

June, 2020

Leaf Litter

Solstice Issue

NTFP  EP

INDIA

Nervilia sp., a terrestrial orchid, single-leafed, found in shady groves, rare. Flower and leaf do not appear together, easy to miss in the ground litter.

Contents

Editorial.....1

COVID19: Learning to protest: *Alan Johnson*.....3

Jamjharan Gram Sabha uses an opportunity: a hearing experience: *Pravat Mishra*.....5

Nature has not locked down: *Anita Varghese*.....7

The COVID19 lockdown and its impact on the collection and sale of NTFPs: *G. Ramachandran*.....9

Stories from Chhattisgarh: *Ramgulam Sinha & Friends*...11

A story like so many others: Land grabbing, exploitation & palm oil: *Michael Rice*.....14

ताड़ के तेल (आयल पाम) का वसितार और भूजल, समाज तथा परस्थितिकी पर असर प्रभाव: *NTFP India Network*.....20

Some tubers, rhizomes and bulb from South Rajasthan: *Dr. Satish Kumar Sharma & Shailendra Tiwari*.....24

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Editorial: Heading for Lockdown X

The early days of the Covid 19 pandemic, or 'corona' as it is commonly called in India, were greeted with fear – made worse by some extremely naive and thoughtless decisions by the government whose effects the nation continues to suffer – which later gave way to a brief spell of new-age euphoria. Euphoria, that the air was unbelievably cleaner, that city skies had more birds in them than aircraft, that dolphins came closer to land than ever before. One must add that this state of awe at these newly experienced phenomena was confined to the urban well-to-do, by that discovery that excessive human activity was not good for our environment. The realization, that the absence of human activity was conducive to environmental recovery, was celebrated on social media and then quietly forgotten. This sudden lucidity was akin to FAO's February 2019 report that says that biodiversity underpins our food systems: with an annual budget of about 2.8 billion US\$ they couldn't have missed that again!

The average person in rural and semi-rural India – farmers and workers in the unorganized sector – dealt with the precautionary rules, of social distancing (which we have followed for about 2500 years) and masks, as they deal with the "helmet rule" prescribed for motorcyclists. One puts on the helmet when one expects a policeman around the corner. Considering the kind of jobs people are engaged in, like banana-harvesting, rice-planting, stone-breaking, etc., it is quite understandable why people can maintain social distance but avoid wearing masks.

Meanwhile, the government has been busy. Not with giving any relevant information about corona, or how long we remain in this state of lockdown – we are in Lockdown.5, a phase likely to become a part of Indian time-reckoning – but with taking several unilateral decisions that, in normal times, would have at least gone through a semblance of parliamentary debate. We are in a phase of virtual clearances for forest diversions, many of the clearances sought for in protected areas and other pristine and fragile forest tracts with endemic species. Two projects have been cleared in Goa, some

pending for several years but which have been fast tracked – and the state will lose about 55,000 trees – even though they are in the Bhagvan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary and Mollem National Park. Some of the other clearances include that in the Sutlej Valley, Kinnaur, (Kashang Hydro Power) in Himachal Pradesh; the coal mining project in Dehing Patkai Elephant Reserve, Assam; the uranium survey in Amrabad Tiger Reserve (close to Nagarjunasagar, an ancient Buddhist site) in Telengana; and a proposal for drilling borewells in the Sharavathi Lion-tailed Macaque Sanctuary in Karnataka. There are many more of these. Throughout these memorable lockdown days mining for coal and other minerals have continued as usual across the country.

Activists and workers in the development sector have raised many issues against these clearances especially on the grounds that visits to project sites – to understand and evaluate the social and environmental impacts – are not possible, and clearances need to be delayed until this is done. In addition, the stipulated public hearings in the project areas have not been held; furthermore, digital applications are neither clear nor sufficient to discern the long-term costs and effects of the project. The activists have had little option but to hold virtual meetings and webinars to register their protests, and to submit their online petitions. And it has become absolutely clear that a virtual protest is just that: **virtual**. It is not the same as a flesh and blood event that has sound and sweat and smells, and is alive with emotion.

The writing on the wall is clear. We are headed for more lockdowns, at least those that keep the clearances going for a while, until protests will be forced to quit the virtual frame and become real. How many lockdowns does it take for a people to realize that they are free?

Madhu Ramnath
June, 2020

COVID-19: Learning to Protest

Alan Johnson, Professor of English, Idaho State University

On or about January 1, 2020, the world changed. First in Wuhan, then everywhere, people were forced to seclude themselves in the face of a new virus, a mote-sized something that can kill. Biologists are still debating whether it's a life-form or not.

I echo, of course, the words Virginia Woolf wrote over a century ago: "On or about December 1910, human character changed. . . . The change was not sudden and definite like that, but a change there was, nevertheless." Woolf was writing in the wake of the psychic earthquake that came to be called Modernism, which made hash of Victorian pretense that all was well in the world. Strange how history repeats itself: in 2020, too, many of the globe's middle- and upper-classes pretend the world is just, that money improves us, and that masks are for sis-sies. (Yes, it's a pretty masculine view.)



Coronavirus cartoon coughing & running image

On the evening of Friday, March 13 (really!), in the wake of rising Coronavirus cases and at exactly the midpoint of our term, the head of our university announced that all classes would henceforth be on-line. As in every institution of higher education in the country, we instructors of in-seat classes had to abruptly redesign the remainder of our lessons to fit the new reality, just as our students had to shift overnight to a new paradigm. There would be no graduation ceremony, no thesis defenses this year. Talks, conferences, and internships were cancelled. And we were told to stay home, keep a distance, cover our faces.

In the weeks that followed, many of our students expressed, in surveys and emails, how difficult it was to stay focused on their studies. Most had lost jobs, as had members of their families, so naturally found themselves worrying not about the next assignment, but about an uncertain future. To their credit, most of my students stuck to it and completed the coursework. None took the option, granted by the administration to mitigate educational upheaval, of switching to a Pass/Fail grade. Meanwhile, I read lots of how-to guides to learn to video brief "lectures" to share with my students, and to

set up virtual (non-video) discussions. I also drank a lot of tea.

Almost everyone on the planet has similar stories to tell. But I don't want to say that we all fought the good fight, that we stoically braved the storm. To say this would be to join a mainstream narrative of Hardy Human Survival that whitewashes the thousands of deaths (and their compounding griefs) and that leaves governments unaccountable. The reality, as we know, is that very few leaders rose to the challenge, and some, such as Trump and Putin, were positively disdainful of early, and multiple, health warnings. Autocrats, it turns out, are clueless in the face of real threats. A virus is not a manipulable Tweet or a fawning fan. A new virus has its own agenda, one that's disdainful, we might say, of human volition. In this case, not just volition, but male ego: two leaders who did meet the challenge are women, Merkel and Ardern.

It's no coincidence, too, that Merkel and Ardern are championing action to address climate change. Being thoughtful leaders, they can see that to be proactive in healthcare, you also have to be proactive in safeguarding the environment, just as you also have to be proactive in preventing economic disparity. The current pandemic is inseparable from a warming planet, and so is inseparable from the deforestation and pollution that contribute to the warming, and that occur in order to satisfy modern appetites. Deforestation also ensures that more viruses will jump to humans, all but guaranteeing more pandemics, more economic hardship.

I say all this not as an expert, merely as a student of human affairs. This leads me to another invocation of Woolf: On or about May 25, the world changed again (in the U.S. at least), when a man named George Floyd was murdered by police in Minneapolis. This was one death too many in a long, long history in the country of African American men killed by an entity that ostensibly enforces the law—killed, in effect, by the white state. Here, as experts remind us, three strands of American culture interweave to form a lethal whip: a belief in American exceptionalism that is borne of the power of a white supremacist state; the history of slavery and racism; and a persistent individualism.

This last cultural strand is not, in itself, harmful; individualism may even be a virtue, allowing for America's vaunted creativity. But when mixed with the idea of "exceptional nation," white machismo rears its ugly head. This produces such pearls of wisdom as: "I won't wear a mask because I live in a free country." The premise of this notion is that a person must always, always have a choice. It's a fallacious, even childish premise, of course, but a consequential one. The problem is that the people mouthing this are, ironically, selective in allocating those "choices," mostly because they're afraid to give the same choices to minorities. For African American men, there is no choice: to not wear a mask, for example, is to risk the police (and public)

targeting you even more.

The hubris of certain anglo-Americans’ sense of exceptionalism is even more on display nowadays as the ground shifts beneath their feet, as Asia rises, and as ugly habits, like policing African Americans, are finally called into question. In brief, they don’t want to relinquish the power they’ve enjoyed for so long. And so they lash out.

But today, exhausted by the reigning hypocrisy, people are protesting. Young people are schooling society, defying the status quo, telling it like it is. Which brings us back to teaching. The goal of true education nurtures a more virtuous kind of individualism, as the great writer James Baldwin said to an audience of schoolteachers in 1963 (the same year Martin Luther King, Jr., gave his “I have a dream” speech, and JFK was killed, and Kenya threw off Britain’s yoke). Baldwin pointed out that: “The paradox of education is precisely this – that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated.” The goal of education, he said, is to have each student “ask questions of the universe, and then learn to live with those questions” so as to help better society and gain authentic selfhood. “But no society,” he added, “is really anxious to have that kind of person around. What societies really . . . want is a citizenry which will simply obey the rules of society.”

