short, everything is good and has goodness in it, only its use and abuse brings goodness or evil.

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<sup>155</sup> Belief in the ‘spirit-world’ is mostly practiced among non-Christian Adivasis. For example, the Adivasis who still practice traditional religion *Sarna* and some who practice Hindu religion. Practice of witchcraft is not found among Christian Adivasis, but they do believe in the presence of the spirit of their ancestors.

<sup>156</sup> The reasons people do not want to call themselves Adivasi has already been discussed earlier; and one of the reasons is the distorted account and portrayal of the Adivasi people by the non-Adivasis.

<sup>157</sup> C. Lakra, “Urbanization and Tribal Identity,” *Sevartham* 25 (2000): 35.

<sup>158</sup> Stephen Schneck, “Laudato Si’: On Care of Our Common Home by Pope Francis,” *Energy Law Journal* 37, no. 1 (January 2016): 82.

Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, recognizes, “the positive value of the market and of enterprise but which at the same time points out that these need to be oriented toward the common good.”<sup>159</sup>

In some Adivasi communities at present the younger generations are taking up responsibilities in the communities. Therefore, one can witness some changes in the lives of the Adivasis. For example, there is greater openness to the wider world outside of Adivasi life and cultures. There are more Adivasis receiving an education. There is more awareness among them, and that is quite encouraging for the progress of the Adivasi communities. Due to the spread of education, there is more mutual understanding between non-Christian Adivasis and Christian Adivasis. There has now been less tension between them in the name of religion in Chhotanagpur. But, when one looks at the Adivasi communities in terms of care for creation and care for one another, the Adivasis are far ahead of the non-Adivasis, at least in Chhotanagpur. For instance, if one looks at the lifestyle and cultures of Adivasis, one finds that their lifestyle and cultures could easily be aligned to the vision of *Laudato Si'* in several ways. First, care for the earth is an integral part of the life of the Adivasis. Second, care for the poorest, as Pope Francis talks about in the encyclical, is also part of Adivasi life, which involve care for the members of their community. Third, the practice of integral ecology is a matter of everyday practice in the life of the Adivasis.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Now, paying heed to the call of Pope Francis to care for the “common home,” one can see the Adivasi communities of Chhotanagpur are a good example for the world in the

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<sup>159</sup> Charles E. Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching, 1891-Present: A Historical, Theological, and Ethical Analysis*, Moral traditions series (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 207.

era of globalization. The corporate/capitalist greed more focusses on oneself than on the other. In other words, in the process of expanding the corporate and capitalist world: 'I, me, and myself' come first, all the rest come later. But with the Adivasis it is quite the opposite. For the Adivasis, as it has been discussed, community well-being comes first, and of course, there is also concern for each individual member of the community. More than any other community, the Adivasi communities enjoy freedom, freedom *with* responsibility and not freedom *from* responsibility. They live in freedom *for* the good of others and the world. In fact, the Adivasis have suffered a lot from the so called 'mainstream society,' but they have neither been hostile nor sought dominion over other people or the natural world. Thus, the Adivasis continue to be innocent and peace-loving people.

While some keep plundering earth's resources to quench their insatiable desires, the Adivasi people continue taking care of the land, water, forest and everything that is there in nature. One can be quite sure that the Adivasi communities of the Chhotanagpur can definitely offer quite a lot to the rest of humanity in terms of caring for the natural world. For them the natural world is not considered as a means to an end but an end in itself. In contrast to some who try to care only for themselves, or cater to the needs of individuals, the Adivasis look for solutions to problems both at the individual and community levels. For them, community plays a very crucial role in the well-being of its individual members. True joy and happiness can be experienced through living in community. In this regard Adivasi communities stand as one of the living examples for the world today.

In a world where economic progress is given importance and priority, how does a human person, or any human community, embrace a culture that is committed to making a preferential option for the earth and the poor?<sup>160</sup> One could definitely think of the life of the Adivasis as an answer to this question. The community that provides care for the individual members of their community speaks for themselves telling the world that humanity is still alive and that care for the ‘other’ and care for ‘nature’ (creation) is still possible. It would be good to mention here one of the special aspects of the Adivasi community: there are no Adivasi beggars. Beggars do not exist in the Adivasi communities. Even though Adivasi people live in poor economic conditions and lack adequate health care and other basic facilities of human life, they are strong as a community and take care of every member of their community, from the young to the old. For example, in a case when a child has lost his or her parents, or when some elderly person does not have close relatives to take care of him or her, the village community decides for that individual who or which family will care for him or her. Therefore, no one is left on the streets in the Adivasi communities.<sup>161</sup>

Undoubtedly, the lives of the Adivasi in relation to nature give an example life for all other people of the world. God gave freedom and responsibility in the garden. But, unfortunately, the first humans failed to carry out their God given responsibility. This is also seen in the garden of the world where humans keep misusing their freedom without responsibility for the ‘other.’ Here the ‘other’ includes other humans as well as non-human

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<sup>160</sup> Daniel P. Castillo, “Integral Ecology as a Liberationist Concept,” *Theological Studies* 77, no. 2 (June 2016): 368.

<sup>161</sup> The claim made regarding ‘no Adivasi beggars’ has no written evidence as far as the author’s knowledge is concerned. But it is author’s claim, even if one enquires about it, one will find that no Adivasis will disagree with the Author’s point of view.



creation. But, the Adivasis, to some extent, seem to have lived quite consistently according to God's given freedom and responsibility. They have lived their lives in harmony with humans, animals, the earth and with the whole of the natural world. The life of the Adivasis reflects a Trinitarian relationship: human, nature, and God.<sup>162</sup> As for the Adivasis, all three aspects are very important in their lives, having supreme importance and complete reliance on God.

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<sup>162</sup> Sudhir K. Kujur, "Tribal Concept of the Divine," *Sevartham* 21 (1996): 119-121.

