

Contesting development paradigms, insurgency and survival struggles in Central India: are the women falling through the cracks?

Irina Sen Professor, Women's Studies, Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University, Wardha 442001, Maharashtra, India.

Chhattisgarh, lies at the heart of India. It lies also today at the heart of the debate about development and democratic practice in the country. The reasons are many and not far to seek. The birth of the new state of Chhattisgarh in 2000 was officially trumpeted as a tribute to the aspirations of the people of the region for democratic and responsive governance. The area was also home to a large indigenous (tribal) population with a history of self governance and self management, as well as natural resource management. The possible translation of this heritage into the legislative reality of modern India was a source of concern for the constituent assembly, and the debates and varied positions on this issue - guaranteeing of the political spaces traditionally enjoyed vs. integration into the larger machinery of elected legislative government- are today a matter of record and reference for students of Indian polity. The sequestering of tribal heartlands into schedule V and schedule VI areas with different degrees of autonomy was one outcome of these processes.

However, today we are faced with a situation in which the region is ridden with conflict. An aggressive agenda of mega development, the poverty and backwardness of the region, and a militant insurgent movement are the ingredients of the cocktail that have led to large parts of the indigenous heartland of Chhattisgarh being disturbed. The insurgency has officially been met with a stiff militarized response from the state, and the state of Chhattisgarh has encouraged a vigilante militia named salwa judum, which has effectively split indigenous society into two, and ushered in a regime of unbridled violence between 2005 and the present.

The tragedy of this region is compounded by its richness of resources. This area contains India's richest mineral and forest resources. Since much of this 'rich land' was covered by forest and was difficult to reach in earlier times there was not much effort to access these riches, and hence not much challenge to the control exercised by the poor people over the rich lands. With the liberalization of the economy, increasing industrial and economic development, the hold exercised by the poor people over their resources has come increasingly under challenge. The fault lines of the official development paradigm stand starkly exposed in this context, and the multifaceted dimensions of the debate rage all around us about physical vs human development, arithmetical vs inclusive development, aggregate development vs development disaggregated by caste, class and gender.

For the people of the region, it has been an uphill struggle to combine the pushes and pulls of 'self determination', 'tribal self government', 'national interest', 'development' and 'empowerment'. In the present situation, each of these terms is loaded. In each case the terms of discourse are muddled by considerations of who sets the parameters, who

writes the fine script, and who defines and who interprets each of these catch phrases. The situation is complicated by the growing resistance to the juggernaut of official development priorities by those who are getting pushed to the margins, and the increasing intolerance of established governance structures to these voices. It is important to examine in this context what is happening to women. Are they merely at the receiving end, at the centre of the resistance or does the truth lie in between? Are women articulating alternative developments paradigms to any significant extent, and do alternative articulations take women into account? Are the women falling through the cracks or are they hanging on there? This paper discusses these issues with reference largely to the experience of Chhattisgarh.

The new state of Chhattisgarh came into being on November 1, 2000. Carved out of the 16 easternmost districts of Madhya Pradesh, the present Chhattisgarh comprises of parts of pre independence CP and Berar, as well as areas formerly incorporated in the adjoining *Riyasats* (princely states). This history, of the partial experience of colonial British Indian administration, and the partial domination of feudal *riyasats*, continues to affect the new state even today. In a similar way, geographical factors, the central plains of the Mahanadi surrounded by relatively inaccessible hills and plateaux (broadly co existing with the British and the princely domains respectively) are important in understanding the present character of the state.

Chhattisgarh was a geographically and culturally distinct region long before it became a state. Culturally, and linguistically, the region forms a fairly homogenous whole, although outlying areas in Bastar, Surguja and Raigarh display heterogenous characteristics and are affected by the ethnic composition of their peoples, as well as the influence of adjoining areas of Dandakaranya, Chhotanagpur or Orissa. Over large parts of the region, Chhattisgarhi is the common spoken language, although there are major tribal languages, as well as other link languages like the Halbi of Bastar that are important. In terms of physical terrain, the region comprises of a central plain in the valleys of the rivers Mahandadi and Shivnath. Known for long as the rice bowl of Madhya Pradesh (so named as it traditionally grew some of the best rice in the parent state), Chhattisgarh is bounded by the Satpura and Maikal ranges to the west, and north, and the age old Gondwana Plateau to the south.

Although resource rich, Chhattisgarh is home to large numbers of people who are among the poorest in the country. The gains of development and industrialization have gone to migrants and 'skilled' labour force from outside the state. This has meant that the poorest of the poor were either forced into working as daily wage labourers or looking for jobs outside the state. In the plains areas, in the absence of assured irrigation and second crop over a large area, rural landless could only get part-time seasonal employment within Chhattisgarh. Therefore a large part of the labour force migrates to other parts of the country from this region.

There has been a traditional distinction between the Chatar raj -the governance of the plains- and the jangal raj- the governance of the forests and hills. This distinction has been reinforced by the process of development where the jungle has become the material reserve and hunting ground of the plains. Dams have been constructed in the

hills and plains (Gangrel, madamsilli and Rudri in Raipur on the Mahanadi, Bango on the Hasdeo in Bilaspur, for eg.) to feed into the industrial process, and a situation has emerged in which the exploitation of mineral reserves under the soil cover is in direct conflict with the preservation of what is above- the forest, agricultural soils, and water.

In Chhattisgarh, as in the other new states, there was an attempt in the official discourse, to link the event of state formation with the peoples' demands for greater autonomy. However, while a vibrant movement for a new state of Jharkhand and a new state of Uttarakhand existed, the demand for a separate state of Chhattisgarh was relatively weak. This may seem a dichotomy, because there was definitely an articulation for a Chhattisgarhi identity in the various peoples' movements in the region, most notably among workers and peasants owing allegiance to the Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha (CMM), led by the charismatic Shankar Guha Niyogi. However, this identity articulation did not, as we shall see below, translate necessarily into the demand for a separate state. It was rather an articulation of a deep sense of subjugation, in which the world political economic system in general, and the state of Madhya Pradesh in particular, that treated Chhattisgarh as an internal colony, both played a part. The sense of subjugation and injustice was combined with a strong desire for greater control over their own lives for the toiling people of the region, and with pride in and love for their heritage. Politically, the demand for a separate state was articulated by the big landowners and traders turned industrialists.