From one angle, Baldwin’s words can make it seem as though nothing has changed. From another angle, though, we can see that his words are being realized in action by tens of thousands, on the streets of American cities and towns America. His warning that “tremendous reservoirs of bitterness which have never been able to find an outlet . . . may find an outlet soon” was soon validated by riots—the “language of the unheard,” Martin Luther King, Jr., called them—and also by the momentous passing of the Civil Rights Act. But though the Act led to the end of racist laws, it did not, obviously, end structural racism.



Idaho Museum of Natural History 3D-printer makes masks: photo from Director Tapanila 2020

Today, things may be different. Baldwin might have had George Floyd in mind when, in the same 1963 speech, and again speaking out of personal experience, he told educators that “a great price is demanded to liberate all those silent people so that they can breathe for the first time and tell you what

they think . . .” What’s different today, say activists and historians, is that protesters are not just African Americans, but also Asian Americans, Latin, and white. They are of all ages, religions, and regions. And nearly all of them wear masks, knowing that congregating in this way can make them susceptible to the Coronavirus. They’ve made an educated compromise between health and justice, deciding to break rules that have infected the body politic much more perniciously than any virus can do. They’re exercising the kind of choice that macho mask-mockers can’t appreciate, a choice based not on individual whim but on mutual fairness.



ISU Corona-Update photo from The Bengal 2020

It seems fitting to conclude with another prescient writer, the nineteenth-century environmentalist Henry David Thoreau, who, like Baldwin and MLK, understood that individual choice must always involve the choices of others. When he went to live alone for a year in the woods of Walden Pond, he did so, he tells us, “because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.” Far from abandoning his responsibilities as a member of society, he also spoke of “civil disobedience” (in an essay of that name which Gandhi read and appreciated), noting that people’s frivolous valuing of objects over principles meant that “Shams and delusions are esteemed for soundest truths, while reality is fabulous.” (Fake news, anyone?)

And Thoreau might well have been speaking of the pre-protest, pre-COVID-19 world of 2020 in concluding that the bulk of his people were “closing [their] eyes . . . and consenting to be deceived by shows” so as to “confirm their daily life of routine,” one “built on purely illusory foundations.” January 1, May 25—the earthshaking changes these dates have ushered in are the realities that we have to teach students, and ourselves, if we’re to have any kind of “human character” worth saving.

Jamjharan Gram Sabha uses an opportunity: a heartening experience

Pravat Mishra, programme coordinator for RCDC, Odisha

Six villages of Dhamanpur and Khaliapalli Gram Panchayats of Golamunda Block in Kalahandi district of Odisha have the distinction of having asserted their Community Forest Rights (CFR) over the kendu leaves (KL). Kendu leaf is a nationalized product, and the state does not want to share it with the communities with the CFR, as it earns a high revenue. Still, the Gram Sabhas of these six villages namely Kalipur, Kanakpur, Khasiguda, Jamgud-abahali, Kasturapadar, and Jamjharan have their CFR titles clearly mentioning the ownership rights over the NTFPs (non-timber forest produce) in general and KL in particular, after a protracted struggle. They have been enjoying the benefits over their KL rights since the 2018 crop year. The Gram Sabhas have not only asserted their rights over kendu leaves and the related operations, they also have been successful in earning higher benefits from the kendu leaves through an MoU with a private KL trader. And this year, the Gram Sabha of Jamjharan has moved beyond the rights and benefits into the realm of responsibility.

After the lock down was declared due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and people were just learning to not trust others (lest they will get infected) a group of strangers were seen resting in the NTFP ‘go-down’ at Jamjharan on 29th of March. The people of

Jamjharan inquired who the strangers were, where they had come from, and where they were headed. The new comers were about 40 in number, including children, and were from 12 families. They were Sabar tribal people, and they had been pursuing their usually occupation of collecting, processing and selling different medicinal herbs (jadi-booti). When the lock down was declared they were in the forests of Nabarangpur, the neighboring district. As all activities came to a sudden halt these people decided to walk towards their own villages located about 350-500 kms from where they were, in Angul and Sambalpur districts. So, they started walking, not on the road, but through the forests to skirt the lockdown laws, with their children and their belongings. After trekking for about 100 kms they reached Jamjharan and wanted to rest and they stopped at the NTFP go-down at the outskirts of the village.

The people of Jamjharan gave the strangers shelter in the Cooperative Facilitation Centre, a community hall in the village, and served them food for two days. With the intervention of the Regional Centre for Development Cooperation (RCDC) staff two regional TV channels picked up the story of the Sabar peoples’ long walk home. The local administration responded by providing dry rations for the rest of the period of their stay in the village.

The Gram Sabhas of Jamjharan and the neighboring villages had prepared for the kendu leaf collection by completing the “bush cutting”. The harvest season for the leaves begins by mid-April and the community began collecting the leaves from the community forests as in previous years. However, there were special guests in the village this year





and the Gram Sabha decided to allow the 40 people whom they had sheltered to collect kendu leaves as well. By mid-May, the kendu-leaf season came to an end and the lockdown restrictions of movement of migrants had been eased. These 40 special guests wanted to return to their villages as well but not before the Gram Sabha of Jamjharan paid them Rs 30,000 as wages as their share in the collection of kendu leaves. The local administration came forward and arranged a vehicle to drop the Sabar people in their respective villages. This incident has given the people of Jamjharan a new confidence and satisfaction as they have done what they did!



Nature has not locked down

Anita Varghese, Director Keystone Foundation

Another piece about the pandemic and all the pandemonium around it is not what was intended at the outset of this article. We are in these strange times faced with a lock down that nobody ever dreamed could happen, not even when scientists said the Earth is heating up and extinction rates are increasing by the day.

In the initial days of the lock down as I walked in the campus of Keystone Foundation - a haven of trees in bloom and bird sounds - I am reminded and grateful that Nature has not locked down. A carpet of purple blue from the jacaranda (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*) trees line the stone and mud paths. The red leaves of the bikki (*Elaeocarpus sp*) trees add their colour to the carpet. It is lock down for us in campus and we are not clearing the leaf and flower litter on the roads. The thudai maram (*Meliosma simplicifolia*) is flushed with buds waiting to blossom. Occasionally a flower falls on one's head or feet, making one look up and be grateful.



Be thankful that Nature has not locked down – it is far better that we human beings lock up and stay indoors. It is far better that we quarantine ourselves and cut down on our consumption, travel and lifestyles. This is far better a situation than Nature locking down.

What if this was the other way around and Nature had locked down? It would have been the end of clean air, free oxygen, life giving water, bees that pollinate our food crops, regulated climate, soil organisms that sustain plants, absorption of chem-

icals that are spewed out from our industries and the list can go on. It would have been the end of humanity.

Many words that hitherto were unheard of - 'social distancing', 'lock down' - have become so common place now that we have taken to it without any grumbling. Anyway, we have become communities that are good at hoarding, and excel in being selfish and looking after us and our families first. So this was not hard for ourselves at all. We forward messages about the poor walking on rail tracks and bicycling with ailing family members, adding a comment about how distressed we are. We have done our bit for the millions of poor landless labour force who are out on the streets. I too have little support to give, only a deep sense of guilt that once again it is affluence that has led to this tipping point, and the price is being borne by those who had the least to do with it. Along with all the distressing news our social media is flooded with images of returning birds, animals, whales, dolphins, flamingos, trees in full bloom, etc. There is such jubilation at the return of the wild – animals reclaiming their space. I wonder if the returning labourers are received with this much joy when they return home.

The pandemic has raised serious questions about our relationship with Nature. There is evidence that when human beings retreat, rivers become cleaner, and air pollution reduces considerably; it is evident that we have inflicted long term damage to Nature. A news article said "Algae growing on the ice of the Antarctic", an unheard of phenomenon, an indicator of warming climates. As ocean temperatures rise we can expect more cyclones and extreme weather events. Gone are the days when we look forward to the southwest monsoon and the cooling rains: for many who reside along the west coast of our country there is worry about possible floods and homes being washed away.

Meanwhile, the COVID -19 virus is being traced to some wildlife species which are heavily traded and come into frequent contact with human beings. This brings issues with regard to illegal wildlife trade and indiscriminate use of forest areas to the forefront. The conservation world is divided over this issue, some groups calling for a total ban on hunting and closure of wet markets, others arguing that such an action would put the nutrition and livelihoods of the poorest at stake. The latter groups also ask pertinent questions about opening up of forests for mining and plantations and warn that closure of all wildlife trade will only open up more illegal markets.

All these events have led to many voices being raised to state the problem, causing all humanity to re-examine how we have kept our pact with Nature. Our resilience is being tested, just as much as we tested Nature's. In fact, our collective intelligence is being tested. Nature just might give us a second chance and while there is much talk about a new



normal, what are the mechanisms in place for supporting dreams of a new normal.

When I see the trees flower and the bees in a frenzy feeding on the floral nectar I am reminded that life has not locked down. The bees and flowers and trees have not forgotten their relationship and continue to flourish. No bee ever kept more honey and no tree took up more water and nutrients than it needed to survive. It is far better that they continue and we lock down: if they were to lock down it would be the end of us. Nature is giving us another chance.