## Chapter Three

### **1. True development**

Thus far, this thesis has presented about the Adivasi of Chhotanagpur: who they are and what is their lifestyle. It has also presented the current situations of the Adivasis in Chhotanagpur explaining how they have been marginalized socially, economically, and how they have been victims of different types of exploitation in their history either by the governments or the corporate world. Further, the thesis has shown how Adivasi life aligns with Catholic Social Thought. It has also shown how the Adivasis embody the integral ecological perspective of Pope Francis found in *Laudato Si'*. Further, the thesis has also made a point of how the non-Adivasi world can imbibe the spirit of “integral ecology,” care for earth, fellow humans and care for non-human world, practiced by the Adivasi communities of Chhotanagpur.

The purpose of this chapter is to show how the development in Chhotanagpur is not “integral development.” As presented earlier, the identity and lifestyle of the Adivasi, the type of development happening in Jharkhand/Chhotanagpur is a violation of basic human rights of the Adivasis.

### **2. Integral Development in Catholic Social Thought**

The goal of this section is to discuss “integral development” according to Catholic Social Thought. At the same time, it will supplement the ideas of Catholic Social Thought on “integral development” by bringing thoughts and views of some prominent thinkers of the world.

Economic growth should not be the sole type of development of any nation or state but only a part of it. What every nation or state needs to promote for its people is “integral

development” of the human person.<sup>163</sup> Such development can only take place by “attending to the inestimable goods of justice, peace, and the care of creation.”<sup>164</sup> Nelson Mandela once said, “A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones.”<sup>165</sup> If someone really wants to find out what kind of development the people want, the individual needs to go to the most underprivileged people and ask them what they need.

According to *Gaudium et spes*

God intended the earth and all that it contains for the use of every human beings and people. Thus, as all people follow justice and unites in charity, created goods should abound for them on a reasonable basis. Whatever the forms of ownership may be, as adapted to the legitimate institutions of people according to diverse and changeable circumstances, attention must always be paid to the universal destination for which created goods are meant. In using them, therefore, a person should regard one’s lawful possessions not merely as one’s own but also as common property in the sense that they should accrue to the benefit of not only oneself but of others. For the rest, the right to have a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and for one’s family belongs to everyone.<sup>166</sup>

One of the important emphases of *Gaudium et spes* on material goods is that the “common purpose” of all the created goods should be in the service of the needs of all people.<sup>167</sup> Today, wealth and most of the material goods are created by human creativity and initiative, either by individuals or as groups. Catholic Social Teaching teaches that

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<sup>163</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home* (Our Sunday Visitor, Inc. Huntington, IN, 2015), 13-14.

<sup>164</sup> Pope Francis, “instituting the Dicastery for promoting Integral Human Development,” accessed April 12, 2019, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu\\_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio\\_20160817\\_humanam-progressionem.pdf](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio_20160817_humanam-progressionem.pdf)

<sup>165</sup> “Nelson Mandela International Day,” accessed April 12, 2019, [https://www.un.org/en/events/mandeladay/mandela\\_rules.shtml](https://www.un.org/en/events/mandeladay/mandela_rules.shtml)

<sup>166</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et spes: Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World*, no. 69. Accessed April 12, 2019, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html)

<sup>167</sup> Charles E. Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching, 1891-Present: A Historical, Theological, and Ethical Analysis*, Moral traditions series (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 180.

human beings are sacred and social. Accordingly, the wealth and material goods created by them have a social dimension and they (wealth and material goods) bear a relationship to God, neighbor, and the earth itself.<sup>168</sup> As a result, the wealth and material goods would bring greater benefit if they are used according to their social purposes, and hence, all should be encouraged to use all the available goods and services at one's disposal judiciously.

The international economy has the task of achieving “an integral and coherent development” for all humankind of the world, that is, for every person and for the whole person.<sup>169</sup> The rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer is an unhealthy sign for the economic system of any country. If this is the case, a country should adjust its economic system of wealth inequality and encourage its citizens to voluntarily make up for this weakness of the system. so that the rich do not grow richer while poor grow poorer. For a country or state having human dignity as the prime goal of their economic system, economic prosperity for one group should surely improve the economic conditions of others. Business is one of the important aspects of any economic development. Pope Francis calls business a “noble vocation.”<sup>170</sup> While naming it as a “noble vocation,” he places immense responsibility upon business and business people. He expects and encourages all business people to direct all their works in producing wealth to improving

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid, 182.

<sup>169</sup> Martin Schlag, ed., *Handbook of Catholic Social Teaching: A Guide for Christians in the World Today* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 82.

<sup>170</sup> Francis, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home*, no. 129, accessed April 14, 2019, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)

the world for better. For him, business can be a fruitful source of prosperity for the areas in which it operates, especially if it sees the creation of jobs as an essential part of its service to the common good.<sup>171</sup> From the Catholic Social Thought's point of view, having all one's energy directed in service to the common good is a matter of justly using the gifts one has received, including material gifts.

Pope Paul VI, in his encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, argued against a narrow economic focus in favor of integral human development.<sup>172</sup> Moreover, some research has shown that economic growth does not naturally lead to greater human development within a nation or community.<sup>173</sup> Economic growth, as one knows, is only one necessary part of human development. According to Amartya Sen therefore, development is “a process of expanding the real freedoms people enjoy.”<sup>174</sup> For Sen “freedom is both the principal means and end of development.”<sup>175</sup> He not only includes the basic social and economic rights, for example, access to healthcare or education, he also presents the basic social conditions required for his understanding of integral human development. To achieve freedom that people can enjoy, Sen proposes expanding it to another realm, and calling them “instrumental freedoms”: they are *political freedoms, economic facilities, social*

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<sup>171</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (Our Sunday Visitor, Inc. Huntington, IN, 2015), 86.

<sup>172</sup> Development was simply equated with the growth rate of the gross national product (GNP) therefore it was called economy with 'narrow focused.'

<sup>173</sup> Meghan J. Clark, *The Vision of Catholic Social Thought: The Virtue of Solidarity and the Praxis of Human Rights* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2014), 75.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

*opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security.*<sup>176</sup> These instrumental freedoms are necessary for basic participation for development of any social groups or people. For Sen as well as Catholic Social Teaching, impeding any one of these instrumental freedoms leads to widespread unfreedom.