The new state was launched with much fanfare and glitter on November 1, 2000. At the time of the inaugural ceremonies, Ajit Jogi, the first chief minister of the state declared that this was the richest state in the country, although inhabited the poorest people, and that one of the challenges that faced us all was that of bridging the many centuries that the people of the state lived at the same time. Although Mr Jogi's tenure in power ended rather unfortunately,² and the events afterwards were even more murky,³ he did make a sensitive articulation of the challenges faced by the people in the new state. However, if there was any hope that the development vision of the new state would be rooted in any kind of indigenous perspective, this hope was quickly belied. It was soon revealed that the new state had been born in the context of globalization and that the political agenda behind the policy of power devolution was the opening up of the resource bases of the third world countries of the south for the capital and markets of the first world. In this agenda there has been no change in the period since the state has been born, although the government has changed through a process of Vidhan Sabha elections two years ago.

Developments since the birth of the state have exemplified and illustrated this trend many times over. Today after its tenth birthday, the state officially prides itself on its new industrializing and developing face. One of the first institutions to be established by the state of Chhattisgarh was the Chhattisgarh Industrial Development Corporation (CIDC) that got busy immediately upon establishment in negotiating development loans from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and other international financial institutions. New industrial growth centers have been established by 2005 in the districts of Mahasamund, Surguja, Kawardha, Dhamtari and Raigarh. An industrial policy has been formulated (2004) with the express objective of creating 'an enabling environment for ensuring

maximum value addition to the abundant, locally available mineral and other forest based resources.’ The policy also seeks to attract directed investments including investments to ‘the most backward tribe dominated areas’ and seeks to invite investors including NRI and direct foreign investors with a host of incentives and tariff concessions. The current state Chief Minister has gone on an international tour wooing NRI and foreign capital investment and has announced proudly on his return that (unnamed) Texas firms had shown positive interest in investing in the state. There are many indications that the natural resources of the state are being prostituted for very minimal returns- only a few examples will be quoted to substantiate this assertion.

One would logically expect that the policy formulations of the government of the new state would reflect the interests and special articulation of the hitherto voiceless people of the state. It is important to point out that Chhattisgarh in our scheme of analysis, is an icon for several other regional formulations that are roughly in the same situation. These could be new states like Jharkhand and Uttaranchal created at around the same time as Chhattisgarh, or they could be resource regions with similar profile like western Orissa or Vidarbha. In either case, whatever are our findings about Chhattisgarh, these could be held to be (symbolically) valid for several other regional units and their development trajectory.

The political discourse at the time of the formation of the new state stressed responsive governance, and there was an apparent flurry of animated activity in order to make this a reality. Several Policy documents covering different sectors were created and put in place in the course of these events, as well as a Vision Document that was supposed to guide the development path of the new state until 2010.

Today, well past the magic deadline of 2010, it is time to ask whether the new state has done things any differently, has it been in deed more responsive to the needs of its people, and particularly to the needs of the indigenous population and other vulnerable sections who found no place in the sun in the previous dispensation. Women have a better physical presence in the state, as compared to many other states in the country. Our gender ratio(F/Mx1000) is 991,, which is above the national average of 940. However, it is an open question whether this fact has been taken into account in charting the development trajectory for the new state. An analysis of major policies formulated by the new state makes this very clear.

Policy promises and Let downs:

Major policy documents in the new state of Chhattisgarh are analysed below.

1.Chhattisgarh Industrial policy (2004-09):

This is a major Policy document that sets forth the tenor of many of the other policy documents in the state. Recognizing that Chhattisgarh is a state endowed with abundant natural resources, the policy document states as its main objective the addition of maximum value to these natural resources within the state while creating maximum employment opportunities by setting up industries in all districts of the state. Within this larger objective, the secondary but important objectives of creating an enabling environment for increased industrial production, promotion of private sector partnership for the creation of industrial infrastructure in the state, and the establishment of the competitiveness of industrial investment in Chhattisgarh vis a vis other states in the country are placed.

The Action Plan outlines the steps that are proposed to be taken to ensure basic infrastructure, the supply of uninterrupted and quality power, assessment of availability of water for industrial use, ensuring road and rail connectivity, and the commissioning of projects to this purpose on a BOT/BOOT basis. Industrial areas are proposed to be established at suitable sites near to district headquarters, and the intention to carry out necessary administrative and legal reforms to carry out the policy recommendations is expressed. Direct and indirect incentives to investors is proposed. For giving necessary administrative clearances to investors, state and district level nodal agencies are proposed to be set up that will facilitate the process through 'single point investor contact'. Necessary steps will be taken, according to the document to 'simplify' labour laws. It is explicitly stated that encouragement will be given to investments by NRIs and to Foreign Direct Investments.

A careful reading of the document makes it clear that the document is based on a set of assumptions that uphold the rapid industrialization of the state based on the natural resources that exist. Consideration of ecology, equity, human development or participatory governance do not figure anywhere in these assumptions. The Policy makers seem quite unaware of the worldwide discourse on reduction of greenhouse gases, of the debates on energy and entropy, or of the emerging concerns about limits to the eminent domain of the state. There is talk of industrial employment, but no mention of people or their livelihoods. Women are not mentioned anywhere at all, and it is almost as if they did not exist. On the other hand it is made very clear whose interests the Policy seeks to promote – there is mention of services that the state will render to investors, but no mention of any obligations that investors may have towards the people of the state. To the contrary, section 11 proposes to give to the Investment promotion committees, the power to override any law enacted in the state in the pursuance of the objectives that the policy is supposed to fulfil.