(this article first appeared in Facebook post of the Nilgiri Natural History Society.)

The COVID-19 lockdown and its impact on the collection and sale of NTFPs in the Nilambur forests.

G Ramachandran is additional coordinator at Keystone Foudation

The honey season in the Nilambur valley begins in mid-February each year. This is also the time for collecting a variety of Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP), like marotty (*Hydnocarpus laurifolia.*), kan-ni manga (tender wild mango), kollakkai (*Anamirta cococulaus*) etc., which are gathered by people belonging to the Cholanaicken, Kattunaicken, Paniya, Aranadan and Muthuva communities.

This year was no exception. The honey season began as usual and the collection of wild honey started in different parts of the Forest Division of Nilambur North; in some areas the harvest was delayed by about a month.

As this is the peak seasons for honey the people had already been engaged in its collection. An average of 100 kg of honey is brought to each settlement every week and the weekly flow from the honey areas in the Nilambur valley could be up to 1000 kg. Vazhikkadavu, Karulai, Pothukallu, Palakkay-am, Amarambalam are the major honey zones and the people were compelled to store the harvested honey in their settlements, which is a big challenge. Even though the government of Kerala relaxed some of the conditions on NTFP collection, the procurement did not happen. The ST Development Society and the VSS institutions did not procure any NTFPs, the stated reason being that they already have a large stock of honey. The private traders who operate secretly offered 1/4th the price (in April) of what was offered in the beginning of the season. At present the traders give between Rs. 100 to 250 per kilogram and the people are forced to sell at this price if they need the money. Ten families in Karulai Grama Panchayath have sold 100 kg of honey at Rs 100/kg, losing at least Rs 30,000/- in this transaction. Another forty families from Chaliyar Grama



The honey harvested by tribal communities is usually collected by the Vana Samrakshana Samitis (VSS) or ST Development Societies or private traders in this part of Kerala. Honey was bought for Rs 400/- in the beginning of the season by private traders; however, by mid-March, following the COVID-19 pandemic the lock down was declared and all marketing channels closed, and people were not allowed to move anywhere.

Panchayath have sold 700 kg of honey at Rs 250/kg, incurring a loss of at least Rs 1,05,000/-.The people in *Pothukkallu Grama Panchayat* area have received a better rate, at Rs 350/-kg and even then have lost Rs 50,000/- in selling 1000 kg of honey. There must definitely be many other deals that went unnoticed; the situation with regard to other forest products would have been similar.



Hydnocarpus laurifolia

A way out in troubled times

Thoduve Foundation is a community-based group in the Nilambur area composed of Forest Rights Committee members, their mandate being the development and well-being of the tribal people. The Foundation established a community-based value addition enterprise at Cherupuzha which managed to procure around 500 kg of honey from the tribal harvesters at Rs 400/kg, until the end of March. They have also bought wild tender mangoes and *Kollakkai* at a good rate. The Foundation is in its initial phase now and have appointed four field level resource persons at village clusters to enable the collection of NTFPs directly from the villages. These products will later be taken to the production unit and value-added. The Foundation also helps harvesters sell their products to private buyers in case large harvests.

Value addition activities in the community enterprise are yet to take off as the group is waiting for statutory licenses to begin production and other operations. The enterprise will commence processing and value addition work once the restrictions due to the lock down are lifted. There is hope for better times!

कामेपुर में पौधा रोपण कर मनाया गया विश्व पर्यावरण दिवस

प्रेरक संस्था, गरियाबंद, छत्तीसगढ़ –

वन अधिकार मान्यता कानून 2006 के न्यायपूर्ण व उचित क्रियान्वयन कर आदिवासी व वन-निवासी समुदाय से किये गये वादा पूर्ण करने हेतु छत्तीसगढ़ राज्य के वनांचल क्षेत्र में वर्चुअल ध्यानाकर्षण कर वादा निभाओं का मांग पूरजोर से रखा गया। कोरोना संक्रमण काल में सोशल डिस्टनेसिंग का पालन करते हुए अपने अपने गांव में प्रदर्शन किया गया। विभिन्न



जन संगठनों के द्वारा आयोजित इस कार्यक्रम में सामुदायिक वनाधिकार के मांग के साथ साथ पर्यावरण बचाने का संदेश प्रमुखता से दिया गया। पर्यावरण तभी बच सकेगा जब ग्राम सभाओं को जंगल बचाने का अधिकार मिलेगा व वन संसाधनों पर उनका नियंत्रण इसी तारतम्य में दिनांक 05/06/2020 को ग्राम- कामेपुर वि.ख.- गरियाबंद में विश्व पर्यावरण दिवस के अवसर पर सामुदायिक वनाधिकार प्राप्त वन क्षेत्र में प्रदर्शन का आयोजन किया व सांकेतिक तौर पर वृक्षारोपण किया गया जिसमें सिताफल, इमली, काजू आदि पौधा लगाया गया। इस कार्यक्रम का शुरुवात श्रीमान रामसिंह नेताम, जनपद पंचायत सदस्य, वनाधिकार समिति व वन प्रबंधन समिति के सदस्यगण प्रेरक संस्था के कार्यकर्तागण उपस्थित रहे। प्रेरक संस्था के श्री रामगुलाल सिन्हा अपने वक्तव्य में उपस्थित ग्रामीण समुदाय को विश्व पर्यावरण दिवस के बारे में बताया कि हमें जंगल से किस प्रकार लगाव रखना है, जंगल कि देखभाल, संरक्षण और संवर्धन कैसे करना है और उससे प्राप्त होने वाले वनोपज को कैसे उपयोग करना है। श्री सिन्हा जी ने प्राथमिकता



देते हुए खास कर सामुदायिक वन अधिकार पर चर्चा किये जिसमें कामेपुर को मात्र चारागाह के लिये ही अधिकार पत्र मिला है जो अपर्याप्त है एवं समुदाय को पूरे अधिकार के लिये लड़ाई लड़ना है। उन्होंने कहा कि वन पर स्वामित्व का अधिकार, गौण उपज का अधिकार, संरक्षण एवं संवर्धन का अधिकार आदि के लिये विशेष

रूप से मांग करना है। उक्त कार्यक्रम में ग्राम पंचायत प्रतिनिधि सहित अन्य ग्रामीण उपस्थित थे एवं कार्यक्रम में अपना योगदान दिये।



विश्व पर्यावरण दिवस (5 जून 2020)

सविता रथ (तमनार, रायगढ़)

आज दिनांक 05/06/2020 को विश्व पर्यावरण दिवस के अवसर पर कोरोना महामारी काल में हमारे कार्यक्षेत्र तमनार में कुल 5 जगह पर कोविड-19 के स्वास्थ्य मुद्दे तथा कोयला खदान प्रभावित लोगों के मुद्दों पर पेसा कानून लागू हो और अधिकार मिले ग्रामसभा को, जिला खनिज न्यास और सामाजिक उत्तरदायित्व के पैसे के हिसाब, सामुदायिक वन अधिकार पट्टा एवं



सामुदायिक वन प्रबंधन के अधिकार तथा आदिवासी उप-योजना पर बैनर पोस्टर लगा कर लोगों ने सवाल किया है। वर्तमान सरकार ने अनुसूचित जनजाति बाहुल्य क्षेत्र पर हमारे मांग को पूरा करें, वही नये नये परियोजनाओं के विरोध में लोगों ने अपनी बात रखते हुए कहा की इतने ज्यादा खतरनाक स्तर पर असर इन परियोजनाएं चल रही है वे रद्द होनी चाहिए, स्थानीय मुद्दों पर महिलाओं के रोजगार सबसे पहले स्थाई तौर पर किया जाए, क्यों की औद्योगिक क्षेत्र एवं खदान प्रभावित लोगों के लिए जीना मुहाल कर रखा है। एक तरफ कोरोना महामारी, मौसम का बदलाव तथा खनन परियोजनाएं और अंधाधुंध औद्योगिकरण, ऐसे में महिलाओं के रोजगार प्राकृतिक संतुलन को सुधार पर मदद मिल सकने की संभावना उतनी अधिक महत्वपूर्ण है। हमारे जंगल के अधिकार, संरक्षण एवं संवर्धन सुरक्षा हमेशा से महिलाओं के हाथों सुरक्षित है तो हम नये नये परिकल्पनाओं में कृषि वानिकी अपने बूते, अपने जंगलों को बढ़ाए, जंगली खाद्य हेतु पुनः नर्सरी प्राकृतिक संतुलन जो पूरी तरह से नियंत्रण या बाहर हो रहा है वह काफी हद तक सुधार की दिशा में तमनार बचाने की मुहिम चलानी चाहिये, यह कहना है कि स्थानीय जनसंगठन के वरिष्ठ साथी रामेश्वर समरथ ही का, वही सुमित्रा, जानकी, रहासो, प्रमिला, राधिका,