In evaluating development and the freedoms of the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur, one must take into account both opportunities and human rights. According to Thomistic theological anthropology, “all human beings have dignity, and therefore rights.”<sup>177</sup> Hence, Catholic Social Teaching strongly encourages that if one is to believe that all human persons have equal human dignity and thus are endowed with equal human rights, one must evaluate society with respect to the equality of opportunity for those on the margins. As the focus group or community of this paper is—the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur, who can be identified exactly as the people of the margins in the words of Catholic Social Teaching, Adivasis need proper care and support for their complete development without violating their distinct cultures and identity. Hence, determining what approach of development would be better or more conducive for the all-round growth of the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur is crucial at this point of the discussion.

Church teachings remind Her faithful, time and again, that “concern for the poor, the marginalized, and those who are excluded is central to the Christian faith.”<sup>178</sup> “We are to be mindful of the poor,” Paul writes to Galatians 2:10. Even today, this works as a

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> David Hollenbach and Kevin Ahern, eds., *Public Theology and the Global Common Good: The Contribution of David Hollenbach, SJ* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2016), 39.

<sup>178</sup> David Hollenbach and Kevin Ahern, eds., *Public Theology and the Global Common Good: The Contribution of David Hollenbach, SJ* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2016), 5.

criterion of action for Christian communities. In addition, *Evangelii Gaudium* teaches Catholics that, “We may not always be able to reflect adequately the beauty of the Gospel, but there is one sign which we should never lack: the option for those who are least, those whom society discards.”<sup>179</sup> Christians base their idea of “option for the poor” in the very life and examples of Christ Himself, who became poor and was always close to the poor and the outcast.<sup>180</sup> This idea, and many such teachings of the church, greatly inspires Christians all over the world to continue to care for the poor and the marginalized.

In Jharkhand too, since the arrival of Christianity, the Adivasis and other marginalized people have been the focal point of Christian mission. Today, Christianity’s contributions to the uplifting of the Adivasis and to the whole of Jharkhand is undeniable. Christians have been working in places among people on the margins, where other (non-Christians) hesitate to go and work. Along with Gospel preaching and evangelization, Christian missionaries are also working for the rights of the Adivasis and other or all poor people of Chhotanagpur. Adivasis would have been on the verge of extinction if the Christian missionaries and Christianity were not present in the region of Chhotanagpur.

Integral development, according to Catholic Social Thought, must be development of every person and the whole person with special concern for the poor and the marginalized. This type of development is only possible by bringing together justice, peace and care for all creation. Furthermore, to bring about integral development, one not only

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<sup>179</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium: On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World*, accessed, April 17, 2019, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html)

<sup>180</sup> David Hollenbach and Kevin Ahern, eds., *Public Theology and the Global Common Good: The Contribution of David Hollenbach, SJ* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2016), 5.

needs to have economic development but also one needs to use available goods and services according to their universal purposes.

### **3. Identity of the Adivasis**

A lot has been discussed pertaining to the identity of the Adivasis. Yet, understanding some vital aspect of their life is necessary for deeper knowledge of the Adivasis. Hence, in this part of the thesis readers will come across some unique characteristics of their life such as their traditional knowledge, their communitarian emphasis and their intimate attachment to their lands.

One needs to keep in mind while talking about development that the communities of the Adivasi have developed themselves for many ages. They do not necessarily need to adopt other people's idea of development. They are in no way static. Their cultures are evolving. The Adivasis want to be themselves and want to develop for themselves, and to do that, they do not need to adopt other cultures. In the development process, what others (non-Adivasis) can do for the Adivasis is to give them "time and space" to think and decide for themselves in order to progressively achieve all-round development.<sup>181</sup> The Adivasis want to retain their distinct identities, characteristics and their integrity. For example, having complete dependence on the providence of nature, sharing and caring for one another, community ownership of productive resources, deep faith and adherence to tradition, celebration of festivals along with the agricultural cycle, etc. all are important to the Adivasis. The adoption of "foreign" strategies for development or imposition of development projects on the Adivasi causes threats to the above-mentioned Adivasi

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<sup>181</sup> Ratnaka Bhengra, "Development not Destruction," *Sevartham* 30 (2005): 67.



cultures and their identity.<sup>182</sup> The massive exploitation of the natural resources from their land in the name of “national development” not only weakens and impoverishes the Adivasi economy but also changes their identity, culture and cultural values as Adivasis.<sup>183</sup>

Here one needs to be mindful of the fact that living in the villages does not mean people living there are devoid of human values and (traditional) wisdom of how their economic, social, cultural, political life should be lived. They understand nature and its functioning more than anybody else. They know the geographical and climatic conditions of their villages. They can foretell the ups and downs of the approaching monsoon by observing the behavior of animals and birds. They know the nature of the soil and where to grow what crop. If a check-dam is to be constructed to improve the irrigation potentiality of the village-land, they know exactly where to construct the dam and the direction it should face. The forest, which is their home, has taught them an enormous amount of knowledge about medical and health practices for most illnesses. The respect and reverence shown to elders and women and the love and care shown towards children are things to be admired and imitated. As discussed earlier, a basic sense of equality prevails, and decisions affecting the village community are taken unanimously with traditional leadership as the guide. In short, traditional village communities are treasures to be cherished.

In the so-called developed society with its modern facilities, knowledge is kept from the common people. But, this is not true with the rural society, especially with the Adivasi communities. The knowledge of how to run their life in the communities is

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<sup>182</sup> ‘Foreign’ meaning- not of their own cultures but from the non-Adivasi cultures.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

“equitably distributed and mutually shared.”<sup>184</sup> The sharing of such knowledge among the Adivasis does not take anything away from them. On the contrary, the sharing of knowledge brings enrichment to their communities. It is only the supposedly developed society which seems to be in the dark regarding the Adivasis’ knowledge. While the Adivasis traditionally nurture their life from generation to generation, the supposedly developed society is not ready to accept that they (Adivasis) possess any knowledge at all.<sup>185</sup> Thus, with regard to development an imposition of their own knowledge (the so-called developed society’s) seems to be the only way to follow the unilateral way of development. In contrast, a participatory development process attempts to respect knowledge belonging to either society equally, and thereby follow a path which is helpful for the people of each society in their own setting.<sup>186</sup>

Adivasis identify themselves through language, customs and traditions. They want to distinguish themselves socially and culturally from other people and want others to recognize them as such.<sup>187</sup> One needs to understand clearly the two aspects of Adivasi life: one—communitarian, and two—attachment with place (land). Though there are other aspects such as language and celebration of festivals, these two aspects of the Adivasis are essential to understanding their identity.

