

COMPENSATION STRAIGHTS OF BIRLA COMPANY TO THE NAGESIA TRIBES IN CHHOTANAGPUR

M.K. Joseph

Principal, St. Xevier's College, Mahuadanr, Latehar, Jharkhand-822119

Abstract:

The Nagesias own both registered and unregistered land. Registered land is that which is given in 'Patta' and registered in the name of somebody in the household. Unregistered land has no legal proof to claim it. They have been cultivating the land. Under the Chhotanagpur Tenancy Act, the tribals can claim ownership of such land if they have been cultivating it for a period of five years or more. The major observation is that most of the leased land is unregistered. The government claims, it belongs to them. The tribals have created a new slogan out of this to oppose the Birlas by saying "*Kagaz tumhara hai, zamin hamara hai*". "You have the papers (acquisition of lease), we have the land". The company asks only a portion of their land for mining. The Nagesias perceive that once part of their land is given for mining it would lead to losing full land and eventual uprooting. Their determination to prevent mining at any cost is based on the reality that developmental activities in Chhotanagpur invariably results in exploitation of tribals and alienation of their land. The Nagesias have come to this conclusion because of their knowledge about similar mining projects in the neighbouring places where people were forced to give away their land and quit the place. After survey all except one respondent said that there would be some compensation. In fact neither the government nor the Birla Company officials sat with the people to discuss about compensation for the loss of land. The Birla Company men sensing protest from the people did not talk about compensation straight away; instead they were using foul means such as forgery to get the consent of the people. They also promised that they would only mine underneath the land and the top soil would be protected.

Key- Words: Chhotanagpur, Nagesia tribe, Land, Compensation, Birla Company.

Introduction: According to Risely the present Nagesia tribe had three different names such a Nagesar, Nagesia and Kisan, a small Dravidian tribe of Chhotanagpur, which has two sub-tribes, Senduria and Telia, one of which uses sindur or vermilion, the other tel or oil in their marriage ceremony [1]. According to the tribal myths the Nagesias have been ousted from the more fertile tracts of their original habitat by the invasion and infiltration of superior people [2]. They were originally from Madhya Pradesh and when the alien forces attacked them in the 12th century; they fled from there and settled down in the thick forests of Palamau Plateau. The Nagesias are aware of the bauxite mining project and the problems the people face [3]. A very small minority directly or indirectly supports the mining. The Nagesias believe that these people were bought by the Birla company as the Nagesias as a group were opposing the mining [4]. There is no clear policy for compensation. The Nagesias know that the Birla company is offering some money as compensation [5]. The vast majority does not know how much money is offered as compensation per acre of land. There is a small but significant number of people forsee this aspect as a ploy of the company to cheat the people. This they say is to manipulate the ignorance and simplicity of the people. As a whole the people are aware of the foul means used by the company to acquire lease. The Birla company claims that its moto is development of the area and the people [6]. It is not talking about uprooting or displacement. The company is asking only part of the peoples' land for mining. The Nagesias perceive it as a ploy of the company to divert the attention from the real issue by not talking about uprooting but talking about the development of the area [7].

Methodology: In the light of the theoretical framework the study focuses on the compensation straights of Birla company to the nagesia tribes in chhotanagpur. The present study is explorative in nature due to the fact that relevant secondary data especially in the form of research is yet to be developed [8].

Sampling: The universe of the study consists of twenty-two villages of Palamau Plateau. the sample consists of sixty-three respondents from ten villages. The random method of sampling was used in the selection of the villages [9]. A lottery was introduced to select the villages. The samples are taken non-randomly. After selecting the villages the researcher received the help of village headmen in selecting the respondents.

Tools of Data Collection: An interview schedule was used to collect information from the respondents as they were mostly illiterate. Questions were asked with regard to their knowledge of the problem of bauxite mining and uprooting, the profile of the voluntary organisations' involved in supporting the resistance, political party support, etc. the questions were also concerned with the socio-economic profile of the respondents, and the nature of the resistance [10]. Most of the questions in the interview schedule were open-ended and some were of a closed nature so as to secure free expression of opinion.

