

**Her Stories from the Margins: Reading Development and
Displacement from the Perspectives of Adivasi Women of
Jharkhand and Kānaka Māoli of Hawai'i (1995-2012)**

Thesis

Submitted for the award of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Arts

by

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under the supervision of

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CERTIFIED THAT THE THESIS ENTITLED

Her Stories from the Margins: Reading Development and Displacement from the Perspectives of Adivasi Women of Jharkhand and Kānaka Māoli of Hawai'i (1995-2012)

Submitted by me for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts at Jadavpur University is based upon my work carried out under the Supervision of Professor Kavita Panjabi.

And that neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for any degree or diploma anywhere /elsewhere.

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ABSTRACT

Adivasi settlements are mostly situated in those areas of India that are rich in mineral resources and hence the ground for setting up heavy industries in the name of development. Such development projects had caused massive adivasi displacements which endangered their livelihoods and adivasi ways of living. The general degradation in the qualities of living after development-induced displacements from their ancestral landscapes has led the adivasi communities to choose *jal-jangal-jameen* over mainstream development projects. To the pro-development groups of people, the dissensions of Adivasis against economic development projects appear as the dissents of intellectually inferior people who should be tamed to accept the collateral damages of economic development for the sake of the larger interest of human progress through various government institutions.

Ironically in the twenty-first century, when the issues like global warming, climate change, and ecological preservation have gained prominence in the urban social sphere, the adivasi demand for safeguarding *jal-jangal-jameen* can no longer be denigrated as the irrational demands of the primitive, hence technologically and intellectually backward, people.

The grey area of the man-made climate crisis has put the non-advasi, urban, technology-dependent people in dilemma regarding the idea of progress. In other words, it appears that modern human civilisation is at the crossroads of two choices. It neither can ignore the imperatives of ecological sustainability nor can it part ways with technological progress.

My research has begun right at this crossroads. Instead of looking at the adivasi resistance movements against development projects as the struggles between

ecology dependent primitive indigenous communities and technology-oriented civilised people, I argue that it is imperative to introspect the meanings of development from the adivasi perspectives. If we interpret adivasi resistance movements against mainstream development projects as the conflict between eco-centric and technology-centric people, we would fail to see the dynamism hidden within adivasi existences and how the dynamism poses a challenge (which is not denigration) to the dominant interpretation of development.

My research engages with the narratives of four (three adivasi resistance movements of Jharkhand and one Kānaka Māoli resistance movements against eviction in Hawai'i) indigenous resistance movements against development-induced displacements. The three narrators from Jharkhand are three adivasi women leaders who belong to three agrarian adivasi communities of Jharkhand namely Munda, Santhal, and Uraon.

Dayamani Barla – a renowned indigenous activist, belongs to the Munda community. She started her life as an activist in the Koel-Karo movement in 1995. She played a decisive role in the indigenous actions against the Arcelor-Mittal Integrated Steel Project in the Khunti-Gumla area of Jharkhand. Munni Hansda was in front of the Kathikund movement against the RPG group's (Ram Prasad Goenka) proposed thermal power plants in the Dumka district of Jharkhand. She belongs to the Santhal community. The third narrator from Jharkhand is Nandi Kachhap. She represents the Uraon community of Nagri village. Nandi Kachhap took the forefront of the Nagri movement when the state government tried to encroach on the agricultural lands of the Nagri village to build three premier universities. Based on their personal experiences as participants in the resistance movements and as adivasi

women, these three activist leaders have addressed the issues of adivasi dissensions against mainstream development projects.

The fourth narrative in my research is the Mākua movement of Hawai'i (1995-1996). During the movement, Nā Mākā O Kā Āina (“The Eyes of the Land”)- which is “an independent video production team” that has been video documenting Hawai’ian traditional and contemporary Hawaiian culture, history, language, art, music, environment and politics of independence and sovereignty from the perspectives of Kānaka Māoli- made a documentary namely *Mākua: To Heal The nation* registering “the faces and the voices” of the Mākua villagers in 1996. I have tried to engage with the Mākua Movement of 1995-1996 from the perspectives of the villagers registered in the above-mentioned documentary. Besides that, the oral narrative of Sparky Rodrigues who was a prominent member of the Mākua Beach Council during the movement and acted as the public correspondent on behalf of Mākua villagers is also chosen by me as the primary text of my research. All the oral narratives are collected by me between 2015 and 2017.

The logic of reading the Jharkhandi adivasi movements against development-induced displacements in tandem with one of the Hawaiian indigenous movements is to show the incapacibilities of economic development to serve economic, social, emotional, and spiritual justice to the local indigenous communities. Besides, the Mākua movement points out how the metaphysical ethos present in the indigenous ways of living can provide the economically marginal people with alternative meanings of well being and better life. Finally, this research aims to explore the universal leverage of the indigenous communities to proliferate and extend the boundaries of varied indigenous knowledge systems through the mutual exchange of their experiences, ideas, and perspectives.

My research primarily focuses on – the indigenous ways of cognising connections to the local landscapes as the basis of indigenous identities, indigenous understandings of sovereignty, histories, and perceptions of wellbeing in the context of resistance movements against development-induced displacements. Hence the primary research questions that act as the mainstays of the following four chapters are:

- i) What is the relationship between the landscape and indigenous identity?
- ii) How does the dynamism that is existing within indigenous identity structure indigenous understandings of freedom and agency?
- iii) How the activists of the indigenous resistance movements sensibly cognised their agency by rediscovering the meanings of the indigenous ways of living and thereby recognised their agency in transforming the meanings attached to development/wellbeing/ better life in relation to their multidimensional and multiple connections to communities and the local surroundings?

And finally,

- iv) How have the experiences of the indigenous resistance movements helped the resisting villagers to evolve as critically conscious change-makers by establishing new connections to their landscapes and also to the people existing beyond the boundaries of their village spaces based on equality, dignity and empathy?

As mentioned above, the primary aim of this research is to analyse the narratives from the perspectives of indigenous ways of perceiving communities' connections to the landscapes. The ways these connections have influenced the narrators' understandings of indigenous existence in relation to the economic development projects are discussed in my thesis to show that indigenous

epistemologies with their distinctness have never ceased to evolve and have capabilities to envisage alternative interpretations of progress through the synthesis of the diverse streams of knowledge.

In this research, I have engaged with the indigenous narrators' understandings of indigenous cultural identity, indigenous ways of understanding landscapes and development-induced displacements. Following the perspective of comparative literature, I aim to understand how the narrators' experience-generated perceptions based on connections to the various aspects of indigenous existence and also to the socio-economic institutions have found their way into the narrative structures. The close reading of the texts (oral narratives) in relation to the "forces of history" (historiography), cultures (as the semiotic frame of reference), and sensible cognition of individuals (aesthetics), I argue, point out that narratives of the indigenous resistance movements exist at the intersections of indigenous pedagogies, histories of indigenous resistances, histories of the displaced indigenous communities, aesthetics of the movements, indigenous sovereignty discourse, and post-development theories which emphasise on ethics, justice, gender, political ecology and many more. This approach toward the primary texts is essentially based on the principles of comparative literature (Zepetnek 1998, 13-20).

One of the general principles of comparative literature, according to Zepetnek, is "to move and to dialogue between cultures, languages, literatures, and disciplines (Zepetnek 1998, 16). As the fundamental aim of this discipline is to establish dialogic relationships with the "excluded other" from the aspects of literary study based on "non-hierarchical and liberal ethics" it looks at the literary creations as the part of an integrated bio-organic system that changes/evolves with time and open for new interpretations. In other words, approaches of comparative literature

acknowledge that the process of engaging with a text means interacting with the pluralities, complexities, ambiguities, and dynamism present in that literary communication. Hence, the inter/intradisciplinary approach of comparative literature is more of relating the experiential world of the text to multiple theoretical lenses that are required for finding pragmatic interpretations of the text. By pragmatic interpretation, I mean the interpretation that observes knowledge as an ongoing process that involves experiences, impacts, reflections, understandings, value-addition and making choices by humans who are part of the earth's interdependent network of relationships. Therefore, to a student of comparative literature, narratives of the indigenous resistance movements appear as the narrators' "patterns of thoughts" (Bandyopadhyay 2004, 12) represented through linguistic signs in a given context. Thus, the comparative literary approach (which is multidimensional and multidirectional) focuses on the relational existence of the text, the interplays between these relations, the subjective reflections on those relationships and "the life-force" existing within texts. In other words, this discipline of literature refuses to see texts as the embodiments of the empirical data of the objective world. The text from the perspective of comparative literature represents the interactions between the narrator's subjectivity and the exterior world that changes with time. The moral and functional responsibilities of the researcher/student are to see the texts as the intrinsic part of the world which embodies continuous transitions of the living elements within a complex interdependent network. The holistic approach that is intrinsic to comparative literary study, I argue, is more suitable to study indigenous perspectives present in the narratives of indigenous resistance movements.

According to Kovach, one of the ways to engage with indigenous epistemologies is the consideration of the 'holistic quality of indigenous ways of

living.’ The ‘holistic quality’ can be understood if one considers indigenous knowledge as a nodal plane holding varied relationships (from the Great Spirit to the world of ancestors, from Creation myth to village histories, from celebrating rituals to everyday practices, from the human capabilities to the dependence of humans on the multifarious functions that are performed by the various elements of nature) within a single plane of equality. (Kovach 2012 reprint, 56) In the light of Kovach’s argument, the inclusive and integrated approach of the comparative literature toward any text appears as one of the compatible approaches while engaging with the indigenous resistance movements in relation to indigenous epistemologies and indigenous epistemic knowers.

Moreover, a narrator’s pattern of thoughts is intrinsically related to the culture she belongs to. Hence, if the indigenous narrator uses non-indigenous dominant language as the communication medium, her interpretations¹ follow the semiotic codes of her culture. By culture, I mean a particular way of living that a group of people chose to follow. Therefore, culture encompasses every aspect of life, including artistic and intellectual activity (Seabrook 2004, 5). Culture is seen by this researcher as a connecting medium that helps an indigenous individual to maintain the connections between the traditional indigenous values and the flux of time. Therefore, the narratives of indigenous movements bear cultural standpoints (which is also part of indigenous epistemologies) of the narrators and their perceptions of lived experiences in a given time. A comparative literary approach to the indigenous resistance narratives would see what cultural codes are appearing as the dominant cultural signs in the narratives and how the narrators cognise their transformative values in relation to their cultures and everyday worlds.

¹ During the interviews, the adivasi women of Jharkhand have communicated in Hindi which is neither their mother tongues nor part of their everyday living.