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<sup>184</sup> Ranjit Toppo, “Rural Development: A Paradigm Shift,” *Sevartham* 22 (1997): 79.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>187</sup> C. Lakra, “Urbanization and Tribal Identity,” *Sevartham* 25 (2000): 37.

First, the Adivasis are communitarian people. They build egalitarian communities.<sup>188</sup> Community living is one of the hallmarks of their life. Their community life is the one which distinguishes them from all other people and gives them an identity as a distinct people. Community life gives the Adivasis existence and survival in terms of supporting one another in both good and bad times. If they are forcibly taken away from their community for any reason, the life of the individual will be in danger in terms of survival and coping with life.<sup>189</sup> Until today, the majority of the Adivasis still find it extremely hard to live an individualized life, which is the kind of life found in cities. Their life is quite simple, that is, sharing and caring for one another. There exists a strong relationship of kinship among themselves as individuals and also as groups. As mentioned before, one can also find a firm relationship of *Ubuntu* among the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur. Rightly so, Catholic Social Thought locates the foundation of human rights in the view of the human person and community.<sup>190</sup>

Second, the Adivasis are deeply and intimately attached to their land. As they are agrarian families, land is a major source of economic survival. The whole life pattern is shaped by agricultural cycles. The majority of them are not familiar with non-agricultural occupations. They consider agriculture as their prime vocation. If they are asked or forced to take up non-agricultural jobs, they find themselves unfit, even as unskilled laborers.

In most cases of development projects by the government of Jharkhand, the above mentioned characteristics of the Adivasis are either violated or are highly interfered with.

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<sup>188</sup> Sudhir Kumar Kujur, "Are Tribals Hindus?," *Sevatham* 29 (2004): 105.

<sup>189</sup> Stan Swamy, "Forcible Displacement and Land Alienation is Unjust," *Sevatham* 30 (2005): 63.

<sup>190</sup> Meghan J. Clark, *The Vision of Catholic Social Thought: The Virtue of Solidarity and the Praxis of Human Rights* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2014), 91.

To implement any development projects, the Adivasis either have to disperse from the community or leave their land, which no Adivasi would like to have happen to them. The interference in these two aspects of their life is highly intolerable. The surprising point here is that the Indian Constitution recognizes the Adivasis as “Scheduled Tribes,” and thus, identifies them as people both with strong communitarian ways of life and with a deep attachment to their land.<sup>191</sup> But when it comes to acquiring Adivasi land in the name of “national development,” the government, the local government, proceeds without showing the least concern for the adversely affected people. So, when orchestrating any development works one must be mindful of who the impacted people are and what their lifestyle is like. In short, acknowledging the distinctiveness of the Adivasi identity will surely be critical before taking any steps towards development goals.

#### **4. Developmental Approach of the Government of Jharkhand**

In this section, the discussion will be focused on “development-induced displacement” because it captures quite accurately the type of development processes taking place in the state of Jharkhand.<sup>192</sup> Some of the key aspects of the development model of the Jharkhand government are privileging corporate interests, increasing the wealth of a few at the cost of so many Adivasis, prioritizing economic growth instead of integral development, displacing the poor, and harming the earth.

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<sup>191</sup> The Constitution of India, in the ‘Fifth Schedule’ accessed April 6, 2019, [https://www.india.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mpi/files/coi-eng-schedules\\_1-12.pdf](https://www.india.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mpi/files/coi-eng-schedules_1-12.pdf)

<sup>192</sup> Swarup Dutta, Adam Runacres, and Ishita Sinha, “Development-Induced Displacement, Indigenous Knowledge, and the RFCTLARR Act: A Critical Analysis,” *Journal of Resources, Energy and Development* 15, no. 1–2 (December 1, 2018), 27.

Often times, the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur are termed as “anti-development” people by the industrialists and local or state administration.<sup>193</sup> Also, some urban middle-class people have formed a mindset that Jharkhand is underdeveloped because the Adivasis oppose development in the state.<sup>194</sup> But today, Adivasis are raising development related questions to the industrialists and the government, in particular to the state government of Jharkhand. People need development to live a good, comfortable and dignified life. The Adivasi people of Jharkhand too share the aspiration of all for development. However, the question the Adivasis are asking is—*whose* development are the industrialists and the government of Jharkhand (and also the central government of India) talking about?<sup>195</sup>

In the urgency to achieve development after independence, the Indian government had uncritically and somewhat ironically adopted western notions of development to make up for the backwardness that two centuries of colonialism had left in the country.<sup>196</sup> It is now acutely clear that the people of India, and in particular the people of Jharkhand, need to rethink this paradigm of development as a whole, since the present strategy of development has failed to balance economic and social development. This model of development can be called a ‘technocratic’ approach and it promises equality and assures of economic development and prosperity. But in actuality, this technocratic development

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<sup>193</sup> Stan Swamy, “Where Ants Drove out Elephants- The Story of People’s Resistance to Displacement in Jharkhand,” January 6, 2012, accessed March 25, 2019, <http://sanhati.com/excerpted/4490/>

<sup>194</sup> Richard Toppo, “Jharkhand: The failed promise of an adivasi state,” July 2012, accessed March 20, 2019, <http://base.d-p-h.info/en/fiches/dph/fiche-dph-9102.html>

<sup>195</sup> B. D. Sharma, *Unbroken History of Broken Promises: Indian State and the Tribal People* (New Delhi: Freedom Press & Sahyog Pustak Kuteer, 2010), 83.