2. The Chhattisgarh Mineral Policy:

This Policy is in many ways a corollary of the Industrial Investment Policy discussed above. Its sole purpose is to facilitate mineral extraction for industrial development, and to find ways around the constitutional safeguards of tribal rights

and other impediments that prevent free and plentiful mineral extraction. The objectives of the policy as stated in the document are revealing

“The State of Chhattisgarh was carved out of erstwhile Madhya Pradesh to provide deference to its distinctive historical, social background and natural resources. It is paradoxical that the State with richest natural endowments is amongst poor in the country. The basic purpose of its formation would be defeated if the natural resources are not used due to constraints of stringent forest laws and environment problems. To ease these strains and to provide accessibility in the benefit of natural resources utilization to the deprived class of the region, it has become imperative to evolve a suitable mineral policy for the nascent State.”

The document surveys the mineral resources of the state, identifies known deposits and extraction sites, discusses regulatory mechanisms that currently are operative like the M&MRD Act of 1957 and the MP Minor Mineral Rules of 1996, discusses issues of royalty fixation, before coming to its central position, viz. granting of long term leases of upto thirty years with an assured renewal clause, export promotion, and the simplification of leases and leading procedures in order to enable the abundant minerals of Chhattisgarh to freely fuel its industrial growth. The document recognizes some dichotomies in the control of mineral resources, for eg the fact that the mineral ownership rests with the states yet the regulation and control authority rests under the 7th schedule with the Parliament of India. The document attempts, in an environmental clause to lay down some regulations for environmental regeneration and directs that a part of the royalties of an undertaking be used for this. There is also mention of the shouldering social responsibility on the part of a mine lease owner, but the detailed charter of responsibility is not spelt out. This is also the closest that the document comes to mentioning any sort of human interface. There is no mention of women anywhere in the document.

3. The Chhattisgarh Energy Policy (2001) :

The Energy Policy compliments the Industrial and the mining Policies. The main thinking behind the Policy is thus laid down:

“Availability of reliable and cheap power is absolutely essential for economic development of any developing State and consumption of electricity in a State is an important indicator of the stage of development of agriculture, industry and commerce in that State. Chhattisgarh is backward in agriculture and industrial sector due to historical reasons. Formation of separate Chhattisgarh State out of undivided Madhya Pradesh since 1st November 2000 has opened up immense possibilities for development of agriculture and industrial sector in the State. Therefore, Energy Policy which is practical and realistic is essential to realise the above possibilities.”

The document further opines that Chhattisgarh State is fortunate that it has surplus electricity and has immense possibilities of coal based thermal power generation. At

the national level one finds several States suffering from serious power crises. Looking to abundant availability of coal in the State, Chhattisgarh would be developed as a 'Power Hub' of the nation from where power would be exported to other needy States. The Policy promises to take steps to provide quality power to consumers. Particular to agriculture, and to industry so that the process of industrial growth in the state is maintained at accelerated levels. The document acknowledges that Chhattisgarh is currently a power surplus state; yet looking to 'future needs' it strategises that permission to industry to build captive power plants be granted liberally

“Normally Captive Power Plant (CPP) is required by industries when availability of power is not assured. Presently Chhattisgarh State is surplus in power, but looking to the future load growth in the State and with a view to meet the demand of other States. State Government's policy for captive power plants would be as given below:

A) Keeping in view the State Government's resolve to make Chhattisgarh 'Power Hub' of the nation, State Government would encourage power generation through captive power plants and would liberally grant permission for the same.”

What remains unsaid is that the natural resources of the state, viz coal, hydel and land, will also be privatized to ensure captive power generation. This is yet another policy document in which people, men or women, do not figure at all.

4. The Chhattisgarh Environment Policy:

As compared to the documents discussed above, the Environment Policy of the government of Chhattisgarh strikes an entirely different note when it talks of sustainability, equity, and the need for taking these concerns in development planning for the new state.

To quote from its stated objectives

“Chhattisgarh lays emphasis on developing the State's rich mineral, forest and other natural resources on a sustainable basis to achieve the targets of rapid economic and social growth. Sustainable development is the delicate balance between the demands of economic development and the need for protection of the environment combining elements of economic efficiency along with intergenerational and social equity.”

The policy states that the concept of sustainable development is particularly applicable in Chhattisgarh where in :

- “80% of the State's population is dependent on agriculture for livelihood
- More than 44% of the State's geographical area is under forest cover

- The State's industrial foundation is based on minerals and mining
- A very large proportion of the population belongs to scheduled tribes and scheduled castes”

The policy proposes to balance the benefits of development with the need to take into account environmental considerations through a series of strategies like:

- Environmental Resource & Planning,
- Collaborative Governance & Market based Mechanism, and
- Positive Intervention through Public Participation

The exact steps by which these strategies will be put in place are not spelt out, which is perhaps why the progressive stance of the document is maintained! There is no stated gender perspective, and there are no clear guidelines about how the conflicting positions taken by this and the preceding policy documents, this document stands apart in the adoption of a standpoint that is pro equity, sustainability, and thus essentially non patriarchal.

5.The Chhattisgarh Forest Policy:

Quite surprisingly, the Chhattisgarh forest Policy, also dating from 2001, is of a somewhat more wishy-washy nature. It states as its objectives the unlocking of the vast array of forest resources for the benefit of local communities living in the forests and the promotion and conservation of forests. It also acknowledges that the focus of forest development will henceforth shift from the major to the minor forest produce. Value addition to the NTFP inside rather than outside the state is another stated consideration. The document acknowledges the unique relationship of the tribal people with the forests, realizes the necessity for ‘bio cultural conservation’, yet cautiously speaks of the recognition of Nistaar rights “in fine tune with the carrying capacity of the forests”. Using conventional wisdom, the document is concerned that-

“Over the years, the forests in the state have suffered serious depletion. This can be attributed to relentless pressures arising from ever-increasing demand for fuelwood, fodder and timber; inadequacy of protection measures; diversion of forest lands to non-forest uses without ensuring compensatory afforestation and essential environmental safe-guards; and the tendency to look upon forests as a revenue earning resource”.