In addition to the above argument, I argue that the cultural codes of an indigenous community are the symbolic representations of the community members' choices of following certain ways of living. These choices are made by the community members after sensibly cognising the efficacies of the cultural codes in maintaining an optimum balance between the community's metaphysical ethos and transformative forces of time. The continuous interactions among metaphysical, experiential, and reflective realms shape the sense of agency of an individual of an indigenous community.

From the perspective of aesthetics, an indigenous narrator's understanding of agency can be read as her sensible cognition of the connections that evolve out of the individual's sensuous cognition of her world. The living body is not merely a vessel that registers experiences and surrenders those to the disposal of the mind for reflection in the long run. The body is a "sense-making system" that is highly adaptive to continuous structural and functional changes. It maintains the coherence and meaningful patterns of activity through its adaptability. In other words, an individual's reflexivities are deeply related to her ever-growing experiential realm that embodies an individual's varied connections to her surroundings.

That is why I propose what I call the 'aesthetics of connection' as a theoretical approach for understanding how oral narratives of resistance movements reflect the transformative powers of physical, emotional, and spiritual connections that the community members individually as well as collectively share with the landscape. An individual's multifarious relationships with the local ecology build the cornerstone of the 'aesthetics of connection'. The sense of self-reliance enmeshed with the notion of well-being that a person ascertains in relation to her association with the surroundings (in the case of the adivasi populace precisely for the women it is their relationships

with *jal-jangal-jameen*) form the structure of this category. The fabric of the 'aesthetic of connection' follows the organic design of the earth system. It acknowledges the interconnection of humans with the other species as well as non-living elements of the local ecology. Thus 'aesthetics of connection', in my opinion, as a theoretical approach, holds possibilities of realising (hence exploring in the long run) that aesthetics response is neither absolute nor static. The realm of sensible cognition of a person is likely to shift with every minor or major change that affects her existence.

As 'aesthetics of connection' focuses on the narratives from the perspectives of sensible cognition of interrelationships by the indigenous narrators, it becomes imperative to inquire about the features of relationships from the relevant theoretical concepts. The need for engaging with the theoretical concepts of different disciplines rises at this point.

In the context of this research, therefore, engaging with the theoretical concepts that focus on various dimensions of indigenous existence like epistemology, identity, culture, ecology, sovereignty, subjectivity and aesthetics becomes necessary. At the same time, to understand the need for alternative interpretations of development, the issues of justice and ethics in relation to development discourse are brought into the theoretical perspectives.

Thereby, I claim that reading resistance movements from the perspective of aesthetics of connection does not end with the inclusion of unheard voices but serves as the means of coevolution necessary to address and work continuously on the issues like ecological unsustainability, unequal distribution of welfare and justice which are absent in the dominant discourse of development.

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INTRODUCTION

Kisi bhi udyog ke liye jameen adhigrahan ke pahle kaha jata hai -punarvas karenge. muwaaja diya jaayega- lekin sawal hai kiska muwaajwa milega? Kaya adivasiyon, Moolvasiyon¹ ke bhasha sanskriti ka, samajik mulyon ka, adivasiyon ke itihaas ka, inke paramparik mulyon, ya inke purvajon ke dharohar ka-akhir kiska muwaja milega. Ya kya ped, poudhon ka, paryavaran ka, ya oonke sanskritik virasat ka. Jab ki adivasi samaj maniti hai ki inke samajik, sanskritik arthik dharmic astitwa, sarna-sasandiri ki na to punarvasit kiya ja sakta aur na hi kisi muwaaja se bhara ja sakta hai. (Barla 2007, 16)

[Before land encroachment for any kind of industrial development project, (*the development executors*) say that they would rehabilitate us. They say that we will get compensation. The question is – What will they compensate? Will they compensate for adivasi -moolvasi people’s languages, cultures, adivasi social values, adivasi histories, traditional values of adivasis, and ancestral legacies of adivasis? Which of these things would they compensate? Would there be compensation for trees, the environment or the cultural heritage of the adivasi communities? The truth is that adivasi societies strongly believe that neither their social, cultural, economic, and religious identities nor their *sarna*² and *sasandiri*³ can be rehabilitated or compensated by the development executors.]

Dayamani Barla is a renowned adivasi activist of Jharkhand. Since 1995, she has been working on the issues related to development-induced displacements of adivasi village societies of Jharkhand. According to her, development projects that

¹ Adivasi – “Adi” means first, “vasi” means settler. Adivasi means the first settler member. (Munda 2012,1)

Moolvasi – Member of a non- adivasi community. The term Moolvasi here refers to the scheduled caste communities of Jharkhand. These communities came to the land of Jharkhand during the eighteenth century. Like the Adivasis, they depend on local ecological elements for lives and livelihoods. They have adopted the ethos and the codes of the Jharkhandi adivasi culture. (Munda 2002, 30); (Roy 2010, 86-91)

² *Sarna* - The portion of the original forest before the adivasi settlement. This sacred grove is one of the fundamental identities of an adivasi village. In Mundari, sarna refers to the sacred grove. In Santhali, the name of the same grove is *jaher-than*. (Roy 2010, 210-212)

³ Sasandiri – The sepulchral stones under which the Mundas bury the bones of the deceased members of the original village family. (Roy 2010, 210-212)

cause forced alienation of Adivasis from their *jal-jangal-jameen*⁴ Are threats to advise existence.

Adivasis reside in the mineral-rich areas of Jharkhand. The dominant idea of development is intrinsically related to the establishment and proliferation of heavy industries. Dayamani Barla's statement stands in opposition to the economic growth of the country. Moreover, in the era of digitalisation, it is impossible to deny the importance of technology in everyday life. On the other hand, these modern technologies would cease to exist without the steady supply of minerals and fossil fuels. The modern technology-dependent lifestyle has become the symbol of human progress in the state culture. Hence, the development planners, executors and the direct beneficiaries of those development projects interpret the adivasi societies' resistance movements against the establishment of heavy industrialisation projects in Jharkhand as the regressive communities. The pro-development groups of people translate the dissension of Adivasis as the dissent of people having child-like naivete.

Ironically in the twenty-first century, when the issues like global warming, climate change, and ecological preservation gained prominence in the urban social sphere, the adivasi demand for safeguarding *jal-jangal-jameen* can no longer be denigrated as the irrational demands of the primitive hence technologically and intellectually backward people.

The grey area of the man-made climate crisis has put the non-advansi, urban, technology-dependent people in a dilemma regarding the idea of progress. In other words, modern human civilisation is now at the crossroads of two choices. It can neither ignore the imperatives of ecological sustainability nor part ways with technological progress.

⁴ *Jal*- waterbodies, *jangal*-forest, *jameen*- land refers to both village and agricultural land.

My research has begun right at this crossroads. I argue that it is not enough to interpret the adivasi demand for the preservation of the local *jal-jangal-jameen* from development-induced annihilation and dissension against development projects like mining, dam, and heavy industries as the struggle between ecology and technology. It is imperative to introspect the meanings of development from the adivasi perspective. If we interpret adivasi dissension against *jal-jangal-jameen* as the struggle of ecocentric people against technology-centric people, we shall fail to see the dynamism hidden within adivasi existences. We shall also fail to notice how the vivacity of adivasi existence poses a challenge (which is not denigration) to the dominant interpretation of development.

In economic development, the existing missing element is the dialogues with the adivasi/indigenous/ ecology-dependent communities whose ecological surroundings, ways of living, and livelihood get seriously affected due to variegated development projects and development-induced displacements. In the development discourse, there is no presence of the perspectives of the adivasi/indigenous people who become the victims (rather than beneficiaries) of the “development” endeavours. In the Indian and global context, indigenous communities constitute a significant portion of the people who have developed close connections with their local ecological surroundings. Within academia, the adivasi voices expressing their reasons for dissensions, their reflections on technological facilities and developmental projects, and their interpretations of the environment, growth, and well-being have not received much attention as the indigenous ways of using metaphors and syntax to express the views and values bear distinct cultural moorings and are hence not readily comprehensible by the non-adivasi/indigenous scholars belonging to a different linguistic culture.

The economic development planners' presupposition that local indigenous knowledge systems have long lost their abilities to evolve and thus exist as relics of the past is one of the reasons acting behind the exclusion of the indigenous voices from the spheres of the mainstream development planning. That also means the economy-centric development propagators understand indigenous communities as groups of people without having the power to think, reflect, interpret and know. Hence, they can not contribute to learning the world and envisage alternative ideas of progress other than the "modern man's" prescribed path of progress or development. To counter the dominant conjectures prevalent in the semiotic codes of economy-centric development ideas and trajectories, initiating a process of dialogue with the indigenous communities is the primary requirement. Besides that, with the exchange of ideas, concerns, knowledge, and visions between the two groups (ecocentric indigenous communities and economy-centric non-indigenous people), the emergence of having multiple choices regarding the course of well-being through the synthesis of knowledge systems can be possible.

The research endeavour attempts to engage with the indigenous interpretations of the environment in connection to the indigenous cultural existences and development projects. As the demand for initiating dialogue thrives on the desire of "transforming the existing world into a more humane and just world through creative thinking (Freire 2005, 87), the inclusion of adivasi perspectives within development discourse becomes a crucial factor. According to Freire, the dialogic atmosphere stands on at least three preconditions. These are – i) the prioritisation of the personal, cultural, and social experiences of the people, ii) acknowledgement of the pluralities of experiences which point out multiple dimensions of representing the truths, and iii) the will to engage with the pluralities of existence from a non-hierarchical and liberal

ethical standpoint (Freire 2005, 88). Another essential postulation that acts as the foundation of dialogues is recognising the truth of human's interrelational and interconnected existences on this planet.

In the light of this argument of, Freire, each narrative of indigenous resistance movements becomes the representation of an indigenous community's distinct personal, cultural, and social standpoints. Consequently, the accounts stand as "the multiple dimensions of representing truths" related to the impacts of economic development projects on the lives of the indigenous communities. As the acknowledgement of "pluralities of human experiences" appears as one of the primary conditions of establishing a dialogic relationship in Freire's argument, both ontological and epistemological understanding of the experiences becomes imperative in this case. In other words, for a researcher who intends to analyse indigenous resistance narratives from the theoretical perspective of dialogic relationships, understanding how the experiences become part of the indigenous individuals and the influences of these experiences on the lives of the individuals becomes essential. An individual's experiences and the reflective process cannot exist in a void. A person's multiple and multidimensional connections to society, economy, ecology, culture, metaphysical ethos, knowledge, and everyday experiences construe her existence. Hence, my argument is that to establish a dialogic relationship with the narratives of indigenous resistance movements representing "the pluralities of existence" "from a non-hierarchical and liberal ethical standpoint", it is imperative to focus on the influences of connections that an individual learns to establish (and/ or is being forced to maintain) with the outside world in shaping an individual's understanding and choice of action in a given context.