Date Collection: The data was collected in the month of June 1997. The researcher received the help of the catholic mission working in that area, got a base to stay, and from there moved around the villages [11]. The researcher also received the help of the village headmen in each village without which the data collection would not have been possible. The researcher introduced himself to the villagers and a personal rapport was established before the interview [12]. In two villages the womenfolk suspected the researcher to be an agent of the Birla Company. The researcher once again explained the purpose of the research to the people.

Data Processing: After collecting the data, each schedule was checked and edited for consistency and completeness. Manual processing method was followed [13].

Data Analysis: The data was analysed using descriptive statistics including measures of central tendency and deviations. Tabular and graphical representation through bar charts, pie charts was also done [14].

Result & Discussion: According to the Deputy Commissioner of Palamau there were fixed rates of compensation for different grades of land. Thirty-five per cent of the respondents were aware of the fixed rates of compensation for different grades of land. But the majority of respondents were aware of the fixed rates of compensation for different grades of land. But the majority of respondents did not know about it. The researcher was told by the kukkud village

Nagesia tribals that they received a very low rate of compensation, that is, only rupees ten thousand for sixteen acres of land. The people of kukkud who gave their land for mining thought that the money they received as compensation was only advance money [15]. For receiving the advance money they gave their thumb imprint and later they came to know that it was the full amount for sixteen acres of land. One respondent could not give a clear answer to this question.

Table 1 : Kind of Compensation :

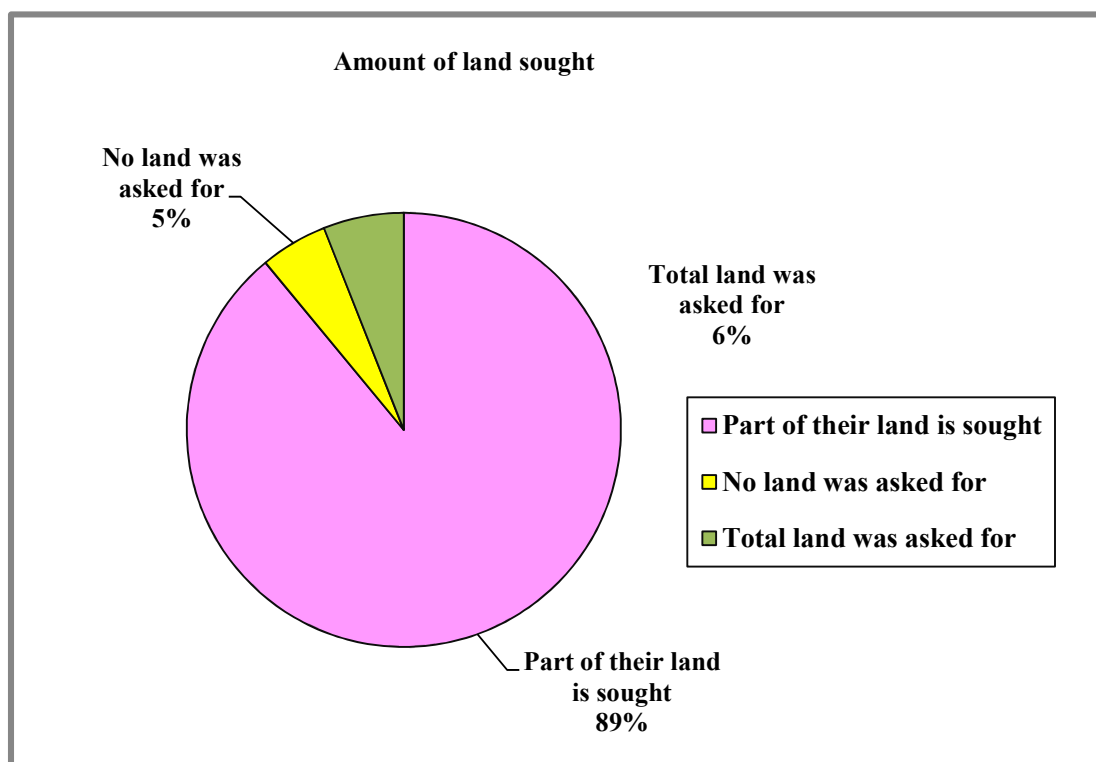
Kind of Compensation	Frequency	Percentage
Money & Employment	43	68.2
Money alone	16	25.4
Employment & land	03	04.8
No clear answer	01	01.6
Total	63	100

The vast majority of respondents (68.2%) said that what was being talked about was money and employment, compensation in the form of money and employment. For 25.4% of the respondents it was money alone and for three of them it was employment and land and one respondent could not give a clear answer. With the exception of two respondents, the rest all said that the compensating authority is Birla Company which is the correct information [16]. For one person it was the government and for another this question was not applicable.