Yet the document speaks more or less in the same breath of the need to promote forestry research, for there to be systematic efforts at forestry education, and most interestingly, of the need to “manage” forests better. Fast track trial for forest related

crimes are proposed, as is the need for ‘capacity building’ of foresters. Tribal people who inhabit the forest areas are taken into consideration, but it is also made clear that the forest department is the boss.

6. The Chhattisgarh Bio Diversity Strategy and Action Plan :

Although this is not purely a plan /policy document, it is briefly considered here, because, like the Forest Policy, this too was drafted at the primary initiative of the forest department. Its primary objectives are the conservation of bio diversity and the documentation of the bio diversity that exists. Although the document speaks of ex situ and in situ conservation, the singling out and museum-ization of exotica like Rice parks, Medicinal Plant plantations, protected habitats for the Mahaseer, the hill myna, wild boar and the albino wild bear occupy a disproportionate share of the concerns in the document. In keeping with the times, the issue of Intellectual property rights, and of the possible benefit sharing mechanisms for local people in regard to knowledge systems currently in their realm are discussed in the document. Taken together with the document on forest policy, one sees a clear concern about the market penetration into bio resources, and the anxiety about not missing on opportunities provided by the global market. Women are no where in the picture.

8. The Chhattisgarh Women’s Empowerment Policy

This is the only document that is concerned primarily and explicitly with women and the promotion of gender interests. As such it is worth examining its key provisions in some detail. According to its own stated intent:

“ This policy seeks to address the unique situation and issues facing women in Chhattisgarh across urban, periurban, rural and tribal areas. It is based on a comprehensive analysis of the best practices of other Indian states and countries from where positive elements have been culled out and suitably incorporated keeping in view the State’s unique features.” –

In its section on strategic intent and approach, the document recognizes the visibility of the women of Chhattisgarh in all walks of life and promises to build upon the comparatively favourable sex ratio in the state. It acknowledges that the sustenance of this sex ratio may be a challenge.

The State Policy recognises the need for increased participation of women for achieving rapid social, economic and cultural development of the state, which is one of the stated

agendas of Vision 2010. The effective integration and participation of women in the process of development would be guided, the document says, by political will and commitment. In order to achieve this the State would have to address a number of issues including gender based occupational stereotyping, male selective in-migration in the context of industrialisation, female illiteracy, impeding cultural practices and attitudes, dominance of women in marginal employment, lack of access to basic facilities, discrimination against the girl child etc.

Accordingly, the objectives of this policy are to:

- Facilitate a conducive environment to enable women to realise their full potential and promote self reliance
- Achieve equality in access to economic resources including forests, common property, land and other means of production
- Ensure participation of women in social, political and economic life of the state
- Encourage NGOs and Women Groups to effectively participate in the developmental process.

To meet these objectives, the State Policy identifies specific initiatives, which include:

- Creating a responsive statutory and institutional mechanism
- Integrating Gender perspective in Economic development
- Creating an enabling environment for Social Development of women

In an effort to set up an implementation mechanism the policy promises to set up a Committee for policy review and implementation to be headed by the Minister-in-charge with representatives from the Department of Women and Child Development, State Women's Commission, NGOs, community based organisations, other Government departments, etc. This committee would work in coordination with various departments to draw up detailed action plan for every sector in line with the initiatives outlined in this policy.

6. Jan Poshan Neeeti (Nutrition Policy)

The Nutrition Policy of the government of Chhattisgarh was drafted in 2004 in close collaboration with CARE, the international food aid and relief organization. The Policy document analyses the extent and parameters of malnutrition in Chhattisgarh using NFHS data. Nutritional anaemia among expectant mothers has been identified as a major issue as has been the prevalence of low birth weight infants attributable to maternal malnutrition. The gender and equity analysis of the extent and parameters of malnutrition lists several gender specific indicators, for eg Women with a BMI below 18.5 kg, which, for Tribal women is stated to be 49.2 %. The policy document states that its target group will be pregnant and nursing mothers, children, adolescents, the elderly and un-cared aged, the physically challenged, industrial and mining workers, landless and migrant worker families. The

specific strategy will be food/nutritional supplementation through ‘participatory governance.’

7. Integrated Health and Population Policy

This document was prepared by the Family planning Foundation of India , on behalf of the Chhatisgarh government. The document has sections devoted to equity in health care and gender mainstreaming for women’s empowerment. Although no specific strategies regarding women’s general well being or health are outlined, the issue of reproductive health is taken up as a discussion point, as is the issue of population stabilization.

8.Chhattisgarh Rehabilitation Policy: This document concerns itself with rehabilitation package(es) offered for people displaced in the course of land acquisition for mining, industry, development project and forest enclosure. Definitions of the key concepts involved forms a major part of the document, as does the layout of the ‘consultative’ machinery. Although it is a foregone conclusion that women’s livelihoods- today ranging free over the entire area, from field to forest to dongar- will be completely lost in the process of the operations of mining and industry, there is no specific recognition of gender issues in the policy document.

Natural resources and Development experience in the new state of Chhattisgarh

The major resources of the state of Chhattisgarh are land, water, forests and minerals, and at this stage it would be appropriate to review briefly the developments that have taken place in each of these sectors in recent times , and to take stock of the plans and progress in the area of industrial development.