By shifting the focus on the materialistic and aesthetic effects of the connections on the indigenous communities in the context of resistance movements against development-induced displacements, one can comprehend the signification of landscapes in the indigenous communities' existence and re/structuring meanings in the context of economic development projects. Thereby, one can understand how the narratives of the indigenous resistance movements against economy-centric development point out the contingency and the dynamism attached to the word development.

My research engages with the narratives of four three adivasi resistance movements of Jharkhand and one Kānaka Māoli resistance movement against eviction in Hawai'i. The three adivasi women leaders belonging to three agrarian adivasi communities of Jharkhand, namely Munda, Santhal, and Oraon, narrate three resistance movements of Jharkhand. Dayamani Barla – a renowned indigenous activist, belongs to the Munda community. She started her life as an activist in the Koel-Karo movement in 1995. She played a decisive role in the indigenous actions against the Arcelor-Mittal integrated steel project in the Khunti-Gumla area of Jharkhand. Munni Hansda was in front of the Kathikund movement against RPG (Rama Prasad Goenka) Group's thermal power plants in the Dumka district of Jharkhand. Hansda is from the Santhal community of Kathikund block, Dumka. Nandi Kachhap is the third narrator. Kachhap belongs to the Oraon community of Nagri village.

Nandi Kachhap took the forefront in the Nagri movement against the agricultural land encroachment for building three premier universities. These three activist leaders addressed the issue of adivasi dissension against development-induced displacement from the perspectives of the resisting adivasi villagers and their

understandings of their personal experiences. The Mākua movement of Hawaii took place in 1995-96. During the struggle, Nā Maka o ka 'Āina ("The Eyes of the Land")- "an independent video production team" made a documentary, namely Mākua: To Heal The Nation registering "the faces and the voices" of the Mākua villagers in 1996. Nā Maka o ka 'Āina ("The Eyes of the Land") has been a video documenting Hawai'ian traditional and contemporary Hawaiian culture, history, language, art, music, environment and politics of independence and sovereignty from the perspectives of Kānaka Māoli- I have tried to engage with the Mākua Movement of 1995-1996 from the views of the villagers registered in the documentary as mentioned above.

Moreover, I have included Sparky Rodrigues' interview to understand how the experiences of the Mākua movement have transformed his understanding of the landscape and the people. Rodrigues was a prominent member of the Mākua Beach Council during the 1995 movement and acted as the public correspondent on behalf of Mākua villagers. I collected all the oral narratives between 2015 and 2017.

My research primarily focuses on – a) the indigenous ways of cognising connections to the local landscapes as the basis of indigenous identity, sovereignty, history, and well-being in the context of resistance movements against development-induced displacements. Hence the primary research questions that act as the mainstay of the following four chapters are:

- i) What are the relationships between the landscape and indigenous identity?
- ii) How does the dynamism within indigenous identity structure indigenous understandings of freedom and agency?

- iii) How the activists of the indigenous resistance movements sensibly cognised their agency by rediscovering the meanings of the indigenous way of living and thereby recognised their agency in transforming the interpretation attached to development/well-being/ better life in connection to her multidimensional and multiple links to community and the local surrounding?

And finally,

- iv) How have the experiences of the indigenous resistance movements helped the resisting villagers evolve as critically conscious change-makers who can explore and establish new connections to places and people existing beyond the boundaries of their village spaces based on equality, dignity, and empathy?

Trajectories of The Study

a) The Relevance of Comparative Literature

As mentioned above, the primary aim of this research is to analyse the narratives from the perspectives of indigenous ways of perceiving communities' connections to the landscape and the influences of the relationships on structuring the meanings of indigenous existence and economic development to show that indigenous epistemologies with its distinctness thrive and have capabilities to envisage alternative interpretations of progress through the synthesis of the diverse streams of knowledge. Therefore, this research engages with the narrators' subjectivity, indigenous cultural identity, indigenous way of understanding landscape and development-induced displacement from a relational perspective. Following the view of comparative literature, I aim to understand how the narrators' experience-generated perceptions

based on connections to the various aspects of indigenous existence and the socio-economic institutions have found their way into the narrative structures. The close reading of the texts (oral narratives) in connection to the "forces of history" (historiography), cultures (as the semiotic frame of reference), and sensible cognition of individuals (aesthetics) point out that narratives of the indigenous resistance movements exist at the intersections of indigenous pedagogies, indigenous sovereignty discourse, histories of indigenous resistances, accounts of the displaced, post-development theories, ethics, justice, gender, aesthetics, political ecology and many more. This methodological approach follows the principles of comparative literature (Zepetnek 1998, 13-20).

One of the general principles of Comparative Literature, according to Zepetnek, is "to move and to dialogue between cultures, languages, literatures, and disciplines (Zepetnek 1998, 16). The fundamental aim of this discipline is to establish dialogic relationships with the "excluded other" from the aspects of literary study based on "non-hierarchical and liberal ethics". Hence, this discipline looks at the literary creations as part of an integrated bio-organic system that changes/evolves with time and is open to new interpretations. In other words, approaches of comparative literature acknowledge that the process of engaging with a text means interacting with the pluralities, complexities, ambiguities, and dynamism present in that textual communication. Hence, the inter/intradisciplinary approach of comparative literature is more of relating the experiential world of the text to multiple theoretical lenses that are necessary for finding pragmatic interpretations of the text. By pragmatic interpretation, I mean the interpretation that observes knowledge as an ongoing process. It involves experiences, impacts, reflections, understanding, value-addition and making choices by humans who are part of the Earth's interdependent

network of relationships. Therefore to a student of comparative literature, narratives of the indigenous resistance movements appear as the narrators' "patterns of thoughts" (Bandyopadhyay 2004, 12) represented through linguistic signs in a given context. Thus, the comparative literary approach (which is multidimensional and multidirectional) focuses on the relational existence of the text, the interplays between these relations, the subjective reflections on that relationships and "the life-force" existing within texts. In other words, this discipline of literature refuses to see texts as the embodiments of the empirical data of the objective world. Instead, the text from the perspective of comparative literature represents the interactions between the narrator's subjectivity and the exterior world that changes with time. Therefore, the moral and functional responsibilities of the researcher/student are to see the texts as the intrinsic part of the world, which embodies continuous transitions of the living elements within a complex interdependent network.

According to Kovach, one of the ways to engage with indigenous epistemologies is to consider the "holistic quality" of those. The 'holistic quality' refers to a knowledge system that considers knowledge as the integrative nodal plane of varied relationships (from the Great Spirit to the world of ancestors, from Creation myth to village histories, from celebrating rituals to everyday practices, from the human capability to nature's spirit) within a single plane of equality. (Kovach 2012 reprint, 56) In the light of Kovach's argument, the relational approach of comparative literature is the consistent approach in dealing with the indigenous epistemologies and the indigenous epistemic knower.

Moreover, a narrator's cultural mooring influences her pattern of thoughts. Hence, if the indigenous narrator uses non-indigenous dominant language as the

communication medium, her interpretations.⁵ By culture, I mean a particular way of living that a group of people chose to live. Thus culture encompasses every aspect of life, including artistic and intellectual activity (Seabrook 2004, 5). Culture is like a bridge that has two ends. One end of it connects the community members with the traditional values, and the other adapts or adopts to the flux of time. Therefore, the narratives of indigenous movements bear cultural standpoints (part of indigenous epistemologies) of the narrators and their perceptions of lived experiences in a given time. A comparative literary approach to the indigenous resistance narratives would see what cultural codes appear as the dominant cultural signs in the narrations and how the narrators cognise their transformative values in connection to their cultures and everyday worlds.

Cultural codes of a community are the symbolic representations of the community members' sensible cognition of the community members. The continuous interactions among metaphysical, experiential, and reflective realms shape the sense of agency of an individual. An individual's sense of agency thus emerges from the sensible cognition of the connections that evolve out of the sensuous understanding of the material world. The living body is not merely a vessel that registers experiences and surrenders those to the mind's disposal for reflection in the long run. The body is a "sense-making system" highly adaptive to continuous structural and functional changes. It maintains the coherence and meaningful patterns of activity through its adaptability. In other words, the process of reflection is ubiquitously present in experiential activities.

That is why I propose aesthetics of connection as a theoretical lens to understand how oral narratives of resistance movements reflect the transformative

⁵ During the interviews, the adivasi women of Jharkhand communicated in Hindi, which is neither their mother tongue nor part of their everyday living.

powers of physical, emotional, and spiritual connections that the community members individually and collectively share with the landscape. An individual's multifarious relationships with the local ecology build the cornerstone of the aesthetics of connection. The sense of self-reliance enmeshed with the notion of well-being forms the structure of the category. A person ascertains her well-being in relation to her association with the surrounding (in the case of the adivasi populace, precisely for the women, it is their relationships with *jal-jangal-jameen*). The fabric of aesthetics of connection follows the organic design of the earth system. It acknowledges the interconnection of humans with the other species and non-living elements of the local ecology. Aesthetics of connection, in my opinion, points out that aesthetic response is neither absolute nor static. The realm of sensible cognition of a person is likely to shift with every minor or significant change that affects her existence.

As aesthetics of connection focuses on the sensible cognition of interrelationships by the indigenous narrators, it becomes imperative to inquire about the features of relationships from the relevant theoretical concepts. The need for engaging with the theoretical concepts of different disciplines rises at this point.

Therefore, engaging with the theoretical concepts that focus on various dimensions of indigenous existence like epistemology, identity, culture, ecology, sovereignty, subjectivity, and aesthetics becomes necessary in the context of this research. At the same time, to understand the need for alternative interpretations of development, the issues of justice and ethics connected to development discourse are brought into the theoretical perspective.

Thus reading resistance movements from the perspective of comparative literature does not end with the inclusion of unheard voices but serves as the means of

coevolution necessary to address the inequality, injustice, and unsustainability existing in the present time.

b) The Process of Initiating Dialogues in this Study

In this research, I aim to find ways to initiate dialogues with the adivasi narrators. Hence following the theoretical arguments of Frierie (Frerie 2005, 88), I have prioritised the narrators' personal, cultural, and social experiences. Thus, I encouraged the narrators to talk about their childhood experiences. As a result, each of the narrators spontaneously found a way to connect the pre-resistance movement experiences with the choice of participating in the resistance movements. Secondly, I have never tried to find the "truth". This research aims to discover how the indigenous village activists, based on their pluralities of experiences, have represented “multiple dimensions of representing the truths” regarding development projects and resistance movements. As mentioned in the title of this thesis paper, I have tried to incorporate the perspectives of the adivasi narrators. The aim is to see how many interpretations of *jal-jangal-jameen* are generated by the narrators. Finally, I have tried to engage with “the pluralities of indigenous existence from a non-hierarchical and liberal ethical standpoint”. Hence, I continuously learned from the narrators if I had failed to grasp any metaphors or syntax in the narratives. I have to be always on guard so that the narrators' interpretations could remain untainted from the researcher's interpretations. That is why observations, active participation in dialogic interactions, and reflections on the meanings generated in the narratives are the cornerstone of my methodological approach. The research methodology includes earning the trust of the community members, observations of the local ecology and people's everyday living, listening to the villagers, noting their expressions, marking the sounds reading the

pamphlets and monographs written by local activists, attending the festivals in addition to taking interviews of the adivasi women activists of Jharkhand.