<sup>196</sup> “How Many People Will We Continue to Displace In the Name of Development,” February 2019, accessed March 6, 2019, <https://www.epw.in/engage/article/how-many-people-will-we-continue?fbclid=IwAR0zyvYO7nm3rZ6q8JxAJL8cMnHcpqREZb61StqFA1KJu92GBdU-g%E2%80%A6>

mostly tends to privilege corporate interests. As discussed previously, displacement has been one of the major consequences of this process of development, particularly the displacement of the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur or Jharkhand.<sup>197</sup>

According to Martin Schlag, “An increase of wealth is morally good if it is not only for a few, but rather improves the situation of all people.”<sup>198</sup> The development strategies adopted by the Jharkhand government are quite the opposite of the preceding statement. They increase the wealth of only a few. The Adivasis of Chhotanagpur would not be poor if the natural resources of the land were judiciously utilized for the benefit of all. If one looks at the present methods of development in Jharkhand, one finds that such development greatly supports the few wealthy people and amplifies the gap between rich and the poor. The government of Jharkhand has had huge failures in terms of governance and comprehensive development for all people. The top-down system of administration has not served the real needs of Adivasi people. In other words, the Jharkhand government and the industrialists who want a developed state apparently have little or no knowledge of the grass-roots reality of the people they are working with. The Adivasis people of Chhotanagpur as “poor of the richly rich land,” would not be the case today if there were a genuine concern for integral development of the state of Jharkhand.

Now, if one views the issue from the perspective of Catholic Social Teaching, one finds that the approach of development adopted by the government of Jharkhand does not fulfil the purpose of created wealth and material goods. The government is far from

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Martin Schlag, ed., *Handbook of Catholic Social Teaching: A Guide for Christians in the World Today* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 80.

fulfilling the “universal destination,” or the universal purpose of all created goods and services.<sup>199</sup> The abundance of wealth and natural resources of the state are mostly being used to serve the privileged few.<sup>200</sup> Thus, one should go back again to the question—*whose* development, as raised by the Adivasi people to the proponents of present development model in Jharkhand. These questions are crucial to the lives of the Adivasis and need answers because the present development model does not suit for overall growth, or integral development of the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur. The mindset of the proponents of the present development approach in Jharkhand has been one of market and profit, and not of subsistence. In the process, the integrated ecological, cultural, economic, political and human rights that were available to people were unaccounted for and neglected openly.

As mentioned before, economic growth should not be the sole type of development for any nation. Any development needs to encompass economic and social aspects for the overall development of the human person. Furthermore, “true development” should also consist of the sustenance and reproduction of the things consumed and used for the development of the human person.<sup>201</sup> True development also consists of other aspects of human life such as “faith, family, education, health.”<sup>202</sup> In the case of the Adivasis of

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<sup>199</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et spes*: Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World. Accessed April 12, 2019, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html); The ‘universal destination’ or ‘universal purpose’ of all goods and this principle is derived from the fact that ‘all persons’ not just a few are intended to participate in man’s dominion over nature. All the creation is given not just to man but to all people. So that each might exercise a creative and conserving dominion, completing and perfecting creation for God’s glory. Found at <https://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/articles.cfm?id=285>

<sup>200</sup> Ratnaka Bhengra, “Development not Destruction,” *Sevartham* 30 (2005): 73.

<sup>201</sup> Martin Schlag, ed., *Handbook of Catholic Social Teaching: A Guide for Christians in the World Today* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 80.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

Chhotanagpur nature is an integral part of their lives. Thus, care and sustenance of nature is crucial while developing any aspect of human society. Therefore, for any government and organization to have a true development for its people it needs to account for development of the whole person rather than just one aspect of their well-being.

Going back to the focal point of this thesis, Chhotanagpur and its Adivasi people, one must consider other aspects of development in order to achieve “integral development.” Having discussed already the development approach adopted by the Jharkhand government, one needs to reflect upon development in relation to its people, especially, the ones who are the most deprived and in need.

As discussed before, after the Indian independence, in Chhotanagpur development has meant mainly acquiring lands for mining, dams, canals, factories, governmental infrastructure and expansion of urbanization.<sup>203</sup> With this process of development having more focus on industrialization, a big chunk of Jharkhand’s population was disregarded or given little attention concerning their progress. What little attention the government gave to the poor people, the ideas and development strategies were imposed without genuine concern for the targeted people, mainly the Adivasis. As a result, some scholars have termed such development as “development-induced displacement” because it has displaced the people and has hardly addressed the real issues and problems. A general observation has been that most of the displaced people belong to the socio-economically marginalized groups who are pushed further to the margins upon losing their livelihood post-

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<sup>203</sup> Ratnaka Bhengra, “Development not Destruction,” *Sevatham* 30 (2005): 73.



displacement. One can see that it is the Adivasis who are at the receiving end of the so-called development practices.<sup>204</sup>

Jharkhand state was formed with the aim of having Adivasis participation in the governing system of the state. Before its formation as a new state, the Adivasis were the majority of the population in Jharkhand, and that was one of the principal reasons for the creation of the state. Now, the Adivasis' population has decreased immensely. Adivasis have not only become a minority in their homeland, but they have been pushed to the margins. The reason behind the formation of Jharkhand was to bring up the Adivasi people but the actuality is just the opposite.

On the national scene of India's development today, Adivasis and other small ethnic communities are losing even their very basic right to life. More than ever, there is a greater need now for a new approach to the problem of economic and social development of small groups of ethnically distinct people. Any approach to the problem of economic and social development has to function within the context which the modern top-down governing system has failed and has proved to be less and less humane. Against the policies which lead to ethnocide, as in the case of establishing factories, constructing dams for hydro-electric projects, and field firing range, there is an outcry for self-determination and autonomy whereby Adivasis and other people on-the-margins can decide about their own affairs. They should be able to participate in the decision-making bodies and processes where their future is discussed and decided. This requires providing them their political representation and participation, respecting their traditions and cultures, and respecting their freedom to choose what kind of development they want.