Forest based development:

Chhattisgarh with a total geographical area of 137898 sq. kms has 44% of its land under forest cover. The Chhattisgarh government’s **Vision document Chhattisgarh 2010** posits “high forest cover and large mineral area under occupation of tribals” as the root cause for limited exploitation of minerals in the state. This paradoxical statement draws attention to the perspective mismatch that characterizes so much of state policy. Approximately 12% of the nation’s forest cover is in Chhattisgarh, and this is concentrated in the southern districts of Bastar, Kanker (North Bastar) and Dantewada (South Bastar), as well as the northern districts of Surguja, Raigarh and, Korba apart from adjoining portions of the central districts. A large proportion of the state’s 32% of scheduled tribe population resides in these forest areas, and the majority of this area falls under the PESA notified part of the state. There are a total of 44 scheduled tribes that

live in Chhattisgarh, and 5 of these are additionally classified as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTG).

The issue of displacement and resource alienation is extremely serious in forest areas. Its impact is also severe in these areas because the livelihood pattern in forest areas is dependent on a combination of agriculture and forest produce. The life style and culture of the tribal people also is woven around the forest. Quite apart from the problems thrown up by the grant of mining leases in forest areas, there are many issues of displacement and alienations in forest areas.

- a. Issues of the Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs)- The state of Chhattisgarh recognizes five communities (the Kamar, Abujhmaria, Birhor, Hill Korwa and the Baiga) as belonging to Primitive Tribal Groups. These are groups that are only beginning to come out of the hunting-gathering stage, and are still not fully settled. Many tribal families particularly PTGs do not have land records of ownership that governments recognize. They often become victims of forest department's aggression. Many cases of displacements of such villages take place by the forcible action of the forest departments. PTGs are also vulnerable due to their lack of livelihood security in a time of transition between stages of development.
- b. Restrictions on access to forest produces- Restrictions on collections of minor forest produces and tendu leaves particularly in the protected areas of the forest has a serious impact on the livelihood of people in the absence of a secure livelihood from rain fed agriculture. The restrictions have a serious impact on the food security of the tribal people because un-cultivated foods like roots and tubers are very important food sources particularly during lean seasons. The government encourages the commercialization of forest based herbal resources but local use is subject to restrictions. People from forest areas have also started migrating to other areas like industrial areas and construction sites for work.
- c. Direct displacements- There are three National parks dedicated to wildlife conservation in Chhattisgarh. The Government of Chhattisgarh has proposed two more. This has opened up the threat of displacement for those who reside in the 'core' area of the park. Some communities who were earlier displaced due to the building of dams and submergence of forest areas, are now under threat of 'repeat displacement' due to current development proposals.
- d. The issue of forest villages- The forest villages were settled under colonial rule for providing labour for forest development. People who settled there had no official land, but were allowed to live and practice agriculture in the forests 'by grace'. Their entitlements to settled lands, as well as entitlements to welfare schemes of the government are now a matter of contention.
- e. Commercialization of the forest The forest as a common property resource used to support livelihoods, food, medicines and many other needs. It was an important component of the non-cash local economy of the local people. Commercialization has brought big corporate and trader interests with cash into the forest economy which has adversely affected local communities. The

transfer of these resources from local economy to cash economy has also limited the women's role in the resource control and economic activity of the families.

Mining and Mineral development

Chhattisgarh has rich mineral reserves. Large scale mining of Coal, Iron ore, bauxite, dolomite, lime stone and tin are going on in the state. Chhattisgarh has got 12.51 % share of mineral production in the country and ranks third in the country. In the year 2005-06 the value of mineral production was Rs. 5600 crore earning 737.85 crore as revenue for the state. But these resources have proved to be curse for the people living in the areas with mineral reserves because it has yielded only displacement and destruction of livelihoods of the local people. Denial of rights of affected people and flouting of laws for the sake of attracting investments has made the mining zones into destruction zone where all natural resources including land , water, soil, vegetation, forest, air are affected putting permanent ill effect on human health, environment and livelihood options of the local people. Due to its scale and the extent of damage it creates it has emerged as the biggest threat to the livelihoods of the people creating direct and indirect displacement of largest scale in the state.

Reserves of Important Minerals in Chhattisgarh

S.No.	Mineral	Unit	Reserves in India	Reserves in Chhattisgarh	% in Chhattisgarh
1.	Iron ore	Million Tonnes	10052	2336	23.23
2.	Coal	Million Tonnes	204652	35375	17.28
3.	Bauxite	Million Tonnes	24622	96	3.89
4.	Limestone	Million Tonnes	75658	3580	4.73
5.	Dolomite	Million Tonnes	4386	606	13.81
6.	Tin Ore	Tonnes	28907	28894	99.96
7.	Gold	Tonnes	68	3	4.41
8.	Corundum	Tonnes	-	25	-
9.	Quartzite	Million Tonnes	2707	44	1.62

Productions of minerals in Chhattisgarh(2004-05)

Mineral	Unit	Production
Coal	MT	69250
Iron Ore	MT	23118
Lime Stone	MT	14772
Bauxite	Mt	1108
Dolomite	MT	1137
Tin (Concetrate)	Kgs	12261

(Source:Questchhattisgarh.blogspot.com)

Land acquisition for development

The Chhattisgarh government has signed 76 MOUs for the investment of Rs. 84506.57 crore in the state between the period of May 2001 to April 2007. The Chhattisgarh government has kept its door wide open for investments through its ‘ investor friendly policy’. Land acquisitions for industries in the past have displaced many people without proper rehabilitation and compensations. The scale of displacement and means adapted for that in the past few years particularly in the economic liberalization regime is very alarming. According to an estimate approximately 2 lakh acres of agricultural land has been diverted to non agriculture purpose in last few years in Chhattisgarh.

Apart from this a private sector power and steel industrial hub is coming up in Raigarh

Special consultative measures in indigenous areas:

Large parts of Chhattisgarh are under the Panchayati Raj (Extension to scheduled areas) Act, or PESA. This Act, incorporated into the constitution under the Vth schedule, , makes it mandatory for the consent of the local community to be obtained for any development work or land acquisition in the areas inhabited largely by indigenous people. In 21st century Chhattisgarh, the provisions of the PESA are observed more in the breach than than observation. This can be illustrated with the following case studies from Raigarh and Dantewada.