Collecting narratives started in June 2015 and ended in December 2017. Again, I relied on dialogic interactions and allowed the narrator to continue her spontaneous flow of thinking. After a few weeks, I deliberately dropped the idea of taking formal interviews. Dayamani Barla, I found, was a loquacious speaker when she visited the villages. Munni Hansda wanted a listener. For Nandi Kachhap, the barn, kitchen, courtyard, village paths, and sacred groves served as the proper backgrounds. She articulated her memories best against those backgrounds.

At the same time, when I had failed to understand a particular word or a syntax and had confessed my lack of understanding, they took special care to make me understand the inherent meanings of those words. For example, Dayamani Barla once told me that she felt peace at the sounds of jungle and river. I could not understand what did she mean by that. In her explanation, she took me to the forest near Korkotoli village and asked me to feel the calmness of the whole atmosphere. The feelings that are hard to describe in words led me to understand that the narratives are pregnant with intense emotions that are hard to describe. Researchers like me who visit the place in search of words are likely to miss these dense emotions lying beneath some words like jal-jangal-jameen. Transplanting those profound silences in the research analysis is the most complex challenge for me. To grasp that richness within the limited sphere of language, I have borrowed the lens of aesthetics in my study.

Another situation I faced during the interviews was the interventions of other village activists at that time. Later, while going through the recordings, I found that interventions had complemented the words of the narrators.

Sometimes the narrators (specifically Nandi Kachhap and Munni Hansda), while talking about the days of resistance movements, chose to let others speak on their behalves. When others took up the thread of the interviews, the narrators extended their silent supports to the speakers. Hence, the task of collecting narratives from its very beginning pointed out the complexities of this research. While listening to these diversions in the primary texts, I have realised the imperative of an integrated analytical approach.

Nandi Kachhap took me to the house of the village storyteller to let me know the history of Nagri village. Munni Hansda also encouraged me to talk to the women of forest-dwelling Paharia village and agrarian Santal village to make me understand how the women of different adivasi communities had perceived the intrusion of the RPG (Rama Prasad Goenka) group's thermal power project in the Kathikund area as catastrophic to their existences.

As the interviewees chose informal setups for the interaction sessions, I could not cut the outside voices and noises from the main recordings. I had to record the narratives and the sounds that were part of their everyday lives. Now, I realise that the voice recordings have successfully retained (in a way) the nuances of each of the narrators' integrated adivasi identities. The interviews have become live examples of the narrators' relational existence.

My research methodology has also incorporated documentary films on the displacements that have helped me understand the stands of the resisting villagers. In the Indian context, I have relied on the documentaries by Shriprakash and Biju Toppo to understand the interconnections among development projects, adivasi communities' experiences of state-induced violence, and adivasi views on adivasi existence. While the documentaries made by the Jharkhandi activists served as the

secondary text, I chose Nā Māka o ka 'Āina's documentary *Mākua: To Heal The Nation* as the primary text. Except for Sparky Rodrigues, I could not find any other residents of Mākua village. In 1996 the Hawai'ian state authorities forcibly evacuated the villagers. The next important thing is to find out the pamphlets and handouts that the villagers published during the movements. Interactions with the other non-indigenous activists, sharing my experiences with other scholars working with indigenous communities, and exchanging views are also part of my research methodology.

The last part of the methodology is to introspect at every point to evaluate my position as a researcher who worked hard to establish connections with the narrators and could not deny her connections that started during those days. Hence, I know my position as an objective-oriented researcher will always be under microscopic introspection. Playing the role of an engaged listener, in my opinion, secures a researcher's objective standpoint to a certain extent the objective viewpoint of a researcher. The continuous interaction between this researcher's epistemic locations and her accumulated experiences in the field is the most important in my research methodology. A researcher's social, economic, ethnicity, linguistic, class, gender, academic positions, and everyday life experiences structure her epistemological standpoints and field- experiences, including listening to the stories and anecdotes from the various indigenous and non-indigenous activists and villagers.

Moreover, the objective experiences include listening to the stories and anecdotes from the various indigenous and non-indigenous activists and villagers. The interactions and introspection have helped this researcher understand that knowledge has transformative power. Furthermore, the researcher has co-evolved with her

interviewees during the dialogic interactions. Hence, she comprehends that her understanding is neither objective nor subjective but essentially relational.

Development and The Imperative of Interpretation

In his book *Development as Freedom*, Amartya Sen has argued that development is a process that expands the limit of "real freedom" (Sen 2000,3). However, The term freedom and other signifiers of development like "growth", "advanced", and "stronger" are qualitative. Therefore, it is imperative to understand how the epistemic standpoints (social, cultural, economic, and environmental locations within a given time and space) of an individual structure the perceptions of well-being and how such understandings influence the perceiver's interpretation of development.

In other words, the community members develop a way of living based on their life experiences on sustenance, self-reliance, well-being, and sustainability. However, on the other hand, the way of living structures the community's value system about the nature of their ecological connections. The nature of the association, in turn, would orient the interpretational abilities of the members of a community. Therefore, there lies the possibility of having multiple interpretations of development.

In the context of both Jharkhandi adivasi village communities' resistance movements against development-induced displacements and Hawai'ian indigenous communities' claim of rights regarding the safeguarding the landscape from military and corporate-backed ecological colonization and continuing Hawaiian indigenous ways of living, the different environmental relationships of the community members play significant roles in structuring the sense of agency and the freedom of choices of the community members. Indigenous communities' sense of agency and autonomy has evolved out of the communities' diverse ecological and community-based

relationships. The connections further have helped the indigenous societies dissociate the meaning of progress from the concept of economic growth and associate community-culture-based meanings of progress and well-being.

By shifting the analytical focus on the cultural perspectives and interpretations, this dissertation intends to study the influence of adivasi/ indigenous epistemologies on the communities' understandings of development critically. The reasons for centring the arguments around adivasi epistemology are to understand: a) the way/s an individual learns to interpret the value of landscapes about her adivasi/indigenous existence, and b) the connection of an individual's sense of agency to freedom of interpreting or reinterpreting the landscape. The understandings, I claim, would be a step forward to the third plane where ecologically conscious communities would be able to share their interpretations and meanings to cater to the need of time.

Whose Development?

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's dictionary, the word development means the gradual growth of something to become more advanced, efficient, Etc. The question that arises after that is: what are the indicators of strength and advancement? What are the reasons behind choosing those indicators?

The indicators may vary across the communities as every community possesses a distinct cultural perspective to understand the means and goals of development or progress. Following the argument, one can claim that the hegemony of a single interpretation of progress in the domain of mainstream development discourse indicates the non-dialogic trait of the mainstream development process. In the dominant discourse, the meaning of development bears a sense of absolute truth

with a definite end. The executors of the growth have posed the means to reach a future of progress as universal.

In *The Development Dictionary* (2010), Wolfgang Sachs has described development "as a particular cast of mind" controlled by money, the market, and various state institutions. Within the cast of mind, the universal development standard is the white man's self-centred world with the unlimited power to consume every resource. The hegemony of the consumerist worldview has gradually established a monoculture that denied the knowledge systems of others as 'inferior' and standardised desires and dreams within the subconscious domain of society. In the context of "development", "Western imagery" occupy the people's interpretational territory because the "experts and educators" have established "market, state and science" as the absolute and universal. Thus ordinary people have lost their capacity to structure alternative connotations of "development". (Sachs ed 2010, xvi-xviii).

The absence of multidimensional interpretations in the dominant discourse of development has brought several cases of collateral damage along with the projects. According to Walter Fernandes, between 1947- 2000, more than sixty million people are affected by the development projects. The number includes displaced people and those whose livelihoods are seriously affected due to those projects.

Rapid and unplanned urbanisation (the aftereffect of projects) causes displacement of more people on multiple levels.⁶ In 2014, LiveMint published a report that said the number of displaced people in Jharkhand was 6.5 million⁷

⁶ Nitya Rao argues: " In addition to the temporal disjuncture between land acquisition and resettlement (including the rebuilding of livelihoods), large-scale and sudden displacement due to large projects such as a dam must be viewed in conjunction with other more gradual process of dislocation due to both partial submergence and the growing pressures on lands and livelihoods". (Mehta 2009, 70)

⁷ . E-paper 'Live Mint' in its 6thOct,2014 edition, published a report on forcible displacements and spatial poverty of Jharkhand. Laveesh Bhandari and Minakshi Chakraborty, in their report " Spatial Poverty in Jharkhand", referred to The Indian people's Tribunal on Environment and Human Rights report that mentioned the number of people displaced due to eviction of slum-dwellers, relocation of

(Laveesh Bhandari 2014). Approximately fifty per cent of the displaced people belong to Adivasi communities; forty per cent are Dalits, and the rest are people without any assets (George 2014, 59). In the chapter titled 'Granting of Mineral Leases and the New Policies', Ajitha S. George has pointed out how after the mining policies are amended in favour of private investment sectors to accelerate the "social and economic reform". In the policy-making sector, "mineral-based industries" are seen as the symbol of "systematic and scientific development". She writes:

The Jharkhand government looks at mining development as the surest way to the social and economic development of the state and tries to attract private investment into the mining sector, both domestic and multinational, by promising all infrastructural and administrative support. (George 2014, 33-34)

Following the Euro-Atlantic economic development model, Indian development planners and executors introduced industrialisation projects in the adivasi lands under the pretext of merging the Adivasis into the mainstream culture after identifying the adivasi communities as regressive, impoverished, economically unproductive hence underdeveloped. However, the model has failed to render social, environmental, and economic justice and freedom to the displaced Adivasi and Moolvasi people.

For example, in 1954, the then Bihar government established Heavy Electronic Corporation (HEC). The project caused the displacement of twelve thousand four hundred eighty-seven adivasi families who lost Nine thousand two hundred acres of land. Only ten per cent of the displaced people got appointments in the positions of fourth-class staff. Dire poverty has become the everyday experience of the displaced people of the HEC area. The experiences of the displaced people from the Bokaro

rural people, industrial pollution, Etc. The report also points out that the cases of displacement in the name of dams, factories, mining, etc, go largely unreported.