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

An Adivasi or tribal ethnic group should not be interfered with in maintaining control over its own land, resources, social organization and culture. It would be better leaving them free to negotiate with the state the kind of relationship they wish to have. What is required today is to find in such a group's own culture the resources and creative forces necessary to confront the challenges of the modern changing world. Therefore, in conceptualizing the nature and objectives of any local level projects like hydro-electric dams, mining, industry or military undertakings like the field firing range, first and foremost, it is absolutely necessary for the planners to keep in mind what are the needs, desires and cultural specificities of the local people. If there is not grass-roots participation in a project from its very inception, it is clearly anti-people. Therefore, it has to be opposed and rejected outright.

Since the present development approach in Jharkhand creates more problems such as displacement and alienation from land of the local people, there is a need for a different approach to developmental plans. As explained, the development that is happening, serves mostly the privileged and leaves out the majority of people in the state. In such a case, not the technocratic but people centered approach to development is needed. It will not only develop the economy but also other vital aspects of people's lives such as faith, family, education, and health, an all-round or integral development.

## **5. Human Rights Violations**

Considering the rights of the Adivasis, in the subsequent sections of this thesis will require further discussion of the Adivasis. This discussion will help shape ideas and thoughts of the proponents (and for anybody else who might be interested in knowing the

Adivasis of Chhotanagpur) of the so-called “national development,” before considering any projects.

It has already been discussed that India has yet to recognize tribal people (Adivasis in terms of place—Chhotanagpur) as indigenous. The Indian government goes ahead freely with self-made rules for development without paying much attention to the rules and protection provided by the United Nations for people on the margins, mainly the Adivasis. Although the government does provide some Constitutional rights and protection as “Scheduled Tribes,” the rights of the Adivasis are being violated every day under the name of “national development or national interest.”<sup>205</sup>

I have shown what integral development is, described the unethical development that is actually happening, and shown how that violates the identity of the Adivasis. Now, I will show that it also violates their basic human rights including the right to life, right to food, right to free movement and right to land.

### **5.1. Right to Life**

Right to life is not only important for humans, but for all beings including animals, trees and plants, as well for their flourishing. One can find in the encyclical of Pope Francis *Laudato Si'*, the sacredness of life in world. The “universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely” says Pope Francis. Hence, “there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face.”<sup>206</sup> Concentrating on Adivasis,

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<sup>205</sup> Richard Toppo, “Jharkhand: The failed promise of an adivasi state,” July 2012, accessed March 20, 2019, <http://base.d-p-h.info/en/fiches/dph/fiche-dph-9102.html>

<sup>206</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (Our Sunday Visitor, Inc. Huntington, IN, 2015), 150.

any obstacle in the way of their human flourishing is a violation of their freedom and rights as human beings. The ‘instrumental freedoms’ mentioned earlier are the necessary conditions for protection of human rights.<sup>207</sup> So, freedom of speech as *political freedom* is very important for any human flourishing. As it has been discussed in the first chapter of the thesis, the Adivasis are killed in the name of naxals. If they raise their voice or protest against some unjust government activities in the state, they are labeled as ‘anti-development.’ Individual access and participation in the labor market, right to utilize economic resources for the purpose of consumption, and production and exchange are supposed to be available as basic *economic facilities* for the people. Unfortunately, this is hardly the case with the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur.

Further, health and education are two important examples of instrumental freedoms for *social opportunities*.<sup>208</sup> The violation of this instrumental freedom of the Adivasis has been examined quite extensively while discussing the life of the Adivasis in Saranda forest of Jharkhand. The issue of health has also been explained sufficiently in the discussion of how the Jharkhand government, along with several private companies, has been doing great harm through mining activities in different parts of the state. The deployment of the security personnel in the mineral rich areas of Chhotanagpur, especially in Saranda forest, in the name of fighting against naxalism has caused atrocities and serious harm to the lives of the innocent people living there. *Transparency guarantees* and *protective security* are both interrelated instrumental freedoms that protect the legitimate functioning of

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<sup>207</sup> Meghan J. Clark, *The Vision of Catholic Social Thought: The Virtue of Solidarity and the Praxis of Human Rights* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2014), 78.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

interpersonal and societal relationships.<sup>209</sup> Transparency is crucial for building trust between the government and its people. Even more, it is important when considering the “integral development” of its people. In the words of *Pacem in Terris*, “if one has a right to life, then one has the duty to consider living it becomingly.”<sup>210</sup> The Adivasis of Chhotanagpur have been obstructed from living their lives “becomingly” in several different ways for centuries.<sup>211</sup> Right to life entails all other rights one should have for human flourishing, for instance, right to food, right to land (in relation to the Adivasis), right to free movement. These will be the subject of the following sections in discussing true and “integral development” of the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur.

## **5.2. Right to Food and Right to Free Movement**

Amartya Sen has rightly said, “all freedoms are interdependent and therefore all human rights are interdependent.”<sup>212</sup> The right to food and right to free movement are closely interrelated. The relation is even closer when one talks about the life of the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur. In the discussion on ‘situations of the Adivasis,’ we have seen that the Adivasis have been facing several problems due to development projects taken up by the Jharkhand government. The discussion has also shown that the nature of the problems that the Adivasis face are associated with several other problems. In other words, the problems that the Adivasis face are interconnected, and hence, one problem leads to another. One

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 77-78.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>211</sup> “Becomingly” means one is provided a conducive environment and given all the opportunity to grow in life. One is able to live his or her life to the fullest.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 74.

example is the Forest Act 1865, which was enacted for the first time during the colonial period of British in India.<sup>213</sup> The act empowered the government to declare any piece of land covered with trees or bushes as government forest. The act also authorized the government to enact laws in managing such forests. This act alienated the Adivasis and denied them free access to their forests. One knows that forest occupies a large part of the economic sustenance for the Adivasis, so, the exclusion and denial of free access to the forest leaves the Adivasis with several other problems: right to food, right to life, right to movement and right to land. In a manner of speaking, one is taking away everything from the Adivasis and handing them a begging bowl, or, one is pushing the Adivasi people into a future full of darkness and uncertainty.