चन्द्रावती के द्वारा प्रयास कर आम, इमली, कटहल, करंज, महुआ के पेड लगाया गया है करीब 50 पौधों को एकत्र कर आगामी वर्षा ऋतु में खाली पड़ी जमीन को संरक्षित कर जंगल बचाने की कवायद पर चर्चा अभियान के रूप में किये जाने की अपील राजेश त्रिपाठी जी के साथ अन्य साथियों ने किया है। इसके अलावा ग्राम पेलमा में 4 प्रवासी मजदूरों के क्वारान्टाईन सेन्टर स्कूल एवं ग्राम पंचायत पेलमा के प्रांगण देवलास पर पौधा रोपण किया गया है जिसमें कार्यस्थान पर राजेश त्रिपाठी, हरीहर पटेल, बंशी, भोजमती राठिया, कुलेश्वर नायक, शिव पटेल, गणेश राठिया, सरोज तिग्गा तथा समस्त कोयला सत्याग्रह से जुड़े संगठन के साथियों द्वारा पौधा रोपण किया गया है।



नांगा बैगा जन संगठन की सदस्यों द्वारा विष्व पर्यावरण दिवस पर बाम्हन माडा डोंगरी में किया गया वृक्ष रोपण

सिमांचल आचार्य (कोटा, बिलासपुर)

नांगा बैगा जन संगठन के द्वारा बिलासपुर जिला के कोटा जनपद पंचायत में संचालित है। संगठन द्वारा बैगा जनजातियों की आत्मनिर्भर और मूलभूत अधिकारों के प्रति प्राप्त करने के लिए संगठन बनाया गया है। संगठन को वर्तमान बिलासपुर और मुंगेली जिला में संचालित हो रहा है इसी संगठन के सदस्यों ने अपने मूलभूत अधिकारों, आजीविका, के लिए अपने बैगा बाहुल्यन गांव में



वंचित परिवारों को संगठन में जोड़कर मदद करती है एवं वन अधिकार, शिक्षा का अधिकार के साथ-साथ वन संसाधन अधिकार, ग्राम सभा की शक्तिकरण के लिए काम कर रही है। आज विष्व पर्यावरण दिवस पर संगठन के माध्यम से पौधा रोपण से आजीविका और वन संसाधन के बचाव की जागरूकता लाकर छत्तीसगढ़ के सरकार के उपर कई सवाल उठाये हैं जैसे राज्य सरकार के द्वारा वन अधिकार कानून से आदिवासी को दिये गये कानून प्रावधानों से बार बार से वंचित एवं वनोपज जैसे प्राकृतिक पेड़ों को जिस तरह जंगल से वन विभागों के द्वारा कटाई करके पर्यावरण एवं वनोपज का नुकसान करते हुए आदिवासीयों की आजीविका को बाधा डालकर व्यावसायिक पौधा का रोपाई करके आदिवासी के पेट में लात मारा जा रहा है उसकी दिशा परिवर्तन करके प्राकृतिक वनोपज पौधा रोपण कराने का मांग रखते हुए अपने अपने गांव के ग्राम सभा को सामुदायिक वन संसाधन की अधिकार पत्र प्रदान करने की मांग के साथ अभी विष्व महामारी कोविड-19 के नीति नियम पालन करते हुए परसापानी ग्राम पंचायत के कटेलीपारा में बाम्हन माडा डोंगरी में कुल्लू लासा के पौधा रोपण का कार्यक्रम सम्पन्न किया गया। जिसमें ग्राम



पंचायत के सरपंच श्री धीरन बैगा एवं चार गांव (परसापानी, केराचुवा, झरना, बैगापारा (लुफा) के संगठन से 27(10 म./17 पु.) सदस्यों के द्वारा वृक्ष रोपण किया गया जिसमें संगठन के महिला सदस्यों षष्ठीकलॉ बैगा एवं अन्य साथियों के द्वारा सरकार से ये मांग रखा गया कि सामुदायिक वन संसाधन अधिकार के साथ-साथ आजीविका के लिए जिन वनोपज (महुवा, चार, तेदु, बास

बीज, बास, कुल्लू लासा, पपरेल लासा) जैसे पौधों का रोपाई सरकार द्वारा वन विभाग करें परन्तु सरकार न भी करे तो हम अपना निस्तारी करने के लिए अपना आजीविका सुरक्षा करने के लिए आने वाले दिनों में वनोपज जैसे पौधा संगठन के माध्यम से निस्तारी जंगल क्षेत्र में रोपण किया जायेगा।

A story like so many others: land grabbing, exploitation & Palm Oil

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False names have been used in this article to protect the identities of the people concerned.

It is February and the rainy season has come to an end in West Kalimantan. I'm heading into palm oil country with three members of a local NGO from Pontianak, the provincial capital. West Kalimantan is one of the Indonesian provinces on Borneo Island and is one of the largest palm oil-producing provinces in Indonesia, which itself is the world's largest palm oil producer, consumer and exporter. The area under palm oil production has exploded in Indonesia over the last 30 years, going from just over 1million hectares in 1990 to around 16 million hectares in 2019, with government plans to further increase national production. During the rush for land, the existence of local and Indigenous communities and their ancestral territories was largely overlooked or deliberately ignored. The customary lands of many Indigenous communities are now planted with oil palms and occupied by large-scale monoculture plantations. The forests, rubber groves, vegetable gardens, rice paddies and sacred sites are all but gone in oil palm country. This has fundamentally changed the way of life for local communities in a single generation.

The village we are visiting is called Sengkeruh: it is a small village of Indigenous Dayak Belangin people in Landak District. My companions have been asked by village members to help the community in their struggle with a plantation company that now controls their land. There is only one access road in and out of Sengkeruh. Each day 15 – 20 trucks carrying Crude Palm Oil ("CPO") drive along this road to a river port in the neighbouring district, and each day 15 – 20 empty trucks drive back towards the mill hidden within the plantation to be filled again. Its late evening when we turn onto the access road, so fortunately the flow of trucks has ended for the day. The road is narrow and windy, and there are dark silhouettes of oil palms looming on both sides. The road is badly damaged by flooding and heavy traffic. It is pocketed with potholes, some as deep as your shins, and gets narrower the further we drive. In some places the road has been washed away entirely or ground into rubble by the CPO trucks. Slowly the asphalt becomes patchy, then disappears entirely from the road surface, and we bump our way along riveted dirt and rocks in the dark.

After six hours, we finally arrive. The sun has gone down and the twilight is fading as we slowly wind our way along a tiny concrete road through the village. People are sitting in front of their houses and watch us as we pass. Some houses are bathed in bright light with loud music playing above the drone

of a diesel generator. Others are dimly lit with candles. Harry, our local guide, has his head out the window and shouts to people as we pass, announcing our arrival. This is his village, and apparently most people in the village are connected by family or marriage. Sengkeruh had electricity when he was a child, Harry tells us, but someone cut and stole the cables. Twenty years later, the community is still without electricity, though Harry tells us there are new rumours the village will be connected again soon.

The company in Sengkeruh's story is PT. Kapuas Rimba Sejahtera ("KRS"), a subsidiary of PT. Hartono Plantation Indonesia ("HPI"), part of the Djarum Group – known for its tobacco and banking ventures. KRS arrived in Sengkeruh in 2010 promising community members unthinkable incomes, wealth and community benefits, in exchange for handing over their land and becoming smallholders – known as a 'plasma' scheme, and integrated into the larger KRS plantation – known as the 'nucleus'. KRS now operates a vast plantation of more than 1,500ha, including the 'Ruai' Mill (Latitude 0.61369, Longitude 109.93251) that extracts Crude Palm Oil from the harvested palm fruit and separates the kernels for crushing and further oil extraction.



Looking over the community land now part of the KRS plantation

We are told by community members that all the CPO from the KRS plantation is bound for the bulk-ing facility at Tayan Port, also owned by HPI. From there, some of the CPO goes to the refinery in Pontianak owned by Wilmar, the world's largest vegetable oils manufacturer, to ADM (formerly known as the Archer-Daniels-Midland Company), a major global food processing and commodities trading conglomerate, and Golden Agri Resources' Marunda Refinery in Jakarta. Wilmar, ADM and Golden Agri Resources ("GAR") are all major players in the global palm oil industry and members of the Round Table for Sustainable Palm Oil ("RSPO"), a private multi-stakeholder platform established to develop, monitor and enforce requirements to avoid the negative environmental and social impacts associated with palm oil production. Both Wilmar's Pontianak refinery and GAR's Marunda refinery are RSPO-certified.

Neither KRS nor its parent company, HPI, or corporate group, Djarum, are members of the RSPO. Despite RPSO certification, CPO from non-certified

mills is permitted to be blended into certified supply-chains on the basis that certificates only reflect the proportion that comes from certified sources. This approach avoids the need for global players to trace their entire CPO supply back to the plantation of origin and ensure it is produced sustainably or to separate certified and non-certified oil in their facilities. While this approach, called ‘Mass Balance’ certification, makes it easier for downstream buyers to obtain certification for a portion of their supply chain, it also enables uncertified operations like KRS to access the sustainable palm oil markets in Europe and North America via global operators like Wilmar, ADM and GAR. In fact, despite being RSPO-certified, only a fraction of the mills supplying the Wilmar and GAR refineries are RSPO-certified (two out of 15 for Wilmar’s Pontianak refinery and eight out of 51 for GAR’s Marunda refinery). KRS’s Ruai Mill and the HPI bulking facility in Tayan are among them.