Thermal Power Project, Chandil dam, and Uranium mining at Jadugorah are not different from the displaced people of the HEC project (Barla 2007). Therefore the primary question reverberating within the adivasi communities is: What does the so-called *Vikas* (development) mean to the Adivasis? Dr Ram Dayal Munda, in his edited book *The Other Side of Development* (2012), writes:

Now, with the introduction of development projects in tribal areas, it is the non-tribals involved in the planning and implementation of these projects who are prospering rather than the tribal people for whose development such projects were conceived of in the first place (Munda 2012, 21).

The “non-tribals” in this context are the “Indian elites” who play a pivotal role in development project planning. They have uncritically accepted the Euro-Atlantic model of development that focuses on plundering natural resources and ecological balance. The supremacy of science denominates the dominance of scientific, technocentric culture. Therefore, understanding development from the adivasi/indigenous epistemic standpoint is still absent from capital-induced development project planning.⁸ With the encroachment of their landscapes, the displaced adivasi communities' repertoires of knowledge face the threat of extinction, and the non-advasi 'mainstream' knowledge system ascends to the authoritative position. The process of mainstreaming Adivasis thus ends up blocking the spontaneous evolution of adivasi knowledge systems, therefore, causing the erosion of the existing knowledge of the adivasi communities. Hence, development projects ultimately become the process of colonising the adivasi minds.

⁸ Padel, Dandekar, and Unni replace the phrase development-induced displacement with investment-induced displacement. The displaced people consider the projects as the cause of their misery. On the other hand, "financial investment is an undisputed causal factor in displacing projects." (Felix Padel 2013, 30)

Knowledge, however, wields power by directing people's attention; it carves out and highlights an absolute reality, casting into oblivion other ways of relating to the world around us. At a time when development has failed as a socio-economic endeavour, it has become of paramount importance to liberate ourselves from its dominion over our minds" (Sachs ed 2010, xviii).

Thus interrogating development is essential to challenge the hegemony of the dominant interpretation of progress and look for alternative connotations of growth.

In this research study, I focus on how the term development is intrinsically related to the sensible cognition of freedom and agency by individuals of the indigenous communities that participated in the resistance movements against development-induced displacements. This research attempts to analyse the connections among sensible cognition of freedom and agency by the village activists, indigenous worldviews and subjective experiences within local surroundings. I have pointed out that an economically marginal individual's sensible cognition or aesthetic sense of a place is a process of understanding the importance of maintaining harmonious and righteous connections with the other community members by juxtaposing the indigenous movements of Jharkhand (India) with the Hawai'i (USA). In Jharkhand, the plights of the displaced adivasi villagers and the deep bonds with the village ecologies were the two primary causes behind adivasi villagers' denial of proposed development projects. In the case of Hawai'i, the indigenous movements are the struggles of the island people to re-establish the traditional indigenous physical, psychological, cultural, and spiritual connections with the landscapes which have been encroached on by the economically influential white businessmen and the USA army over time. The tremendous pressure of following the cultural codes of the developed economy to get the recognition of valuable human resources within the developed economy and the forced cultural (which includes

economic, ecological and epistemological) and spiritual impoverishments of the indigenous people have led the indigenous people of Hawai'i to restructure the meanings of Hawai'ian indigenous people's development from the Kānaka Māoli perspective. In the following two sections, I will briefly introduce Jharkhandi adivasis and Kānaka Māolis of Hawai'i.

Jharkhandi culture and Adivasi -Moolvasi Communities

Dayamani Barla and the villagers of Torpa established *Adivasi-Moolvasi astitwa Raksha Mancha* in the wake of resistance movements against the Arcelor-Mittal integrated steel project. She interprets Adivasi-Moolvasi as the *Jharkhandis* or the people of Jharkhand.

Adivasi is the combination of two words Adi-first and vasi-settler/inhabitor. Hence, Adivasi means the first inhabitant of the land. In the context of India, accepting the literal meaning of Adivasi as a determinant factor for identifying the aboriginals is problematic. According to Xaxa, accepting the literal meaning of Adivasi as the basis of identity would exclude the history of migration. According to Xaxa, the term Adivasi is expansive. It includes different tribes "speaking different languages/dialects". The word goes beyond "politico-administrative category" and bases itself on the "bond of emotion". (Xaxa 2008, 37-40)

It does not imply that the term Adivasi is devoid of political intention. On the contrary, the word came into force during the political movement for separate Adivasi land. In the wake of the Jharkhand movement, Jaipal Singh Munda first coined the term Adivasi (in his writing, the spelling is 'Adibasi') in 1930. He pointed out that neither religion nor language was the identity denominators for the Adivasis living in the tract of Chota Nagpur and Santhal Pargana. On 5th July 1939, Jaipal Singh

Munda- then the President of Adibasi Sabha, emphasised that Adivasis have a distinct history, civilisation, customs, and languages (Pankaj 2017, 27-28). All four things are the elements of the adivasi culture.

In his essay, Ram Dayal Munda has argued that adivasi identity and adivasi culture complement each other. According to him, in the geographical terrain of Jharkhand, adivasi societies have maintained close, mutual, reciprocatory relations with nature since the prehistoric era. He also mentions that the members of other non-tribal communities who have followed the Adivasi way of maintaining relationships are also part of Jharkhandi or Adivasi culture. Munda identifies them as *Sadaan/Moolvasi*. Munda, in his argument, has claimed that the non-advasi communities that follow the fundamental ethos and codes of the adivasi cultures are an intrinsic part of Jharkhandi culture (Munda 2002, 29-30).

Moreover, Ram Dayal Munda has opposed the term “Scheduled Tribes”, which generally refers to the indigenous communities living under the jurisdiction of the Indian Constitution. According to him, the name implies that the tribal communities are primitive, and their identity, as well as their ways of living, are temporary (Munda 2002, 40-41). Here he extends the term Adivasi to include communities living outside the geographical terrain of Jharkhand.

Following the arguments of Xaxa, Singh, and Munda, I argue that the term Adivasi in the present context as a term refers to the people who have developed a distinct socio-political, historical, and linguistic cultures based on mutual and harmonious relationships (that include both emotional and physical aspects) with their surroundings. The connections incorporate continuity, ethics, and value system, which contain the complexity of making choices. Hence Adivasi demands for

protecting jal-jangal-jameen are related to the interpretations that evolve from the relationships. In general,

Adivasi refers to a wide variety of communities that earlier had remained relatively free from state control but were increasingly subjugated during the colonial period and brought under the control of the state (Felix Padel 2013, 27).

The term Adivasi thus refers to Jharkhandi indigenous communities. It also refers to, in a more general sense, all indigenous communities following more or less non-dualistic culture. Moolvasi organisations are the non-indigenous people who depend on nature for sustenance and follow the Adivasi ways of bearing and understanding relationships with the surroundings. With time they have become part of Jharkhandi culture. I have followed Munda's arguments and justifications regarding adivasi identity in this research study.

Therefore, in my thesis paper, Adivasi primarily refers to the Jharkhandi indigenous communities. Indigenous communities of Jharkhand value ethics of harmonious existence and follow the cultural codes of maintaining mutual and symbiotic relationships with the local surroundings. Consequently, each indigenous community's knowledge system incorporates within its realm the ethics and rationalities of interconnectedness, and each of the adivasi communities obtains an outlook that opposes the 'monological, hierarchical, and mechanistic model' (Plumwood 2002, 11) of the dominant knowledge system.

Kānaka Māoli, 'Āina and the Hawai'ian Indigenous Sovereignty Movements

Kānaka Māoli is the outcome of native Hawaiian people's conscious effort to assert their " distinctive identity" in the native Hawaiian language. It refers to the autochthonous people of the Hawaiian archipelago. They are those people who share

their genealogical relationships with the lands and waters. (Noelani Goodyear-Kaopua 2014)

The genealogical relationships of Kānaka Māoli to the Hawaiian land and water are intrinsically related to the perspectives of the traditional Hawaiian society toward their local environment. According to the conventional Hawaiian community,

“‘*Āina* (land)” is the provider and the centre of sustenance. In return, the community members must take care of ‘*Āina*. As the carer of the land, the people cannot own or trade the relationships they share with the lands and waters.

According to the Creation Myth of Kānaka Māolis, islands are the offsprings of *Papa* (the Earth Mother) and *Wakea* (the Sky Father). The first offspring of *Wakea* and *Ho’ohokukalani*, named *Haaloa-Naka* (long trembling stalk), died, and a *Kalo* (Taro) plant grew from the burial spot. The second child, *Haloa*, is the progenitor of all the peoples of the Earth. So *Kalo* is the older brother of the human being. ‘*Āina* was part of the ‘*Ohana* (extended family) that connected individuals. Moreover, the connection is spiritual. ‘*Āina* belongs to *Akua* (supernatural power). In the pre-colonised time, *Ali’i* (the chiefs and chiefesses,) the human embodiment of *Akua*, were responsible for assisting *ka po ‘e Hawai’i* (the people of Hawai’i) in the proper management of the ‘*Āina*. There existed a conscious practice of organic relationship with ‘*Āina*. *Ali’i Nui* or (*Mo’i*) traditionally was a trustee. The King was over all the people; he was the supreme executive, so long, however, as he did right. “If *Ali’i* did not treat others in a manner that was *pono* (just, respectful, righteous), the *Ali’i* could be rejected or even killed. (Dyke 2008, 10-15);(Pukui 1993);(Oliveira 2006). The sense of place incorporates the subjective understanding of land, water, and atmosphere. For Kānaka Māoli, the interpretations of ‘*Āina* include “relationship

to *Akua* (god, spirit), (2) relationship to natural elements, (3) relationship to self and others, and (4) belonging to a particular place. (Watson 2008)

Hawai'ian indigenous sovereignty movements, therefore, can be read as the effort of Kānaka Māolis to regain the freedom of choice regarding what is *pono* for the indigenous people and also to re-establish their rights of interpreting and reinterpreting Hawai'ian culture from Kānaka Māoli perspective. In addition, Hawai'ian indigenous sovereignty movements also deconstruct the myth of Hawai'i, which is structured and controlled by the controllers of the Hawai'ian tourism industry.

The webs of connections among subjective experiences, culture, metaphysical ethos, and local ecological surroundings continuously generate new meanings in the cultural domain of a community within a given context. When a society loses its right to maintain the webs of connections, it loses the power to generate new meanings in changing social, historical, economic, political, and ecological contexts. The history of Hawai'i and its people is the history of losing traditional, cultural, political, and economic rights over maintaining physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, genealogical, and cultural connections with land, water, livelihood, and way of living.