If one observes carefully about the lives of the Adivasis, focusing one's attention on their right to free movement in the forests of Chhotanagpur, one will find that the lives of the Adivasis became harder and miserable after Jharkhand became a new state in November 2000. The denial of free access to the forest and free movement (in the forest) in Jharkhand became life threatening since 2011 when the government started anti-naxal movement. As discussed earlier, the Jharkhand government deployed a huge number of police and military forces in the forests of Jharkhand to eliminate naxals from the land. During that time of anti-naxal movement, people were not allowed to go to the forest, and

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<sup>213</sup> Gladson Dungdung, *Mission Saranda: A War for Natural Resources in India* (Ranchi: Bir Buru Ompay Media & Entertainment LLP, 2015), 67-83. This Forest Act began in 1865 since then there have been many times revisions and amendments in the law. Finally, in 2006 the government of India recognized Adivasi rights over forest through the 'Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006. But the Act was strongly opposed by the wildlife conservation lobby and the Ministry of Environment and Forest, who termed it 'a recipe for ensuring the destruction of India's forests and wildlife by legalizing encroachments.' According to this opposition the Adivasi became encroachers of their own land.

if someone went, and military forces found them, they were gunned down or arrested, labeling them as naxals. And, the military forces were not answerable to any authority for their inhuman acts.<sup>214</sup> So, one can easily imagine how hard and difficult life was for the Adivasis who were unable to gather forest produce for their daily sustenance.

### **5.3. Right to Land**

Most of the points related to right to land have already been covered in the earlier discussion of the rights pertaining to Adivasis. But reiterating briefly some vital aspects of the Adivasis is really crucial at this juncture, as right to land is of paramount importance to their life and identity. Adivasis believe that land is the gift of God.<sup>215</sup> For them, land belongs not only to the living but also to the dead—to their ancestors. Therefore, they not only have physical but emotional and spiritual attachment to land as well. Land is the basic economic power hub for the life of the Adivasis. Being agrarian communities, land provides one important part of their identity too. The whole cultural celebrations of the Adivasis revolves along with agricultural cycle in praising God. This act of praise and gratefulness to God is expressed through celebrations of festivals and seasonal dances. As discussed before, land is not only a source of economic sustenance for the Adivasis but a source of spiritual sustenance as well. Pope Francis makes a special mention in *Laudato Si'* about the relationship between land and the indigenous people. “Indigenous people,” says Pope Francis, “have a special relationship to their lands because the very meaning of their existence is tied to them.” He, therefore, encourages people of the world to respect

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<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 99 and 137.

<sup>215</sup> Cyril Hans, “The Adivasis of Jharkhand: Contemporary Issues and Response,” *Sevartham* 36 (2011): 39.

and assist appropriately to promote and protect this relationship.<sup>216</sup> So, one is encouraged to imagine sympathetically as to how painful an experience of being displaced and alienated from land would be.

If one looks back to the discussion thus far, one can see that the government of Jharkhand along with corporate families, and state administration such as the police have done gross violations of the human rights of the Adivasi people. One can also see a systematic denial of the rights of Adivasi in the state. Thus, one is encouraged again to go back to the very questions raised by the Adivasis concerning the development approach in the state of Jharkhand. The question raised by the Adivasis of Jharkhand is—*whose* development?

The question above is vital to the Adivasis, as it concerns their life and existence, since the development approach is truly not beneficial to them. On the contrary the Adivasis of Jharkhand have grown worse off due to many developmental works. The government in particular is answerable to the questions of the Adivasis because it extracts a large amount of mineral resources from the lands of the Adivasis. The rights of the Adivasis as human persons have been ignored and violated openly by the ones who were supposed to be the protectors. Usually, it is the government who makes human rights violators accountable. But, here the case is quite the opposite. Here the citizens of the state are trying to bring the state government and the corporate world to be accountable for the rights of the people in the state. In other words, the people of Jharkhand are asking their government to adhere to the ‘universal purpose’ or ‘universal destination’ of the goods and services available in the state.

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<sup>216</sup> Martin Schlag, ed., *Handbook of Catholic Social Teaching: A Guide for Christians in the World Today* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 120.



This study presents a detailed display of the failures of the Jharkhand government in achieving integral development. It focuses on the people of margins. It presents the government's unwillingness in protecting the rights of the Adivasis. Having mentioned of all the failures of the government and the corporate world does not mean that there is no single good individual in the government system of Jharkhand, or in the corporate world, nor that the Jharkhand government is all bad for the Adivasis. This is absolutely not the point of the thesis. The point of the thesis is to discuss the intensity of the gross violation committed against the rights of the Adivasis for centuries on the Chhotanagpur plateau. Looking at the situation of the Adivasis from the viewpoint of Catholic Social Teaching, gives the reminder that not only believers, but every human person is created in God's image, endowed with dignity, inalienable rights, and duties. The human person is both the foundation and goal of society, and thus, it is the principal task of every society and government to defend and foster human dignity in its laws and institutions.<sup>217</sup> Catholic Social Teaching also instructs believers that "the human person's life and dignity must not be sacrificed for the sake of scientific research, or economic, military, social or political goals."<sup>218</sup>

Human rights are meant to be protected from the misuse of governmental power. There are certain spheres of human life that must not be encroached by governmental authority, some of which are life, liberty, property, religious belief, etc.<sup>219</sup> Sometimes, the

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<sup>217</sup> Martin Schlag, ed., *Handbook of Catholic Social Teaching: A Guide for Christians in the World Today* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 21.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 100.

top-down governance has treated its people in the margins as less worthy of human respect and dignity.<sup>220</sup> In earlier times, there was a great reluctance to acknowledge that the Adivasis too possessed knowledge, which was a clear sign of disrespect of dignity of an individual person.