Table 2 : Strategies of the Company:

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Foul means (fraud, forgery, false promises), Alcohol, pressure tactics, threat, etc.	59	93.7
No foul means	04	06.3
Total	63	100

All except four respondents were unanimous in their opinion that the company used foul means and cunning tactics to obtain the consent of the people for mining [17]. This showed that even those who were willing to give their land for mining felt that the company was trying to cheat the people using foul means[18].

Figure 1: Amount of land Sought

Four of the respondents said that all their land was asked for by the mining company. The vast majority (88.9%) said that only part of their land was asked for mining. Three respondents said their land was not asked for.

Limitations of the study: The researcher took more time than expected for the completion of data collection. While interviewing one person, several others from the village would be present and also answering. It took longer time for the researcher to elicit the responses in cases where initial reluctance of the respondents was foremost.

Conclusion: It is true that the nation needs development and progress and therefore it has to exploit the mineral and other wealth of the country but it should not be at the cost of the people. The present paradigm of development in tribal habitats necessarily entails uprooting of the tribal

population form their own land. The compensation of tribal land and resources by non-tribal affluents is unjust by Birla company. It is done in the name of development. In many cases it is the poor and the illiterate tribals who have been made victims of the developmental activities, and progress, and in the process have become expendable commodities as in the cases of the Narmada project, Koyalkaro project, Chandil Dam as well as various mining projects in Chhotanagpur area. Land is life for the tribals and if it is taken away from them, their life is taken according to an old saying among the tribals. The Nagesias have no other means of survival except cultivation as the researcher has found out. Hence their logic is valid: if they lose their land, they lose their life.

References:

1. Risley H.H. (1891) The tribes and castes of Bengal. Ethnographic Glossary vol. it Firma Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta.
2. Hasnain N. (1991) Tribal India Today, Harnam Publications, New Delhi.
3. Joshi B.L. (1982) Displacement and Rehabilitation: A study of Dam Affected Rural community, Primal Prakashan, Aurangabad.
4. O'Malley L.S.S. (1907) The first District Gazetteer of Palamau.
5. Ranjan Lal. R. (1992) Land Grab, Birla Style. The 1992, September Illustrated Weekly of India 19-25 PP. 7-9.
6. Alexander K.C (1991): Tribals Rehabilitation And Jahgirdar M.P. Development, Rawat Prasad R. R. Publications, Jaipur, India.
7. Dalton E.T.(1872) Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal R.D. Press, 11/B Chowringhee Terrace, Calcutta.
8. Bhowmik P.K. (1981): Some Aspects of Indian Anthropology, Institute of social Research and Applied Anthropology, Calcutta.
9. Prasad N. (1961) Land and people of Tribal Jharkhand: Jharkhand Tribal Institute government of India, Ranchi.
10. Prabhu P. (1982) Transcience and Transition in Suresh V. social Institutions, the warli. Experience, ISISD, Madras.
11. Fernades W. (1989) Development, Displacement and (ed) Rehabilitation, ISI, Delhi.

12. Fuchs S. (1963) Land Scarcity and Land Hunger Among some Aboriginal Tribes Of Western Central India, NewDelhi.
13. Russel and Hiralal (1916) Manual of Data processing methods, Vol. 4, Oxford University press London.
14. Singh K.S.(1994) People of India, The Scheduled Tribes, Vol. III, Oxford University Press, Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta.
15. Roy Chowdhary P.C. (1961) Jharkhand District Gazetteers, Palamau, Secretariat Press, Jharkhand.
16. Gupta R. (1981) The Tribal unrest and Forest Management in Jharkhand, IIM, Ahmedabad.
17. Roy Burman P.K. (1971) National Movement Among Tribals: Secular Democracy Annual Number, vol. 4, Delhi.
18. Pathy J. (1996) Contemporary Struggles of the Tribal Peoples of India. Towards People centred Development, Tata Institute of Social Science, Mumbai.