Too good to be true

When KRS arrived in 2010, few people in Sengkeruh needed a cash income – they farmed their own rice, grew their own vegetables, had fresh water in their streams, fish in their rivers, and collected all

over to KRS, but estimates are above 600 ha.

We hold meetings in the evening with men from the community who have sold their family land to KRS. We sit in a circle on the floor of Harry’s parents’ house drinking sweet, black tea. More people join us as the night wears on. They enter quietly, sit listening, nodding, and wait for their turn to share their story. No one has made the riches they were promised. No one is earning the monthly incomes they were expecting. The promises of wealth and infrastructure never came true. Instead they feel poorer than ever. Now that the forests are gone and most families no longer grow their own food, most households need to buy their food from the nearby town. Many of the men now work on the plantation as labourers to support their families. The work is hard and insecure. It is a cruel irony, of which they are well aware, that they are now completely dependent on the company that has ruined their lives.

Laughing in misery

After the families agreed to hand over their land to company in 2010, it was cleared by KRS, planted with oil palms in 2011 and incorporated into KRS’s own plantation operations. Harvesting began in



A smallholder and plantation labourer

kinds of products, herbs and medicines from the forest. What little cash they needed was provided by tapping rubber in their traditional rubber groves. They rarely needed to travel to the nearby town for food or supplies and led mainly self-sufficient, subsistence lifestyles.

Nevertheless, like many communities now encircled by oil palm plantations in West Kalimantan, most families were persuaded by the promises of riches and community infrastructure like schools, roads and health clinics, and handed over their land. Small-holdings vary per family; some have two or three hectares, others ten or more. No one knows exactly how much community land was handed

2015, and smallholders started to receive their first payments under the plasma scheme. The moment they had been waiting for had finally arrived.

KRS told the smallholders in Sengkeruh that they were members of a cooperative called “Plasma Pacorok Jaya” that included smallholders from neighbouring villages. The men we spoke to had no idea how many smallholders were members of the cooperative; in nine years there has never been a single members’ meeting. They have never met the president of the cooperative. They know his name – Cahaya Tanus, but he is a phantom. Apparently he is a member of the district parliament, but seems

to have never set foot in Sengkeruh. No one knows how he became involved in the cooperative. The cooperative treasurer is a local man living in Sengkeruh but shares no information with smallholders. He provides them with monthly pay slips showing their meagre earnings, but never answers their questions about why the payments are so small.

Some of the men have brought bundles of yellow payslips with them to the discussion and we leaf through them carefully. These are the slips they receive each month from the cooperative treasurer that tell them how much their smallholding has earned that month. The slips have very few details that could allow anyone to make much sense of them. None of the smallholders have a copy of a profit sharing agreement with KRS or any other kind of contract. Some of them remember signing a document when they handed over their land, but they never received a copy and have no memory of what the agreement was. Others say they have never signed or seen any agreement – they just received some cash in an envelope when they agreed to hand over their land. No one knows what their rights are as smallholders, or the terms of their agreement with KRS, or the rules of their cooperative, or what the arrangement is concerning their land. The smallholders are completely in the dark.

Their monthly payslips all include “GRTT” dates: GRTT refers to a compensation arrangement, but the dates have no significance to any of the smallholders we speak with. “The company just puts those dates there. I don’t know why.” Some slips show different dates, some slips show two different dates. The men are confused and stare at the slips as if trying to see a hidden message. There is no message to be found - the slips have no resemblance to whatever arrangement they believe they have with the company.

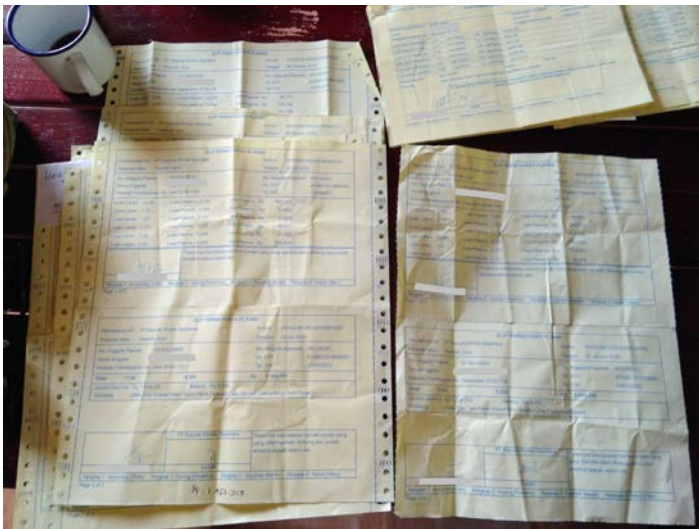
Now, the company manages their land as part of its plantation. Driving through the plantation now, it is impossible to tell where community land and smallholder plots end and where the ‘nucleus’ plantation begins. Ironically, some of the men working as labourers on the plantation are tasked with maintaining and harvesting the oil palms on their own land. Yet, they have no idea how much their land produces, how much KRS pays for it, or how much KRS deducts as operating expenses.

A few of the smallholders have an old print-out of a PowerPoint slide from KRS introducing the profit-sharing model. This is the document KRS representatives used to entice community members to sell their land in 2010. “These are the rules” they were told. They have asked for copies of their profit-sharing agreement and their cooperative rules, but they say the KRS staff they ask only delay and defer, but never answer their questions.

According to the print-out of KRS’s “rules”, after nine years all smallholders should be receiving 70% of the revenue from their smallholdings, with 30% go-

ing to KRS. However, the monthly statements they receive show that KRS is only paying them 30% of the monthly productive value of their land – as determined by KRS’s own assessment. One of my companions explains to them that even according to KRS’s own “rules”, their payslips show that they are getting less than half of what they should. The men laugh in disbelief and stare at their payslips as if seeing them for the first time, chatting excitedly. They laugh. I ask why. “They are laughing at their own ignorance” says one of my companions, “laughing in misery.”

We continue talking, with periodic moments of serious inquisition followed by bursts of merry laughter, drinking small cups of sweet black coffee and smoking cigarettes, late into the night.



Collection of monthly pay slips with name redacted

We have been deceived

After four years of waiting without any income, followed by five years of disappointingly small payments, no answers about their entitlements, poor working conditions on the plantation, and no information about their rights as cooperative members, the Sengkeruh community is agitated. There has been no economic improvement since KRS arrived. The promises of individual wealth, community roads, a school and a medical clinic have not come true. There is a general feeling that KRS is not contributing to the wellbeing of the community and that the company does not care about the community’s interests. Today, the families who sold land to KRS are worse-off: they have very few means to support themselves, are dependent on KRS for

their income, they eat cheap and unhealthy food bought from the nearest town, and their lives are largely dictated by the availability of work on the plantation.

Smallholders have started to ask the cooperative treasurer more questions, but receive no answers.

We spoke with a community elder who is part of the village council and also a smallholder. He handed 17.9 ha of land over to KRS – a large area compared to landholdings of other community members, which range from one to eight hectares. He



Scene from a gathering of smallholders

also kept one hectare which he planted with oil palms himself and maintains with the help of his nephew. He explains that from that one hectare he earns US\$54 – 68 per month. In comparison, he receives between US\$122 – 183 per month for his 17.8 ha smallholding: less than 15% of what he earns from his one hectare of oil palms from a smallholding 17 times the size. He says he can't understand how the plantation could have such large expenses that the revenue per hectare is so low. He has visited his smallholding in the plantation several times to check the quality of the palm fruits and to watch the plantation workers to make sure they aren't misrepresenting how much his smallholding produces. He is sure KRS is committing some kind of deception, but he doesn't know what to do. He has given up asking the treasurer of the cooperatives for answers.

Four CPO trucks roll past on the dusty road while we talk.

Does our land still belong to us?

Later, we drive into the plantation. Now that the forests are gone, the plantation roads connect neighbouring villages and are commonly used by locals. We drive through the plasma area and then through the official KRS plantation. The 'plasma' and 'nucleus' areas are indistinguishable. Here and there we see bunches of palm fruit – known as Fresh Fruit Bunches or 'FFB', piled next to the dirt road for collection. There are no markings indicating which area is community land, which area belongs to which smallholder, or which area is KRS's 'nucleus' plantation. You quickly realise that KRS is highly unlikely to have any system in place for monitoring the monthly yield of each individual smallholding or a reliable system for measuring the yield per hectare. Any such figures are likely to be based on measurements at centralised bulking facilities that aggre-

gate productivity for the whole plantation – information withheld by senior company management and not shared with workers from the Sengkeruh community.

As we drive along Harry tells us 'this is plasma', 'this is still plasma'. We stop on the crest of a hill and look out over the rolling hills of oil palms. Harry stretches out his arm and points in an arc. 'All of this is community land' he says.

Later that day we meet at the house of Hermanto and his wife Devi who both work for KRS as a field supervisor and 'maintenance worker' respectively (maintenance workers are tasked with spreading fertiliser and spraying pesticides and herbicides). We are joined by Charlie, Hermanto's neighbour who also works as a field supervisor. Both men are responsible for overseeing operations on blocks of 400 hectares on the plantation. They are also both smallholders. They confirm that KRS has no process that they are aware of for measuring the FFB produced from each smallholding or even the plasma in general. Despite their relatively senior positions on the plantation, they have no idea how much their own plasma smallholdings produce.