For Catholics and Christians at large, human dignity of every person comes from the fact that he or she is the living image of God Himself and called to eternal life.<sup>221</sup> It means that every human being although, they might appear to the human eye as frail and unimportant, he or she represents God. The Bible tells us that “God created man and woman as individual selves with freedom and responsibility, and at the same time as persons in relationships.”<sup>222</sup> Human dignity cannot be explained apart from the individual’s relationship to God, other human persons, and creation. If humankind is understood in this triune relationship, many of their destructive actions towards nature and humans themselves would be restrained and would be disciplined.

Finally, the focus of this chapter was to assess the ‘top-down’ model of development and its inherent alienating force which pushes the rural masses out to the periphery as mere receivers. Such a concept of development, which is clothed in the garb of vested interests, can only harm the very confidence of people by setting foreign

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<sup>220</sup> Gladson Dungdung, *Mission Saranda: A War for Natural Resources in India* (Ranchi: Bir Buru Ompay Media & Entertainment LLP, 2015), 189.

<sup>221</sup> Martin Schlag, ed., *Handbook of Catholic Social Teaching: A Guide for Christians in the World Today* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 23. In this thesis one can notice that there is less mention of the natural law and there no mention of Thomas Aquinas at all. But, the thesis does touch some aspects of natural law. For example, the discussion on “right to life,” “right to food” etc., because right to life demands for self-preservation and hence, human beings need to pursue for good and avoid evil in order to preserve oneself, other humans.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

parameters which can never be an original goal of the rural masses. Therefore, such an approach to development cannot bring an “integral development” of people, mainly the Adivasis. A paradigm reversal is needed at the present time, that makes people central, allocation of their resources both natural and human. When the people are accepted as they are with their own world-views, a multi-dimensional approach to development can flourish or new strategies to development may emerge from the people themselves. In fact, only such development can be fitting in the land of the Adivasis.

## General Conclusion

I began this thesis with a statement, ‘Adivasis are both the oppressed and the model as protectors of the earth and nature’ at the very beginning in the general introduction. I also presented that the lives of the Adivasis align well with the call of Pope Francis to all people of the world to be “protectors of God’s creation.”

In the first chapter I presented an account of the life of the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur describing them as strongly community-based people. While discussing about the life of the Adivasis I emphasized their “symbiotic relationship” to nature and all that it contains. I argued that Adivasis people could be an ideal people whose life is based on sharing and caring for one another including nature. In that chapter I also presented the current situation, the exploitation of the Adivasis through displacement, alienation from their lands, violations of their human rights by government and corporates. I claimed that among various reasons of their marginalization, be it economic or social, displacement and alienation from land are the two prominent causes. Furthermore, I also argued that though the Adivasis have faced several problems and have become victims of many types of exploitation, they have not been hostile to other people. They continue to be innocent and peace-loving people. Lastly, I discussed that for Adivasis land is not only an economic resource but spiritual as well, hence land is considered to a gift from God. But in the present time, land being a gift to them has also become a problem because of the development approach adopted by the state.

In the second chapter I argued that the Adivasi embody the integral ecological perspective of *Laudato Si’*. My argument showed Pope Francis’ understanding and interpretation of creation in his encyclical *Laudato Si’*. I, then, demonstrated how the

Adivasis' cultures align with the Christian theology of creation, that is, God created all other creatures in the world with a purpose. God created everything in the world, and human beings are to use them as far as their use of other created things help them to give glory to God the Creator. Furthermore, in this chapter I argued that the Adivasi community has something to offer to the rest of the humanity in terms of community-living and caring for the natural world. I also made a point that for Adivasi, nature is an important part of their lives. Hence, they consider it as an end in itself not the other way around.

In the third chapter I argued that the development in Chhotanagpur is not “integral development” but is “development-induced displacement.” Given the identity and lifestyle of the Adivasi, the type of development happening in Jharkhand/Chhotanagpur is a violation of the basic human rights of the Adivasis. Next, I discussed the ‘top-down’ model of development and its inherent alienating force that pushes the poor Adivasi still further to the periphery. My argument is that such an approach to development cannot bring an “integral development” of the Adivasis. Therefore, I suggest a paradigm reversal where people are central and earth resources are distributed equitably.

Now, this thesis is important for me because a major part of it comes from my lived experience as an Adivasi. I have seen my people fighting for their rights in the land of Chhotanagpur. I have witnessed my people's struggles to keep their ancestral land and secure their right to access the forest and its produce. Through my writing I wanted to let the world know about my people, the Adivasis and their unique characteristics that could teach and inspire non-Adivasis in several ways. Adivasis are people of oral traditions. They do not have their history in written form. Whatever literature available are written mostly by non-Adivasis and they sometimes tend to present distorted accounts of the Adivasi

people. Furthermore, it is important for me because in the present time of our world, where care for oneself (in relation to development) comes at the cost of others. However, in the Adivasis community care for the other comes first. Adivasis are people of *Ubuntu* where “we” comes first and “I” later. It is my claim that more than any other community, the Adivasi communities enjoy freedom, freedom *with* responsibility and not freedom *from* responsibility as I have discussed earlier.

In today’s world while some keep plundering the earth’s resources to satisfy their greed rather than their needs, Adivasis continue to live out their symbiotic relationship with nature. Therefore, I am sure that the Adivasi communities of the Chhotanagpur can definitely offer an example to the rest of humanity in terms of caring for the natural world. While some who try to care only for themselves, the Adivasis try to care for whole community. Community plays a crucial role for the Adivasis because their identity comes from their community. Without community an Adivasi is devoid of his or her identity.

Thus, Adivasis of Chhotanagpur are truly an ideal people in terms of care for nature and community living. They are also simple and innocent people. Therefore, non-Adivasis should learn from them and cooperate with them to keep up their lifestyle and cultures. The Jharkhand government and non-Adivasi as well, should not manipulate them because of their simplicity and vulnerability. On the contrary Adivasi cultures and traditions are to be kept alive, cherished, and imitated in non-Adivasi cultures as well. Finally, I claim that the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur are protectors of earth (nature) and an oppressed people. Therefore, the unjust actions from the government and corporate world in the name of “national development” should cease to exist and Adivasi’s life and their rights be protected.



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