Case study 1: The Jindal Empire and the **Dam on the Kelo river**

In Raigarh district of Chhattisgarh ,construction of dam and exploitative use of water from the river as well as under ground sources has affected livelihoods of the local people and has created threat to the legitimate water needs of the people of the Raigarh city and adjoining villages.The exploitation of Kelo river is a classic example of how common property resources like water are being controlled by the corporate interests and of the way livelihoods and even basic human needs of drinking water are being critically affected..

Jindal Steel and Power Ltd., earlier known as Jindal Strips Limited, started its operations in Raigarh in the early-1990s with the construction of a 500,000 TPA steel plant. The company gradually increased its presence by acquiring coal mines, chromium ore mines and iron ore mines for captive use. For its industrial activities, the group also established a captive power plant. At the start, the 75 MW power plant was dependent on groundwater extraction through reservoir tanks and borewells. In 1995, the Jindal Group proposed to draw water from the river Kelo for its captive power plant requirements. The Kelo, a tributary of the Mahanadi, is a 95-km-long perennial river in the district of Raigarh; it's the only source of water for the over 100,000 residents of Raigarh town and numerous villages spread along its banks. In 1996, the district water utilisation council denied the company access to the Kelo on grounds that the river would not be able to meet industrial demand especially during the summer months, taking into consideration the drinking water needs of Raigarh town. Despite such objections, and the resistance of the people of Raigarh, Jindal has not only gone on with mining water from the Kelo river, but is engaged in building a private dam on the Rabo river for a 1,000 megawatt (MW) hydel power project. The protest against the Rabo dam by the people of the villages in the area who would effectively have to buy water from the Jindal group started in 2004. It has been joined by Human Rights groups and environmentalist. They sent appeals to the district administration, water resource department, chief secretary, Chhattisgarh, Prime Minister of India, National Human Rights Commission, SC/ST Commission and the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), until, finally, the district administration ordered a stay on construction. The protestors also initiated direct people's action by taking turns guarding the site and preventing further construction activity. Peoples' consent remains unobtained in 2010, and yet, the Jindal construction project has gone ahead. In March 2011, Ramesh Agarwal and Harihar Patel, two leading activists of the Raigarh Bachao Sangharsh Samiti (Save Raigarh Struggle forum) have been arrested by the state police for breach of peace and remain in state custody at the time of writing.

Case Study 2. Land Acquisition in Dhurli and Bhansi for the Essar Plant.

On 12 September, 2005, a huge rally of indigenous people from more than 15 villages around Dhurli, in Dantewara District of Chhattisgarh, marched to the offices of the district administration in Dantewara. They were there to protest the process of forced land acquisition that was to make way for a proposed steel plant owned by the massive Indian multinational Essar Group. Under the banner of the Adivasi Mahasabha, a mass-based indigenous-rights organisation, the rally alleged that a special *gram sabha* (village assembly) held three days earlier had taken place under inappropriate circumstances, and that over 6000 police personnel had coerced the people into giving their consent for the land acquisition.

Also present at the gram sabha had been the district magistrate and police superintendent, as well as Mahendra Karma, the leader of the notorious anti-Naxalite Salwa Judum. Individual villagers had reportedly been taken into a closed room under police escort, threatened with weapons, and made to sign papers that signified their consent to the land-acquisition deal. The few villagers who had resisted were subsequently taken into police

custody and kept in the Bhansi *thana* (station) for over 24 hours, until the gram sabha had concluded.

Although three earlier gram sabhas had refused to give consent to the land acquisition by the proposed plant, and the proceedings of this gram sabha were clearly illegitimate, the district administration refused to heed the representations of the people and opined that the land be acquired, since due legal and constitutional processes had been duly completed.

Questions raised by Chhattisgarh's Development trajectory:

The experience of Chhattisgarh raises several questions about the choice of development paradigms, about the logic of political decentralization in a world spiralling into the bottomless pit of the unified global village, and about mainstreaming of the indigenous life world.

The conflicting pulls and pushes of 'development' and democratic decentralization

The hollowness of the argument for local autonomy given by the political establishment is borne out when we see that the new state gave almost no space for the development vision of indigenous communities and peoples' organizations from the region, and instead opened the state to an army of external (sometimes international) consultants who descended upon us with Vision Documents, Strategy papers and Turnkey proposals. Those who had argued for a pro-people development strategy or for regional articulation of aspirations were quickly marginalized.

In the constitutional history of India in the last quarter of a century, three sets of legislations have been formulated to promote decentralization in administration and to give greater scope for participatory democratic processes. These are the 73rd and 74th amendments to the constitution, and the PESA or Panchayati Raj Extension to Scheduled Areas Act. These mandate representation from local people in governance as well as the participation in grass root democratic institutions of marginalized sections like women, the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The PESA makes it mandatory for any development project to be undertaken in a region only after the local community gives its consent. We have seen in the above discussion that the PESA provisions are not only not followed always, but are selectively ignored and subverted when the 'pressures' of development become imminent.

Although PESA intended to give greater autonomy to tribal areas, and was part of the declared effort of the Indian state to decentralise governance and give greater space to local self-administration, today the decentralisation agenda seems to be in conflict with the globalisation agenda. And judging from the examples of Bastar and Dantewara, it is clear which agenda will triumph during such conflicts. While the 73rd and 74th amendments may have given space for personal growth to individual protagonists and

facilitated the flow of funds for civic improvement, they have had limited results for broader policy or structural change.

Were any Alternative visions of development available for our planners?

Chhattisgarh has a rich heritage of indigenous material culture as well as movement led struggles for alternative development. We can discuss a few examples below

Agricultural production systems and Community Food Sovereignty :

The indigenous communities of Chhattisgarh have been food sovereign in ways not fully comprehended by the scientific community right upto the present time. To make an attempt to understand this reality, one has to understand the production and distribution systems in some detail. Chhattisgarh has had an amazing variety of food production systems. It is one of the last places on the earth to have a remembered history of an enormous diversity of food resources. These food resources include many kinds of rice germ plasm, a wide range of millets and other dryland crops, pulses, oilseeds, fruits, edible flowers, tubers mushrooms and other gathered foods. Many of these are dependent upon access to and close proximity of the forests.