One of the men recounts his experience of being pressured by KRS managers into selling more land to the company. He had already sold six hectares into the plasma scheme in 2010. In 2012 he was sent a letter by KRS asking him to go to the plantation office to receive compensation. When he arrived he was told to sell another two hectares of land to KRS. He refused, but received a second letter soon after again asking him to go to the KRS field office. By this time he was working as a labourer on the plantation. He was again told to sell more land to KRS, this time with more insistence and pressure. With downcast eyes, he explains how he felt

he had already lost and had no choice. He was not happy about it and felt forced to agree. He didn't want to lose his job. He receives only about US\$54 a month from his 6 ha smallholding and needs his job on the plantation to support his family.

We ask them about the smallholder arrangement with KRS and they look back at us blankly, not sure what to say. We take out the print-out of the KRS 'rules' and ask about the profit-sharing ratios. They listen quietly, realise they are not getting what was promised, but are not surprised – they know the company has been exploiting them for years. Hermanto and Charlie explain how KRS deliberately under-represents the areas of land handed over by community members: "we see GPS data that says one hectare, but when it is put into the company's system, the area to be acquired is 0.8 hectare but we don't know why." They don't know why or how this happens and don't know what happens to the remaining 0.2 ha. This supports allegations we have heard from other community members that KRS has been misleading them about the size of their lands and entitlements.

No choice but to keep working

Working on the KRS plantation is far from ideal, but households have little choice. The labourers we spoke with reported being poorly treated, over-worked and under-paid. Labourers should earn a minimum wage of US\$183 per month for 25 days' work (about US\$7.30 per workday). However, they say these wages are conditional upon hitting targets set by KRS. Those targets are unreasonably high, they say, and when the targets are not hit their wages are reduced. They say they are kept as casual workers despite working consistently 21 days or more a month for years. Sometimes they

are unexpectedly stood down for long periods without reason, and then told to re-apply for their own job. They feel completely vulnerable to the whims of KRS managers.

Devi says that maintenance workers have to buy their own "PPE" (Personal Protective Equipment) to protect them from the toxic chemical fertilisers and pesticides they are required to use. KRS does not provide safety equipment. She says the smell of the chemicals makes them dizzy, and tells the story of one woman who recently fainted and had to be taken to the hospital. Working as a 'sprayer' is notoriously hard and dangerous work, typically performed by women, as men are hired to do the heavy-lifting of harvesting and loading FFB.

Devi explains how life has changed: "I used to walk 20 minutes in the morning to the paddy field. Now I walk two hours to the plantation office. Before, we had independence and could provide for ourselves. Now we get paid by the plantation but they work us too hard. The targets are too high and they deduct our wages. We were self-sufficient. Now we can't save crops for ourselves, we need to buy from others or from the market. We have to keep working."

Despite knowing that KRS is deliberately exploiting them and their community, Hermanto, Devi and Charlie, like many other community members, continue to work for KRS. They say they want things to change, but feel helpless and have no other choice. Their family costs are so high now. They have no savings and there are no other nearby employment options. The plantation is only employer in town.

When asked, the men say they think they will get their land back after 30 years, but they don't have any written agreement with KRS and they don't know for sure. They look at me with forlorn faces. I have the impression they wish they could speak with more confidence and pride with this foreign, white visitor in their house, and feel a sense of shame about their predicament. We break the awkward silence by thanking them for their time, a photo, and we leave.

Only together can we succeed

The community's collective lands cover around 1,700 hectares. No-one knows for sure, but several people estimate that around 600 hectares have been handed over to KRS and incorporated into its oil palm plantation. The details of that land acquisition are entirely unclear. No-one seems to have any documentation of the arrangement with KRS, a copy of any contract, sale, lease, or licence. All smallholders said they believe they are entitled to receive their land back at a certain point, but have no clear idea when. Perhaps this is just wishful thinking, but there are many indicators that suggest the community was either not given even basic information about the transaction or did not understand what was given to them. There is also anecdotal evidence that



Smallholders examining their pay slips

dotal evidence to suggest that the terms on which many smallholders entered the plasma scheme – promises of high monthly incomes, construction of community infrastructure and good-quality jobs on the plantation – were either deliberate lies or promises that have been breached.

These allegations paint a familiar picture: land-grabbing disguised as benevolence and a toxic company-community dynamic that is known by countless other Indigenous and local communities in West Kalimantan. The question is, what can the people of Sengkeruh do about it?

The task of gathering evidence sufficient to support a legal case in the local courts is almost impossible, leaving aside doubts about the independence and reliability of the court system; local political representatives are typically more interested in serving the needs of the plantation industry and corruption is pervasive; KRS seems to hold a position of complete dominance over community members, especially those whose livelihood now depends on insecure employment on the plantation, and has, so far, enjoyed complete impunity for its actions.

tor dies and the lights go out. We are plunged into darkness, except for the glowing embers of a dozen smouldering cigarettes. We leave early the next morning. Some rain overnight has made the access road slippery, but luckily not too muddy. We pass eleven CPO trucks coming the other way, heading to the KRS mill to be refilled. And so it goes.



Smallholders examining their pay slips

That evening we sit again in discussion with a group of smallholders from the community and try to give them hope that a solution is possible. It is the first time a group of smallholders has collectively and openly discussed their dissatisfaction and frustration with KRS. Although it is painful to share their experiences of feeling powerless, ignorant and helpless, this is an important step forward. After discussing their grievances and challenges, we start to talk about what they could do. It's not easy. After nine years of living with KRS and having little choice but to accept everything the company tells them, it is hard to imagine how the community could now collectively assert their rights and reclaim their lands. Nevertheless, the sense of solidarity felt between the smallholders as they share identical stories of exploitation and hardship is energising. It gives us hope that after our visit ends, the conversation will continue and grow to include larger groups of men, women and youth from the community.

Deep into the discussion, the hum of the genera-

ताड़ के तेल (आयल पाम) का विस्तार और भूजल, समाज तथा परिस्थितिकी पर असर प्रभाव

सारांश

भारत में 2030 तक ताड़ के तेल की खेती को 1.00 मिलियन हेक्टेयर तक बढ़ाने का भारत सरकार द्वारा प्रस्ताव, देश के अधिकांश हिस्सों में पहले से ही बढ़ रहे जल संकट के लिए बेहद घातक साबित होगा। सर्वोत्तम विकास और फलों के उत्पादन के लिए ताड़ को औसतन 150-300 लीटर पानी प्रति दिन की आवश्यकता होती है, और यह केवल उन क्षेत्रों में अच्छी तरह से उगता है जहां वार्षिक वर्षा 2,500-4,000 मिली मीटर होती है। वृक्ष मूल तिलहन (ट्री बॉर्न ऑयल्स) (TBO) और तेल के बीज ने वर्षों से खाद्य एवं

औद्योगिक तेलों की आपूर्ति की हैं और पर्यावरण के लिए कम हानिकारक भी रही हैं, लेकिन उनकी क्षमता पूरी तरह से महसूस नहीं की जाती है। टी.बी.ओ. को आवंटित बजट, और साथ कुल क्षेत्र, जिसमें ये उगाए जाते हैं, वे ताड़ के तेल की तुलना में बहुत ही कम हैं।

पूर्वोत्तर में, छह राज्यों को ताड़ के तेल के लिए लक्षित किया गया है। चुने हुए राज्यों (असम, त्रिपुरा, अरुणाचल प्रदेश, मेघालय, मिजोरम, नागालैंड) में से, 2015 में मिजोरम का 25,741 हेक्टेयर ताड़ वृक्षारोपण, अधिकतम क्षेत्रफल रहा था। राज्य ने इस फसल के लिए 101,000 हेक्टेयर का क्षेत्र निर्धारित किया है, जिसका तर्क है कि यह झूम खेती के लिए एक "इलाज" साबित होगा। ताड़ के तेल को बढ़ावा देने के लिए इसी तर्क का उपयोग क्षेत्र के अन्य राज्यों द्वारा किया जाता है। हालांकि, अनुसंधान और क्षेत्रों की रिपोर्ट से पता चलता है कि झूम खेती, विभिन्न प्रकार की खाद्य फसलों को देने के अलावा, जैव विविधता के लिए भी अनुकूल है।¹

झूम की गिरावट और जैव विविधता की हानि समानांतर प्रक्रियाएं हैं। मिजोरम में ताड़ के तेल के तहत आने वाले कई क्षेत्रों में अब पानी की कमी है, जो इस क्षेत्र में पहले के वर्षों में कभी नहीं होता था। इससे भी महत्वपूर्ण बात यह है कि इन छठी अनुसूचित क्षेत्रों की राज्य सरकारें, सांप्रदायिक भूमि (जिनके कई हितधारक और उपयोग होते रहे हैं) को उन व्यक्तियों को पट्टे पर देने के लिए प्रोत्साहन देती हैं, जिनकी ताड़ के तेल में रुचि होती है। इसने भूमि हेतु पहुँच और उसके उपयोग करने के तरीके को बदल दिया है, और इसके परिणामस्वरूप पानी की कमी बढ़ती जा रही है, जिसने जीवन के पारंपरिक तरीकों को प्रभावित किया है। उदाहरण के लिए, अरुणाचल प्रदेश में, जहाँ समुदाय समान अधिकारवादी (समतावादी) हुआ करते थे, वहाँ अब श्रम विभाजन हो गया है और पुरुष वृक्षारोपण में तथा महिलाएं घर में हैं।