Beneath the dominant myth of "sun, sea, and the hula girls" (Trask 1999) lies the history of overthrowing Queen Lili'uokalani in 1893 by the "Missionary gang of the white planters and businessmen" with the tacit support of the United States of America (Dyke 2008, Wood 1999) to usurp the lands and water sources from the Kānaka Māoli people. Hawai'ian indigenous sovereignty movements are about unearthing the histories of the Hawaiian native people's alienations from water and land, fish and *poi*.⁹ By establishing the monolithic meaning of Hawai'i, the

⁹ Traditional Hawaiian food is made from taro.

controllers and the benefactors of the Hawai'ian tourism industry have buried the history of military occupation of the land and the records of the destruction of biological species.

The distinctiveness of the term Kānaka Māoli lies within the truth of the re-emergence of the meaning in the context of Hawaiian sovereignty movements. Its emphasis on building a careful connection to the *'Āina*, reimagining and interpreting well-being in relation to healing and health, brings the issue of limit and choice in the interpretation of growth.

Thus, one can conclude that based on their specific worldviews (which are intrinsically related to the Creation Myths), Adivasis of Jharkhand and Kānaka Māolis of Hawai'i have structured their distinct aesthetic sense of landscapes. The Adivasis and Kānaka Māolis have formed their ways of protecting and preserving harmonious relationships with their ecological surroundings based on their respective metaphysical ethos. These relationships have structured the aesthetic sense of the landscape of these two indigenous communities. Hence, to understand how the adivasis or the Kānaka Māolis interpret terrains and displacements, one must look into how each connection contributes to the community's sense of agency, freedom, identity and sovereignty. It is where the imperative of comprehending the values of the relationships and the integrity (hence interdependency) existing among the connections within the ecology-centric lifestyles of the indigenous communities arises.

A Comparatist's "Holistic Approach" in this Study

I have already mentioned that the approach of comparative literature to a text is a process of engaging with the pluralities, complexities, ambiguities, and dynamism

present in that verbal communication. The process involves relating the experiential worlds of the text to multiple theoretical lenses required for finding how the text connects subjective experiences to the world outside that undergoes variegated changes and thus extends the horizon of experiences of the subjects (in this case, indigenous narrators). Therefore, a comparative literature researcher tries to introspect how the motifs present in the texts represent an individual's experiences, impacts of the incidents on her world, her reflections on those impacts, her understanding of the values of certain connections and making choices regarding her well-being. In other words, a comparatist tries to see a text as the intrinsic part of the Earth's interdependent network of relationships. In the context of the indigenous resistance movements against development-induced displacements from the ecological surroundings, it is imperative to read the narrative of the resistance movements in connection to the indigenous identity, indigenous sovereignty, ecology, food sovereignty, development, and displacement.

The narratives of adivasi women leaders and activists on Adivasi and Kānaka Māoli resistance movements against development-induced displacements serve as the nodal plane that shares connections with various disciplines. To understand the nuances of the narratives time and again, I have borrowed the lens of other fields like political ecology, food sovereignty, ecofeminism, environmental identity, environmental ethics, environmental aesthetics, anthropology, cultural anthropology, critical theory, development studies, and indigenous studies. Each discipline has pointed out that connections exist between ecology and economy, ecology and identity, sensible cognition of self and aesthetics, food sovereignty and women, poverty and displacement, and development and colonialism. At the same time, while trying to understand the indigenous perspectives on 'development' and 'displacement',

I have realised that within the contemplative theoretical arguments, there is a noticeable absence of the indigenous communities' variegated experiences, and reflections, understandings, and knowledge and vice-versa. The scholars have pointed out the loopholes within development projects, the traumas of the displaced indigenous villagers, the influence of ecological connections in structuring cultural codes, sense of indigenous self. However, they remain silent regarding the indigenous people's sensible cognition of “development”. Thus, the ways resisting indigenous communities have shown their capabilities in incorporating the non-indigenous pieces of knowledge and restructuring the understanding according to the communities' metaphysical ethos. I argue that this is the missing link that would not only deconstruct the dominant interpretation of development and underdevelopment but also point out that with the help of creative imagination, an indigenous community can reconstruct the meaning of development from its knowledge system.

As the thesis primarily focuses on Jharkhand's adivasi resistance movements and tries to understand the meanings of *jal-jangal-jameen* from the adivasi perspectives, it becomes imperative for a researcher to understand the connections among ecology, the adivasi cultures and the adivasi worldview. Babu Sarat Chandra Roy's books (1912, 1915) on Munda and Oraon of the Chotanagpur region and W.J Culshaw's (1956) anthropological study on the Santal community point out the traditions, social structures, creation myths, ways of living of the three indigenous communities. A close reading of the three books points out how the cultural practices of the three communities maintain intrinsic relationships with the environment. These three communities have chosen distinct ways to express their relationships with nature through cultural performances. The eco-geography of Jharkhand forms the cultural basis of the three communities; the researcher needs to explore the ethos acting

behind those communities' cultures. Anthropologist Ram Dayal Munda (2002, 2015) has argued that despite the cultural differences, the indigenous communities living on the landscape of Jharkhand share a common ethos which he refers to as "adi-dharam". According to Munda, the ethos adi-dharam constitute the basis of jharkhandi culture that maintains mutual and harmonious relationships with nature. Australian environmental philosopher Freya Matthews (2005, 1998), whose work focuses on the areas of ecological metaphysics, has argued that the metaphysical rooting of a community structure the cultural pattern of the society.

The cultural setting of a society, on the other hand, determines community members' general attitude towards ecology. Hence under the umbrella of Jharkhandi culture, multiple community cultures bear nuanced distinctions across villages. The microscopic view of Parveen Kumar and Sonika Tuti's book (2010) reveals how each Munda village carries its unique customs and history. The outstanding characteristic of Jharkhandi culture is its ability to include the non-indigenous ecocentric communities living on the landscape. Ram Dayal Munda identifies the non-indigenous ecocentric communities as Moolvasis, who have adopted the ethos of adi-dharam in their ways of living with the time. Munda, thus within the canopy of Jharkhandi culture, establishes that the local environment is the cornerstone of the integrated adivasi identity of Jharkhand. The arguments collected in Clayton and Optow's edited *Identity and the Natural Environment* (2014) and Arne Naes's opinions in *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle* (1990) support Munda's assertion on the environment and adivasi identity.

Besides Munda, Jharkhandi scholars like Vandana Tete (2016), Mahadev Toppo (2018), Dungdung (Dungdung 2013, 2017) and non-indigenous scholars like RadhaKrishna (2016), Asoka Kumar Sen (2018), Sahu (2009, 1996), Padel (

2013, 2011, 2010), Kela (2012), Sundar ed (2016) in their books have shown how the self-representation of Adivasis is intrinsically related to the local landscapes. In the following paragraphs, I will briefly point out how the narratives of the indigenous resistance movements exist at the intersections of multiple disciplinary discourses.

As the environment plays a significant role in structuring adivasi identity, the motif of the *jal-jangal-jameen* present in the narratives becomes the symbol of adivasi self-representation to the reader. Therefore, it becomes imperative to understand how the adivasi narrators have tried to interpret their existences concerning *jal-jangal-jameen*.

In Clingerman, Treanor, Drenthen, and Utsler's edited book *Interpreting Nature* (2017), the contributors have pointed out how a person's physical interactions with the natural surroundings help her explore meanings out of her everyday experiences in connection to her socio-economic, cultural, political locations. The dynamics of reflections and interpretations embedded in the process of making meanings thus help her to resist the hegemony of a dominant sense. Ecofeminist scholars like Warren (2014), Shiva & Mies (2010), Agarwal (2010, 2002), and Kelkar (2013) have pointed out how the women members of the ecocentric communities gain expertise over the knowledge of food, nutrition, health and livelihood through maintaining non-dualistic and reciprocal relationships with the other members of the society and local ecologies. Thus, these two perspectives point out that a) the ecological relationships of an individual and the experiences she accumulates through the connections play a significant role in her modes of interpretation, and b) these interpretations are intrinsically related to the interpreter's sense of agency that she perceives. Therefore, her communication is the verbal manifestation of those perceptions. She communicates her experiences, reflections, and interpretations

through the metaphors, symbols and epithets available to her at that historical juncture. Hence, her verbal communication represents multidimensional networks of words that reflect her traditional, cultural, and experiential standpoints.

The motive of *jal-Jangal-jameen*, on the one hand, represents the relationships of the narrators and thus becomes a cornerstone of each narrator's sense of identity. On the other hand, from the perspective of agency sense, *jal-jangal-jameen* also becomes the symbol of Jharkhandi indigenous communities' sense of sovereignty.

Establishing the environmental identity and indigenous sovereignty of the adivasis becomes imperative in understanding adivasi resistance movements against development-induced displacements to challenge the way development planners, executors, investors and the beneficiaries or the consumers of the development endeavours interpret adivasi communities. At the same time, it is necessary to understand the impacts of development projects on the lives of adivasis.

Scholars and activists like Sundar(2007), Baviskar(2004), Padel (2013,2011, 2010), Fernandes (2008,2002), George (2014), Munda, Mehta (2009), Gadgil and Guha (2018,1995), Pereira (2019), Nathan and Xaxa (2012), Sainath (1996), Kela (2012), and Gupta(2015) have explicitly described how ecologically alienated, resource-hungry, capital oriented development projects affect the lives and livelihood of the local adivasi communities with the destruction of local ecological structures. Pereira and Shiva have discussed the closed knowledge system of 'western' technology-based understanding of science and its ignorance of the local knowledge system on food, sustenance, self-reliance, and sustainability. Scholars like Shiva, Agarwal, Mehta, and Fernandes have also pointed out how women of ecocentric communities lose agency, self-reliance, and dignity due to the destruction of local ecology and displacement as the alienation from the local ecology leads to their

dispossession from their collective and accumulated knowledge over preservation of indigenous seeds, sustainable utilisation of local edible and medicinal plants, maintaining of livestock. Alienated from their traditional rights over land, common food resources, and community support, the displaced indigenous women become unskilled labourers in the public sphere and second-grade dependent members in their private life. Within the rehabilitation programme, the male members of the family get recognition as farmers, and the authorities give the land titles to the male members of the displaced families. As the means of collecting free food from the surroundings get closed, the displaced families face food shortages. In the changed situation, the imbalance between work and food severely affects the members' health. The displaced ecocentric families who lose their authority over food production and self-sustenance have to depend on the state-aided food distribution system and sparse incomes to address hunger. Their complete dependency on the market or public distribution system for food deprive them of making choices regarding the selection and consumption of food. Women and children's health and nutrition get severely compromised in the stressed situation where women need to undergo utmost physical labour and psychological stress. The narratives of the displaced women collected in *Visthapan Ki Dard* (2007) show how, in the rehabilitation centres, women hardly get leisure time and feel helpless in the disintegrated village system. They have to labour almost twice in jobs such as collecting water and firewoods. Earlier, they had the freedom to choose the time for going outdoor work. In the rehabilitation centres, the women need to keep the time tab on fetching the supply water or spending twice more time collecting firewoods. Managing time becomes a constraint for them. The peasant families who used to enjoy three months of leisure after the three months of strenuous farm labours cannot psychologically adjust to the work condition after displacement.