Chhattisgarh has traditionally been known as the rice bowl of India. The region is known to have grown a very amazing diversity of rice varieties in the not too distant past. These include indigenous rice varieties capable of giving the equivalent of, or even higher yields than the green revolution varieties. These varieties are adapted to various micro ecological conditions, and give reasonable yields under normal conditions and with organic manuring. Individual varieties vary in maturity period ranging from 55 days to more than 180 days, drought resistance, and water tolerance capacity. There are low rain fall area varieties and deep water ones, short rices of a height of 50 cms, to tall ones more than 150 cm. The grain size also varies from short fine to long fine, long bold to short bold and round, oval ones, beaked and awned ones, awned with various colours sizes and shapes. The kernel may be coloured white, dull white, red opaque and the grain can be of one of many possible colours. The grain may be scented or unscented. The world's longest rice "Dokra-Dokri" is found in Chhattisgarh.

Much of our current knowledge of the diversity of rice strains in Chhattisgarh is based upon the research of Dr R.H. Richaria, the famous rice scientist of the region whose pathbreaking work on indigenous rice varieties was put down by the proponents of high yielding monocultures.. His research demonstrated quite clearly that it was possible to obtain and maintain remarkably high yields of rice while using indigenous seeds, local resources and skills.

The diversity in crops is matched by the diversity in production techniques. There has been a range of technical and production practices that the farmers of Chhattisgarh have practiced. For example, the *Biyasi* system of rice cultivation, practiced both in the low lying plains as well as by the Marias in Abujhmar under the shifting system of cultivation, was based on a ploughing of standing crops, as a method of weeding.

There was also a variety of sowing practices known to the farmers. Apart from broadcasting, there was *Laichopi*, in which the seeds were germinated in a controlled environment and then sown. This was useful in areas/years where the rains came early, and the fields did not retain enough warmth for in situ seed germination. To cover seed shortage, the farmers knew the technique of *chaalna*, in which broken earheads were replanted in the soil using the technology of clonal propagation. Again, the *Utera* system in which gram and oilseeds are sown in a planted rice field before it is due to ripen and left to grow with the residual moisture remaining in the rice fields.

It is not possible to have a discussion on the bio diversity in food resources without referring to the many kinds of uncultivated foods used in Chhattisgarh. These include many kinds of roots and tubers (*jimi kanda, keu kanda karu kanda, chind kanda* to name a few), many kinds of greens, and the many seasonal edible mushrooms. There is a large range of leaves, from trees, creepers, bushes and shrubs, that are eaten here as *bhaji*s. Some of these like the *tinpania* and *chanori* bhajis grow naturally in the many rice fields after the rice harvest. As a matter of fact, the distinction between what is a *bhaji* and what is a weed is a product of the philosophy of agricultural monoculture that is in complete contradiction to the culture of bio diversity prevalent in Chhattisgarh. These foods lend richness to the diet and in times of drought and food scarcity it is these food resources that have sustained generations of the people of Chhattisgarh. It is this complex heritage that has kept the indigenous people of Chhattisgarh food sovereign to a large extent, and not the highly centralized and inefficient Public Distribution System (PDS)

This amazingly complex production system was accompanied by distribution system equally comprehensive. The *Charjaniha* (literally belonging to several people) is a community based grain bank that is found in several areas of the southern hills, and variants are seen among the different tribal groups of the area. Procurement is through voluntary contributions, and/ or preferential collection from the more affluent families, or those wishing in any given year to donate to a public fund. Community collections through the *Cherchera* rituals or through groups of women dancing the *Relo*, also go to build up the collection. The *Charjaniha* resources can be held in paddy, in the minor millets, and even in an NTFP product like *Mahua*, and are used for community functions, as well as for distribution to individual households in drought years.

Women's role in production and social life

The network of local traders or *kochiyas* were originally the link persons between the many local markets, and were the major agents in the local trade in primary food resources. It is interesting that the *kochiyas* operating in the food trade were mainly women, while those dealing in forest produce or utility items were mostly men. Today, the system exists in a distorted form, with male *kochiyas* having

become agents of a centralized trade system. However, the role of women belonging to the *Sonkar* (vegetable farmer) community in primary marketing survives upto the present day, and institutions like the *Turi Hatri* (women's market) of Raipur bear witness to the vibrancy of women centered local distribution networks.

The role that women have played in maintaining these systems is relatively little understood. In Chhattisgarh, women are the major agricultural workers. They work in each and every aspect of crop production, preservation and storage. In certain parts of the state like Abujhmar and Sihawa, women are also known to use the plough, a function that is tabooed and prohibited for them in almost all other parts of the country. Apart from crop weeding, maturing, harvesting, women are the leading players in all post harvest and storage operations. Women also play a major role in the collection and processing of the many kinds of uncultivated foods found in Chhattisgarh. Many of these foods are collections from the forest, and women use them for maintaining household food security and nutrition needs outside the market system.

Women are the primary gatherers of all uncultivated foods, and inheritors of an ancient knowledge system about food bio diversity. They are also the gardeners and herbalists with primary knowledge and responsibility for maintaining the home gardens, the *baris* and the *bakhris*. Again it is the women who take the produce to the primary markets and barter or trade in the items related to primary food needs. Agricultural scientists would do well if they attempted to learn from women about their existing knowledge of seed technologies, varietal preferences, and even breeding experiences and procedures.