एक ऐसी अवधि में, जहां दुनिया भर के देश ताड़ के तेल के वृक्षारोपण के बुरे प्रभावों को पहचान रहे हैं (जैसे विशेष रूप से इसके कारण घटते भूजल का प्रभाव, भूजल प्रदूषण, वनों की कटाई, मिट्टी की अवनति और प्राकृतिक संसाधन प्रबंधन में महिलाओं की भूमिकाओं की उपेक्षा), वही भारत विपरीत दिशा में आगे बढ़ने के लिए आतुर है। इस निर्णय के सामाजिक और पर्यावरणीय प्रभाव बहुत बड़े होंगे।² यह निर्णय, दुनिया के अन्य देशों के 'ताड़ के तेल के विस्तार' संबंधी, उभर कर आ रहे पर्यावरण-तार्किक और सामाजिक संवेदनशीलता के साथ, भारत की वियोजित दृष्टि को दर्शाता है।

भारत में ताड़ के तेल वृक्षारोपण का विस्तार करने का निर्णय

भारत में ताड़ के तेल के विस्तार (अप्रैल 2017 में एक मंत्रिमंडल आदेश के माध्यम से पारित)³ की समस्या, पर्यावरण संबंधी (जैव विविधता हानि, भूजल हास और प्रदूषण) होने के साथ-साथ सामाजिक (प्राकृतिक संसाधन प्रबंधन से महिलाओं की उपेक्षा, आदिवासी समुदायों का भूमि अलगाव)⁴ भी हैं।

हालांकि भारत में ताड़ के तेल 1980 के दशक से ही रहे हैं, लेकिन इसका विस्तार, जिस स्तर पर हम अभी देख रहे हैं, वह अभूतपूर्व है और इसके प्रभाव दूरगामी होने वाले हैं। पश्चिम अफ्रीका के मूल का ताड़ (*Elaeis guineensis*), जिसका मलेशिया और इंडोनेशिया आज दुनिया के सबसे बड़े बागाने हैं, अब खाद्य तेल का एक प्रमुख स्रोत बन गया है। वर्तमान में, मलेशिया (35%), इंडोनेशिया (46%), नाइजीरिया, थाईलैंड और कोलंबिया, दुनिया के ताजे फलों के गुच्छे (Fresh Fruit Bunches) का 90% उत्पादन करते हैं।

भारत ताड़ के तेल का सबसे बड़ा आयातक है; 2015 में इस पर खर्च 10 बिलियन अमरीकी डॉलर, भारत के सोने के आयात पर हुए खर्च से भी अधिक है। ताड़ का तेल, जो हालांकि कम दिखाई देता है, हमारे सभी आवश्यक वस्तुओं जैसे साबुन और खाद्य उत्पादों में छिपा हुआ है, हमारे द्वारा खाए जाने वाले बहुत सारे बाजार के खाने (स्ट्रीट फूड) में, और हमारे कई अन्य खाद्य तेलों में भी मिलाया जाता है। ताड़ का तेल भारत में सभी खाद्य तेलों के आयात का दो तिहाई हिस्सा है।⁵

मंत्रिमंडल का फैसला, विदेशी मुद्रा को बचाने की इच्छा से प्रेरित है। हालांकि, भारत के बहुत से क्षेत्रों की (उत्तर-पूर्वी राज्यों के कुछ हिस्सों के अपवाद को छोड़कर) वर्तमान पारिस्थितिक परिस्थितियों के मद्देनजर, इतने बड़े पैमाने पर ताड़ के पेड़ का लगाना, भारत में पहले से मौजूद जल संकट और भी बदतर बना देगा।

मिशन, लक्षित राज्यों और भूजल की स्थिति

12वीं पंचवर्षीय योजना (2012-2017), जिसका उद्देश्य "तेजी से, सतत और अधिक समावेशी विकास" हासिल करना है, के तहत तिलहन और ताड़ के तेल पर एक नया राष्ट्रीय मिशन का शुभारंभ हुआ, जिसके तहत मिनी मिशन II को ताड़ के तेल के विस्तार और उत्पादकता में वृद्धि के लिए समर्पित किया गया था।

मंत्रिमंडल नीति का उद्देश्य 16 राज्यों में "मिशन मोड" पर देश में ताड़ के तेल का क्षेत्रफल का विस्तार करना है। 2016-17 में देश में इन राज्यों में लगभग 3,00,000 हेक्टेयर ताड़ के तेल का उत्पादन किया गया था, जिनमें से अधिकांश सिंचित परिस्थितियों में उगाई जाती हैं। यह उम्मीद की जाती है कि 2017-18 और 2018-19 के दौरान मौजूदा क्षेत्रफल में और 75,000 हेक्टेयर को जोड़ा जाएगा, जिससे देश में ताड़ के तेल के तहत कुल 3,75,000 हेक्टेयर भूमि आ जाएगी।

ताड़ के तेल की खेती के लिए लक्षित इन 16 राज्यों में, 2015-16 में उच्चतम क्षेत्र आंध्र प्रदेश (के 8 जिले), कर्नाटक (के 23 जिले) और तमिलनाडु (के 26 जिले) में क्रमशः 1,45,073 हेक्टेयर, 34,589 हेक्टेयर और 24,126 थे। केंद्रीय भूमि जल बोर्ड (सेंट्रल ग्राउन्ड वॉटर बोर्ड - CGWB) द्वारा 2017 के लिए भूजल की गुणवत्ता और मात्रा के आकलन ने दर्शाया है कि इन 57 जिलों में से केवल 7 जिलों में अपेक्षाकृत निरापद पानी

था। बाकी हिस्सों में भूजल अत्यधिक शोषित, खारा और एक गंभीर अवस्था में है। भूजल में फ्लोराइड, आर्सेनिक, मरकरी और यहां तक कि यूरेनियम की उपस्थिति के साथ भारत के अधिकांश हिस्सों में गिरता हुआ भूजल का स्तर काफी आम हो गया है। कई मामलों में जल संकट के कारण छोटे धारकों (जिन्होंने शुरुआत में राज्य सब्सिडी के साथ ताड़ के तेल कृषि हेतु बदलाव किया था) को लगभग 5 वर्षों के बाद खेती बंद करने के लिए मजबूर होना पड़ा। वे फिर अपनी पहले की फसलों पर वापस जाने में असमर्थ रहे हैं और अब अपनी जमीनों पर चूक के जोखिम के साथ इसे बेचने के लिए मजबूर हो रहे हैं। कई मायनों में जल संकट, असमानता का एक चालक बन गया है, जो उन लोगों को प्रभावित कर रहा है जो सिंचाई का खर्च नहीं उठा सकते हैं और फलतः आजीविका नुकसान को मजबूर हैं।

तिलहन बीज और वृक्ष मूल तिलहन (ट्री बोर्न ऑयल्स)

भारत की वनस्पति तेल अर्थव्यवस्था, संयुक्त राज्य अमेरिका, चीन और ब्राजील के बाद दुनिया में चौथी सबसे बड़ी है, जो की सभी कृषि वस्तुओं का 10% है। मूंगफली, सफेद सरसों (रेपसीड) और सरसों, सोयाबीन, सूरजमुखी, तिल, कुसुम और रामतिल / काला तिल सहित नौ वार्षिक तेल-बीज वाली फसलें उगाई जाती हैं; दो अखाद्य तेल, अरंडी और अलसी का भी उत्पादन किया जाता है। तेल बीज की खेती 27 मिलियन हेक्टेयर में होती है, जो मुख्य रूप से सीमांत भूमि पर होती है, जिसका 72% हिस्सा, सिंचाई हेतु, बारिश पर निर्भर रहता है।

इन तिलहनों के अलावा, भारत में विभिन्न प्रकार के वृक्ष मूल तिलहन (ट्री बोर्न ऑयल्स) हैं जिनमें महुआ, साल, सिमरौबा, करंज, कोकम, जटरोफा, नीम, जोजोबा, चेरुआ, जंगली खुबानी, अखरोट और तुंग शामिल हैं।¹⁶ कई अन्य प्रजातियों की भी छान बीन कर खोज की जा सकती है, जैसे कि कुसुम (*Schleichera oleosa*), किर्वा (*Glochidion* sp.)। इन फसलों में से अधिकांश पानी का हास करने वाली नहीं है और देश और इलाके की विविध जलवायु परिस्थितियों के अनुकूल हैं, और समुदायों के साथ इनका एक लंबा सांस्कृतिक इतिहास रहा है जो परंपरागत रूप से इसकी खेती करते हैं या उन्हें जंगली से इकट्ठा करते हैं। उनकी खेती या संग्रह, और प्रसंस्करण, प्रक्रिया के विभिन्न चरणों में महिलाओं को शामिल करता है; यह एक ऐसी बात है, जो ताड़ तेल की अर्थव्यवस्था, निरपवाद रूप से हमेशा चूक जाता है।