The earning members of the displaced families do not have the luxury to choose between work and rest, and they cannot decide about the work quality or conditions.

Amartya Sen's capability theory points out how choicelessness is adverse to the idea of development. He argues that the members must have a voice and choice in the development projects. The aim of any development, according to his argument, is to amplify the number of options for the people. Thus the project-affected people can exercise their authority to make a choice. Thus, the community members can exercise their freedom of agency in interpreting well-being and can actively participate in implementing those interpretations.

The arguments of indigenous sovereignty in the context of aggressive development projects find resonance in the capability theory. The indigenous scholars of the Global North like Alfred (2005, 1999), Kovach, Simpson (2012), Barker (2005), Ka'ōpua (2014), Trask (1999), and Watson (2008) have interpreted indigenous sovereignty as the demand for self-determination. From the perspective of indigenous communities, self-determination means freedom of maintaining and extending the spirit of adivasi ways of living that reflect cultural manifestations of communities' metaphysical understandings. Each indigenous community depending on its longstanding relationships with the local ecology has structured its governmental laws to protect the means of sustenance and well-being of the community members without jeopardising the future generation's food, water, and shelter security.

One of the pragmatic ways to introspect indigenous sovereignty is from the perspective of food sovereignty because it focuses on the sustenance of local biodiversities and the options of free food open for the local consumers. The lens of food sovereignty connects the participation of the local communities, especially women, in

choosing the ways of food production, food procurement, and eating habits which are intrinsically related to the health and nutrition of the women, children and male members of the local communities. As ecologically sustainable agricultural practices structure the main argument of food sovereignty, the imperatives of safeguarding local ecological knowledge, maintaining the balance of soil and water, and local people's rights over ecological resources become part of this sovereignty discourse. Thus, the demand for indigenous self-determination dwells in the realm of food security, indigenous seed preservation, local food diversities and local food cultures.

Plumwood's analysis on dualism, patriarchy, neoliberal economy, and colonial mindset shows how the binary mode of understanding, prevalent in the dominant development cultural discourse, has always denied the interrelation between economy and ecology. Thus economy centric activities and the persons related to such activities have identified the other as regressive 'other', and the project of mainstreaming the 'other' has become a violent endeavour of establishing the codes of the economy-centric ways of interpretation as the absolute and irrefutable truth of human progress by violating the rights of existing ecocentric cultural codes.

Sach edited *Development Dictionary* (2010) gives a comprehensive overview of such violations and violence. By identifying the ecocentric indigenous communities as 'primitive' and 'poor', the spokespersons of development have tried to establish that the path of progress is a unilinear and closed system. Indigenous communities' intellectual regressiveness prompts their general detest towards the hard labour is the root cause of their economic impoverishment. Thus, the proponents of economic development chose to ignore the indigenous outlooks toward production-oriented rapid progress and the required social conditions to meet the demand of the production mechanism.

While the arguments collected in the *Development Dictionary* show the exclusion of the ecocentric voices from the development structures, Plumwood's analysis shows how the patriarchal mindset works behind the modern men's technology-centric development structure. With the dismissal of ecocentric people's understandings and participation in the development designs, the development agents have successfully separated ecology from the economy within the development culture. As a result, the idea of unilinear economic growth has wholly ignored the logic of evolution. That also means that individuals' relationships with the market economy have become the symbol of progress within the development discourse. To the interpreters of mainstream development, the ecological relationships of an individual have become the symbol of regress.

Therefore, it becomes imperative to understand how the indigenous communities' demands for self-determination in connection to the existing and traditional ecological relationships challenge the term regress and offers alternative meanings of development. The capabilities of creating the alternative meanings are intrinsically related to the individual's lived experiences within a context, the influence of the encounters in structuring her agency consciousness, and a value system that emerges from her repertoire of experiences. Hence, it becomes necessary to engage with the term *jal-jangal-jameen* from the perspective of aesthetics of connection.

As ecological relationships of community members play a pivotal role in structuring the aesthetic sense of the indigenous communities, it is imperative to explore the politics of landscape from the perspective of environmental aesthetics. Berleant's arguments on the aesthetic sense of environment show how the interactions

with the local ecology give rise to multiple perceptions and thus refute the idea of a unidimensional idea of universal aesthetics.

On the other hand, Vizenor's aesthetics of survivance shows how the plurality of perceptions helps indigenous communities find alternative interpretations within the dominant perception of survival. The fluidity of life embedded in the process of inventing and rediscovering new meanings out of their survival conditions helps the indigenous spirit survive. The impetus of indigenous resistance is to proliferate the alternative implications of qualitative terms like progress, growth, and freedom from their emerging value systems.

The scholarly arguments of Carson (1962), Scumachar (1973), Amitav Ghosh (2016), Plumwood (2002), Naomi Klein (2014), Ramchandra Guha (2006), and the IPCC reports on Climate Change (2014-2021) have pointed out how the planet's ecology stands as an integrated whole, and the local environmental degradation causes chainlike impacts on larger ecology of the planet. Humans still depend on the planet's ecology for food production, and the imbalance created through aggressive development projects exerts a boomerang effect on human existence.

The discipline of Political Ecology talks about the embedded existence of humans within the planet's ecology. The growing demand for adapting the culture of 'environmentality' (Agarwal, 2005) (sensible human-nature interactions which condone mindless exploitation of natural elements and hence search for ways to preserve the health of ecological balance within nature) is another way of understanding the indigenous resistance movements as the people's struggle to safeguard the local ecological balance from the perspectives of environmental sustainability and the knowledge.

Therefore, the imperative of establishing dialogic relationships with the ecocentric communities is the need of the present time. There is an immediate need to build functional connections between technology and ecology, economy and environment, consumption and conservation. Development discourse cannot refute the exigencies of starting dialogues with ecocentric communities in the twenty-first century. The issues of sustainability, climate change, ecological rights, and rights over making choices regarding the ways of living compel us to re-introspect and adapt the new meanings and the means of development.

While the neoliberal globalisation and its adverse effect on local indigenous communities' traditional rights over local ecologies open up a platform for indigenous solidarity across cultures, the arguments of political ecologists regarding the limit of ecological resources deconstruct the myth of unilinear and unlimited production-consumption-centric growth advocate for initiating a dialogue between non-indigenous and indigenous communities in the context of sustainability of human civilisation. Thus the arguments of environmental pragmatism and environmental ethics justify the final chapter of this dissertation. Paulo Freire's (1968) theories on dialogism and building consent to transform the atmosphere of injustice into an environment of justice and balance have been the link between the indigenous resistance movements.

Reading Resistance Movements

The objectives of the thesis are to understand i) how the ecocentric relationships generate alternative interpretations of development and ii) the exigencies of including alternative understandings in the discourse of development. In other words, the aim is to introspect not only to point out the market-manipulated politics in structuring the monolithic and unidimensional meanings like primitive, progressive, development

and underdevelopment but to link the words of the indigenous activists to the scholarly arguments that have been existing within the periphery of various academic disciplines time and again pointed out the loopholes in the economic development.

Moreover, my point is that the indigenous knowledge systems evolve with time if the community members have the freedom to maintain their cultural and epistemological connections with the local natural surroundings. The knowledge systems have potentialities to subvert, deconstruct, and reconstruct the meanings of development, progress, happiness, and well-being. In other words, if we are looking for alternative semiotics of economic development, we cannot possibly denigrate the value of the indigenous knowledge evolved from various earth-centric worldviews. The agenda of mainstreaming indigenous communities is to make the indigenous communities abide by the state's normative culture, which reflects the worldview of the political and economic elites. The development programmes also come with a condition of negation and denial of the epistemic values existing in the adivasi or Kānaka Māoli knowledge systems. More importantly, the sense of stagnancy attached to the term indigeneity in the dominant cultural imagination overlooks the fact that the cultures possess the capability of interpreting and reinterpreting the meaning of self-determination.

That leaves us with the question of how the indigenous communities learn to determine themselves and how they communicate their interpretation of self in everyday living. In the first chapter, I have tried to understand the relationships between the landscape and indigenous identity from the perspective of Jharkhandi adivasi resistance movements against development-induced displacements. Here I have tried to show that the adivasi identity of Jharkhandi adivasi communities is intrinsically related to the local ecology. My arguments thus focus on adivasi

interpretations of the adivasi self in connection to jal-jangal-jameen and adi-dharam. Both indigenous and non-indigenous scholars working on the issue of indigeneity have shown a noticeable absence of adivasi voices from the dominant representation of adivasi identity (Sen 2018; Munda 2002; Xaxa2008). The dearth of adivasi views within the methods of interpreting adivasi identity calls for an attempt to reconstruct adivasi identity from the adivasi perspectives to construct a counter-argument against the hegemony of modern men's interpretations of Adivasis as underdeveloped societies. In this chapter, I analyse the need to read adivasi identity (a conglomeration of various adivasi communities' identities) in connection to the adivasi landscape (a conglomeration of multiple local environments) in the context of economic development.

As the first chapter looks at adivasi understanding of agency, the second chapter attempts to understand the freedom of maintaining relationships with local ecology from the adivasi perspective. In the dominant socio-political understanding, the word sovereignty appears as a social phenomenon that deals with the freedom of a nation-state to structure a just governance system for the well-being of the state-citizens. Thus the term sovereignty carries the idea of freedom regarding self-determination. In the context of the indigenous resistance movements against develop-induced displacements, this chapter explores how the indigenous concept of freedom intrinsically relates to indigenous environmental identity.

I claim that how the member of society learns to identify 'self' help her understand what is suitable for her society's sustenance. The sovereignty of the community exists when the members of society possess the freedom to design and determine the course of achieving the good. The privilege of participating in the decision-making process forms the basis of sovereign power. In the context of adivasi

resistance movements against development-induced displacements from the ancestral lands, forests and waterways, I attempt to see how adivasi narrators' understandings of adivasi freedom and well-being are part of adivasi culture and history of resistance.

In the third chapter, I claim that sensible cognition of development as unjust and medium oppression is not unique to the adivasis of Jharkhand. As economic development is a global phenomenon, it is imperative to see the impacts of economic development on the ecocentric people living at the margin of the economy across indigenous cultures to understand how the indigenous activists sensibly cognised their agency by rediscovering meanings of place in connection to their cultural understanding of the indigenous way of living. The objective is to understand how the local indigenous resistance movements like Nagri (Jharkhand, India) and Mākua (Hawai'i, USA) have reshaped their understanding of agency and freedom in connection to the communities' sense of place.