Women are also the keepers of the seeds. As stated above, women are responsible for all post harvest operations. An important aspect of these is the preservation of the seeds of bio diversity. In traditional Chhattisgarh, the crop to be harvested as seed is identified in the field of standing crop, and women take special care while reaping these. A wide variety of seed storage structures are used in subsequent stages, and the exact storage structure used for seed depends on the length of time the seed is to be stored away, the moisture content, and other factors. Some seeds like rice are stored in bamboo *dholgi* (or *dhongi*)s, thatched and sealed with cow dung, and kept away. These can last for upto three years. Other seeds like the minor millet seeds or vegetable seeds are stored in Sal leaf containers, and often hung up in the kitchen above a wood fire, so that the smoke can act as a pesticide and preservative. The extremely complex knowledge of seed storage and preservation including its technical aspects is in the hands of the women.

Although the economic role of women in the social life of traditional Chhattisgarh has not always translated into political authority, one feels that there are important lessons to be learnt from this history. However, when we examine the situation of women in Chhattisgarh today we realize that the indigenous life world provided many kinds of

options and spaces to women which they have lost as the 'backward' region of Chhattisgarh has integrated with mainstream India., economically, socially, politically and culturally. Despite practices like witch hunting (Tonhi pratha) in Chhattisgarh, women enjoyed certain freedoms and social spaces in terms of relationships and normative behavior in the region.. The image of the strong woman is not historically or sociologically unfamiliar in Chhattisgarh.

In recent years however, we find that not only are crimes against women on the rise, traditional society's attitude towards women is also changing for the worse. Caste/Tribe panchayats have emerged as severely patriarchal bodies of *siyans* (elders) and in several cases have meted out severe punishment to women transgressing what are perceived to be customary laws. These trends are in keeping with hardening attitudes to female morality among male dominated groups of community elders, in many parts of the country. Dowry at the time of marriage was an almost unknown phenomenon twenty years ago, but with the coming of sections of the indigenous population into the service sector, with the money inflow for government servants following the implementation Fifth and Sixth Pay Commission for government employees, it has become standard for the lower middle and middle class families to hand out and receive the customary dowry package of refrigerator, TV set, Motorcycle at the wedding of a daughter or a son. Certain provisions of customary law like the 'Churhi Pratha' which once gave women the freedom to end an unpleasant relationship and contract another that is more compatible, are today being used by men to throw out economically dependant and vulnerable wives and children and contract subsequent relationships. The cultural creation of the 'dependent' wife is itself a product of the cultural integration of chhattisgarh into mainstream India. Whatever have been women's rights and entitlements in indigenous society; processes responsible for their interpretation and codification are not working today in the interests of women..

Indigenous and sustainable models of development

Unlike in Latin America, the indigenous vision, perhaps with greater potential for sustainability has never been integrated seriously into the history of resistance in India We can recall however that many of the revolts against authority and movement struggles in the central India have been over the conflict between the indigenous and invasive perspectives in the area of development. The central issues in both the Birsa Ulgulan and the Bastar Bumkal were those of access to and control over forests and other natural resources by the indigenous communities rather than a faceless and invisible centralized state serving the interests of mammon. Coming closer to our own times, we have the example of the Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha (CMM) which adopted a theory of Sangharsh aur Nirman (Struggle and Social reconstruction) that validated the Peoples' perspective over the mainstream theory of growth oriented development.

Beginning as a trade union of indigenous mine workers who worked in the iron ore bearing hills of Dalli rajhara, the experience of this organization between 1977 and 1997 combined a militant workers' struggle with creative experiments in health care,

education, agro- forestry, cultural initiatives and forms of organization that were immediately owned by the 10,000 strong indigenous membership. The work drew the support of a large Indian intelligentsia involved with sustainable models of development, and many of the experiments were supported by Gandhian and Socialist ideologues. What is interesting is that with experiences like this being available in the public domain at the time the new state was created, these did not form the theoretical basis on which developmental plans for the new state were drawn up

The issue of Insurgency

Large parts of Chhattisgarh have been disturbed for the past decade or more. It is not within the purview of this paper to discuss insurgency related issues in any depth; however, we can point out that several reports and scholarly articles see a connection between the insurgency in areas inhabited by the indigenous population, and the extreme poverty and lack of development in these areas. The state response has been brutal – apart from enforcing fundamental rights-suspending laws, the government has yet not been able to either win over the disaffected people or bring law and order situation under control. Many of its strategies, like the use of strategic hamletting and the arming of unaccountable vigilante militias have drawn widespread criticism. As far as control of the insurgency, there is no indication that these policies have worked. In the process the state has singularly failed to project to the people (who need to know this more than anyone else) the image of a just and caring entity, whose policies are based on considerations of the well being of all its citizens, and on justice, equity, and peace.

The issue of insurgency has generally been viewed in the political economic discourse in a nationalistic frame. However, the question I would like to raise is whether there can be other ways of understanding the issue of insurgency. Is it possible to interpret insurgent movements rooted in popular support as articulations of a contesting vision of development from the one that is mainstream ?

Conclusion

Today the state of Chhattisgarh officially prides itself on its new industrialising face. One of the first institutions to be established was the Chhattisgarh Industrial Development Corporation, which immediately busied itself with negotiating development loans from the Asian Development Bank and other international financial institutions. By 2005, new industrial growth centres were established in the districts of Mahasamund, Surguja, Kawardha, Dhamtari and Raigarh. The previous year, an industrial policy was formulated with the expressed objective of creating “an enabling environment for ensuring maximum value-addition to the abundant, locally available mineral and other forest-based resources.” The policies adopted by the new state have sought to attract direct investments, including those to “the most backward tribe-dominated areas”, and to woo investors (including NRI and FDI) with a host of incentives and tariff concessions.

We have seen that this process has set in motion several contradictions and raised a set of questions about the trajectory of development that was unquestioningly been adopted by the political leadership of the state. For those on the margins of society – the Indigenous population, for those at the bottom of the caste hierarchy, as well as for women, there are several areas of concern that this experience has thrown up. The question we must ask ourselves is whether all of these sections- the tribes, the lower castes, the poor and the women, falling through the cracks in the development edifice, and if so, what are our strategies for change ?