ट्री बोर्न ऑयल्स को वर्तमान में 28 राज्यों के लिए लक्षित किया जा रहा है, हालांकि केवल 11 ही खेती की दिशा में योजनाओं को लागू कर रहे हैं। 2016-17 के दौरान, मात्र 2787 एकड़ जमीन ही टी.बी.ओ. के रोपण कार्यक्रम के तहत थी, जिसमें वित्त पोषण प्रतिरूप 60:40 (केंद्र / राज्य) था, उत्तर पूर्वी राज्यों और पहाड़ी क्षेत्रों को केंद्र से 90:10 का हिस्सा मिला था।

नीति निहितार्थ

देश में ताड़ के तेल के विस्तार से संबंधित नीतियां बहुत हद तक सब्सिडी पर निर्भर करती हैं। प्रति एकड़ एक निश्चित मौद्रिक राशि, बिजली, उर्वरक, कीटनाशक और मुफ्त रोपण सामग्री, उन सभी किसानों को दी जाती है जो ताड़ के तेल की खेती करते हैं। भूजल पर प्रभाव स्पष्ट है और कई मामलों में पड़ोसी भूमि नकारात्मक रूप से प्रभावित हुई है। जो ज्ञात नहीं है, वह है इन प्रक्रियाओं में प्रयुक्त रसायनों की श्रेणी शृंखला। ताड़ की उचित

खेती के लिए दी जाने वाली सलाह में विभिन्न कीट नाशकों और उर्वरकों का उपयोग शामिल है। इनमें से कुछ हैं: दिउरोन (Diuron)⁷, आट्राजिन (Atrazine)⁸ और पाराकुआट (Paraquat)⁹। आखिरी वाला 32 देशों सहित यूरोपीय संघ में प्रतिबंधित है और माना जाता है कि राजस्थान में मौतों का कारक रहा है।¹⁰ राज्य द्वारा सब्सिडी प्राप्त और अनुशंसित अन्य जहर है, मोनोक्रोटोफॉस (monocrotophos)¹¹, जो कि पक्षियों के लिए अत्यधिक विषैले होते हैं, यहां तक कि इरादतन ना होते हुए भी उनको भी मारते हैं, जो कि रसायन से प्रभावित कीड़े खाते हैं, और यह जल को भी प्रदूषित करते हैं जो की जलीय जानवरों और पौधों के लिए खतरा पैदा करने हैं; और कार्बेरिल (Carbaryl), एक व्यापक स्पेक्ट्रम कीटनाशक जो श्वसन और केंद्रीय स्नायुतंत्र (तंत्रिका तंत्र) को प्रभावित करता है।¹²

अनुशंसा / संस्तुति

देश में अधिकांश भूजल की वर्तमान स्थिति संदिग्ध है। नए क्षेत्रों में ताड़ के तेल की शुरुआत, विशेष रूप से उन क्षेत्रों में जो पहले से ही पानी की कमी का सामना कर रहे हैं, विनाशकारी प्रभाव डाल रहे हैं। बजाय ताड़ के तेल के, तिलहन बीज के साथ-साथ वृक्ष मूल तिलहन (टी.बी.ओ.) का विस्तार, भूजल हानि और प्रदूषण, जैव विविधता और सामाजिक अशांति को रोकने में एक लंबा रास्ता तय करेगा।

ताड़ के तेल, और इसके उपस्थिति के चले जाने की इच्छा करना, जवाब नहीं है। हालांकि, टकरावों से बचने के लिए और जैव विविधता तथा वन हानि को कम करने के लिए, ऐसी जलवायु क्षेत्रों का योजना बनाना (नक्शा सहित ब्योरा तैयार करना) बुद्धि-युक्त होगा जो इस पानी-प्रधान फसल के लिए उपयुक्त हो; और महत्वपूर्ण जल क्षेत्रों, वन्यजीव भंडार के पास के स्थान, या वे क्षेत्र जो आर्द्र भूमि चावल के लिए उपयोग किए गए हैं, उनसे दूर हों।¹⁴ यह समझना उचित होगा कि शुरु से ही, भारत में ताड़ के तेल की पैदावार (मलेशिया और इंडोनेशिया में 6 टन प्रति हेक्टेयर की तुलना में लगभग 1.6 टन प्रति हेक्टेयर) अधिकांश क्षेत्रों कम होती। विभिन्न सामाजिक और पर्यावरणीय कमियां, जो ताड़ के तेल के उत्पादन का एक हिस्सा हैं, वह आने वाले वर्षों में, जैसे-जैसे ताड़ के तेल के क्षेत्रों का विस्तार होगा, वैसे-वैसे यह बढ़ेगी हीं। यह अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण व उचित समय है कि टी.बी.ओ. और अन्य तिलहन बीजों पर उचित ध्यान दिया जाए और उपयुक्त नीतियाँ बनाकर उनकी खेती को पूर्ण क्षमता अनुसार लागू की जाए।

Authored by NTFP EP India Network

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Some tubers, rhizomes and bulbs of south Rajasthan

Dr. Satish Kumar Sharma & Shailendra Tiwari from Seva Mandir in Rajasthan

This article is about the tuberous plants found in south Rajasthan. It broadly tries to capture the rich biodiversity of cultivated and non cultivated tubers and their uses as food and medicine by the local communities.



Mountainous rich forest terrain of Phulwari ki Nal

\Rajasthan, especially its southern Aravali tract, is rich in tuberous plant species with soils of varying depth rich in humus. The valleys are rich in soil moisture and organic matter and host more tubers than slopes and tops of the hills. There are many ‘nals’, which are special habitats with different micro-climates in the valley, the word ‘nal’ referring to

a narrow stretch of the valley which is usually with a stream. These stream-banks have good deposits of alluvial soil at places and the water regime in a nal remains higher than in adjacent elevated areas. In addition, the air current is relative slow and there are less light hours in a nal. This micro-habitat supports many species including succulent tubers, bulbs and rhizomes. The local communities using these resources include the Bhil, the Meena, the Kathodi, the Garasia, the Sahariya among others. Apart from being useful food and medicine for the people these species are also eaten by some wild animals of the region like Porcupines, sloth bears, etc., and are an integral part of the larger forest eco system. Some species like Chlophytum borivilianum have declined due to over-exploitation and now are endangered. The Rajasthan government has established a Medicinal Plant Conservations Area (MPCA) at Ramkunda Forest Block to save this species.



Glory Lily or Kalihari



A rivulet in Phulwari Ki Nal Wildlife Sanctuary

Brief list of cultivate and uncultivated root crops are given below:

Cultivated

Botanical Name	Common name in English	Local Name	Uses
<u>Colocasia esculenta</u>	Taro	Arvi	Food
<u>Dioscorea bulbifera</u>	Air Potato	Ratalu	Food
<u>Dioscorea alata</u>	Greater Yam	Aretha	Food & Medicinal
<u>Allium cepa</u>	Onion	Pyaj, Kanda	Food & Medicinal
<u>Allium sativum</u>	Garlic	Lahsun, Lasan	Food & Medicinal
<u>Amorphophallus campanulatus</u>	Elephant Foot Yam	Suran	Food & Medicinal
<u>Curcuma longa</u>	Turmeric	Haldi	Food & Medicinal
<u>Zingiber officinale</u>	Ginger	Adrak, Aadu	Food & Medicinal
<u>Chlorophytum borivilianum</u>	Safed Musli	Dholi Musli	Medicinal

Uncultivated

Botanical Name	Common name in English	Local Name	Uses
<u>Ceropegia hirsuita, C. bulbosa, C. tuberosa, puraria tuberosa</u>	NA	NA	Food (eaten raw)
<u>Asparagus racemosus, A. asiaticus,</u>	Asparagus	Satawari	Medicinal
<u>Momordica diocia</u>	Bristly balsam	kikora	Food
<u>Momordica charantia</u>	Bitter gourd	karelu	Food
<u>Momordica balsamina</u>	Balsam Apple	Jangli karela	Food, Medicinal
<u>Costus species</u>	Crepe ginger		Medicinal
<u>Crinum latifolium</u> <u>C.asiaticum</u>		Chakrangi	Medicinal
<u>Chlorophytum borivilianum,</u> <u>C.laxum;C.tuberosum</u>	Safed Musli	Musli	Medicinal
<u>Corallocarpus epigaeus</u>	NA	akasgaddah	Medicinal
(i) <u>Curcuma aromatica;C.amanda</u> (ii) <u>C.angustifolia</u> (iii) <u>C.inodora</u> (iv) <u>C.pseudomontana</u>	(i) Wild turmeric (ii) East Indian arrow root (iii) Purple ginger (iv) Wild turmeric	Jangli haldi; Amba haldi	Medicinal
<u>Cayratia trifolia</u>	Bush grape	Aamal bel	Medicinal
<u>Ensete superbum</u>	Cliff Banana	Jangli kelo	Medicinal
<u>Euphorbia fusiformis</u>	NA	NA	Medicinal
<u>Glorisa superba</u>	Glory Lily	Kalihari, Vachnag	Medicinal
<u>Leea indica</u>	Bandicoot berry	Kukur jihwa	Medicinal
<u>Leea macrophylla</u>	Large leaved Leea	Hastikarna	Medicinal
<u>Leea asiatica</u>	Leea	Banchalita	Medicinal
<u>Tinospora cordifolia</u>	Heart leaved moon seed	Giloy	Medicinal

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