The fourth and final chapter tries to show how do the experiences of the indigenous resistance movements have helped the resisting villagers to evolve as critically conscious change-makers who have the capabilities of exploring and establishing new connections to places and people existing beyond the boundaries of their village spaces based on equality, dignity and empathy.

There is a need to understand that decolonisation of the mind poses a challenge to the hegemony of the dominant culture, but it is not a complete negation of the existing truths within those cultures. I have tried to establish the meanings of *jal-jangal-jameen* from adivasi perspectives. The truth is that there is one Earth in the solar system, and the history of the Earth is the history of coevolution. The diversities, which are the root cause of the ecological richness of this planet, are the outcome of such evolution.

CHAPTER- 1

Identity in the Light of *Adi-dharam*: Understanding the Metaphysical Relationship between Jharkhandi Adivasi Identity and Nature

Economic development projects like hydroelectric power plants, large dams, mining projects, heavy industries, and other infrastructural projects have displaced almost eighty lakh Adivasis from their villages and *jal-jangal-jameen* in the post-independence India. Most of the adivasi settlements exist in the mineral-rich areas of Jharkhand, India and hence have become the lucrative ground for setting up heavy industries. The development executors pose heavy industrialisation as the means to uplift the general condition of economically impoverished and technologically backward Adivasis (identified as Scheduled Tribes in the Indian Constitution). In reality, such development projects had caused massive adivasi displacements, which endangered their livelihoods and adivasi ways of living. The general degradation in the qualities of living after development-induced evictions from their ancestral landscapes has led the adivasi communities to choose *jal-jangal-jameen* over mainstream development projects.

To the pro-development groups of people, the dissensions of Adivasis against economic development projects appear as the dissents of intellectually inferior people who dislike the destruction of their local ecologies and could not accept the collateral damage of economic development for the sake of the more considerable interest of human progress through various government institutions.

In the discourse of economy-centric development identifying the ‘underdeveloped’ communities plays a dominant role. In the lexicon of economic development discourse, the aim of bringing industries is to economically develop or

mainstream the primitive, backward, and underdeveloped local communities (in the case of Jharkhand the Adivasis)¹⁰. That is why “development” is always a top-down process, and the effect of the development projects on the local ecology-centric adivasi communities gets minimum attention from the development executors.

In the narratives of adivasi resistance movements against development-induced displacements frequent recurrence of the term *jal-jangal-jameen* (water-forest-land) makes it the motif of the texts. I claim that if we see the motif of *jal-jangal-jameen* as “ a pattern of thought” (Bandyopadhyay 2004, 12) of adivasi narrators who participated in the adivasi resistance movements against development-induced displacements, we need to see how the narrators have used the motif of *jal-jangal-jameen* to describe the structure of adivasi identity from their perspectives. Therefore, to understand adivasi resistance movements, it is imperative to comprehend the connection between adivasi identity and local ecology. To discover what kinds of relationships exist between the adivasi communities of Jharkhand and the local environment and what are the meanings of those relationships from the viewpoints of adivasi villagers, in this chapter I have tried to understand What is the relationship between the local landscape and Jharkhandi adivasi identity?

The research question tries to explore how the adivasi metaphysical ethos (referred to as *adi-dharam* by Dr Ram Dayal Munda) connects *jal-jangal-jameen* to the adivasi sense of identity and how losing their traditional and cultural rights of maintaining distinct relationships with the local *jal-jangal-jameen* jeopardise the basis of Jharkhandi adivasi identity. Thereby, in this chapter, I have tried to explore the

¹⁰ In India the people who depend on local ecology for livelihood are the first to lose their rights to access on local ecological elements through displacements. According to a study report published in 2011, the heavy industrial development projects have caused displacement of nearly 21 to 33 million people. Adivasis constitute nearly forty percent of these displaced people. (Negi and Ganguly 2011) (Saxena, 2012 27). As per 2011 Indian census the Adivasis who in Indian administrative-judiciary-and legislative languages are known as Scheduled Tribes constitute only 8.2 percent of the total Indian population (Narain 2019)

Jharkhandi adivasi identity in connection to the adivasi communities' social, economic, cultural, and spiritual relations to the *jal-jangal-jameen* through the integrated lens of oral narratives (that I have collected) and *adi-dharam*.

In the narratives of adivasi resistance movements against development-induced displacements, frequent recurrence of the term *jal-jangal-jameen* (water-forest-land) makes it the motif of the texts. In the context of adivasi resistance movements against development-induced evictions, the adivasi women activist-narrators have used *jal-jangal-jameen* as the basis of adivasi existence. Hence, the term *jal-jangal-jameen* represents “ a pattern of thought” (Bandyopadhyay 2004, 12) about the adivasi self. Therefore, it is imperative to understand adivasi resistance movements to comprehend the connection between adivasi identity and local ecology. To discover what relationships exist between the adivasi communities of Jharkhand and the local environment and the meanings of those relationships from the viewpoints of adivasi villagers, in this chapter, I have tried to understand why the narrators describe Jharkhandi adivasi identity in relation to *jal-jangal-jameen*.

In this chapter, I have pointed out that adivasi communities' social, economic, cultural, and spiritual connections to the *jal-jangal-jameen* constitute the basis of Jharkhandi adivasi identity. Through the integrated lens of oral narratives (that I have collected) and *adi-dharam*, I argue that without understanding the profound relationship between the adivasi worldview on *jal-jangal-jameen* and adivasi identity, the adivasi dissension against development-induced displacement would remain in the shrouds of incomprehensibility. India's development policy planners and executors ubiquitously identify adivasis as the underdeveloped. Development planners and executors posit the establishment of heavy industries as the panacea for underdevelopment. However, the development executors hardly introspect how the

heavy industries affect the foundation of adivasi existence and identity by dislocating and disintegrating adivasi communities from their traditional homelands and destructing the local ecological structures. Hence, my argument is that the inclusion of adivasis in any development project can only be possible if the non-adivasi socio-political and economic elites understand the value of *jal-jangal-jameen* in structuring and sustaining the cornerstone of adivasi identity.

Thus, identity plays a pivotal role in the economic development discourse in determining who would enjoy the authority as planners and bear the social-cultural-economic-ecological burdens of the development projects. Therefore, the imperative to read adivasi identity from the adivasi perspective is to subvert the meanings attached to the signifiers that identify adivasis as underdeveloped.

Adivasi identity and Local ecology

The identity of a social group describes how the members of that group live their life, execute different social roles, understand their social responsibilities and express them through everyday living, social relationships, community norms, festivals, rituals, arts and more. A community's identity signifies how the members describe themselves and how the outsiders interpret the gathered pieces of information about the community members' social, cultural, and economic behaviours. Identity is thus a “self-concept involving beliefs about who we are and whom we want to be”(Clayton and Optow 2003, 5). Therefore, interpretations play significant roles in structuring the idea about the self and the concept of others. As the human experience is intrinsically related to the place of living, a person's complex and multidimensional relationships with that area structure her “concept of self”. Therefore, how the members of a community interact with the environment of a place and cognise their distinct

existences (as an individual and as a member of her community) in relation to their physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual connections with their place of living, act as one of the crucial elements in structuring their identity. The basis of ecological identity is the importance of ecological relationships in building the concept of self. According to Susan Clayton,

Environmental identity is one part of how people form their self-concept: a sense of connection to some part of the non-human natural environment, based on history, emotional attachment, and/or similarity, that affects how they perceive and act toward the world; a belief that the environment is important to us and an important part of who we are. (Clayton 2003, 45-46)

Environmental identity, Clayton argues, is “both a product”, that is, “an assortment of beliefs about the self”, and “a force” which acts as “a motivator of particular ways of interacting with the world, thus structuring the personal, social, and political behaviour”. She has also argued that the dominance of social aspects in defining identity tends to overlook “ the impact of non-social (or at least non-human) objects of defining identity”. Hence she proposes environmental identity as a lens to understand how the people of a community “form their self-concept in relation to their non-human natural environment (Clayton 2003,46).

Following the argument as mentioned, Jharkhandi adivasi communities’ collective resistance movements against the development-induced displacements from *jal-jangal-jameen* indicate nature plays a pivotal role in adivasi understanding of self. That is why, in the context of resistance movements against development-induced displacement, protecting *jal-jangal-jameen* from development-induced destructions acts as the primary motivating force. Hence, it is imperative to understand how the adivasi villagers identify their existence in relation to their local

surroundings and why adivasi villagers' reflections on progress and ecology are essential in development discourse.

The ubiquitous presence of jal-jangal-jameen in the stories of resistance movements indicates that the adivasi communities carry a more profound sense of awareness regarding their identity in connection to the local ecology. The inquisitive enquirers can better understand this process of identifying self in relation to surrounding natural elements from the perspective of environmental identity. According to Susan Clayton, environmental identity is,

one part of how people form their self-concept: a sense of connection to some part of the non-human natural environment, based on history, emotional attachment, and/or similarity, that affects the ways in which we perceive and act toward the world; a belief that the environment is important to us and an important part of who we are(Clayton and Optow ed 2003, 45-46).

In other words, how a community identifies itself is related to how the community members have developed an outlook to define the members' positions and responsibilities within the local environment. On the other hand, the metaphysical ethos of community structures the basic behaviours of the community members to the non-human world or local environment. Guided by those "basic modalities" (Matthew 2006), the community members interpret their needs and rights, securities and insecurities, wealth and poverty, cosmic roles and social duties. A community's sense of identity assimilates all the factors mentioned beforehand. Thus, one can argue that the metaphysical ethos of a community plays a pivotal role in structuring the identity of a community. Suppose the metaphysical ethos of society perceives the local environment as the valuable foundation of its distinct existence. In that case, the community's identity does not remain bound to the only social sphere(human relationships). The sense of identity of that community includes community members'

physical, psychological, and emotional connections to the local ecology. (Matthews 2006, Clayton 2003, Plumwood 1995).

The complex network of social and ecological interactions, reflections, metaphysical ethos, value system, knowledge, and cultural norms form a community's identity. Hence, to understand the multiple layers existing within adivasi identity or adivasi sense of self, it is imperative to comprehend adivasi worldview or adivasi metaphysical ethos towards the non-human elements of the local ecological surroundings. In the context of adivasi identity, one has to look into how an adivasi individual learns to interpret 'self' in relation to her local environment through personal as well as collective experiences and shared memories of the community that include information on the surroundings, ways of sustenance, and belief systems.

On the other hand, in the established idea of economic development, development planners identify the adivasis as underdeveloped based on their socio-cultural behaviours following the methods of the Euro-Atlantic development concept.

In the dominant development discourse, the idea of development is related to mainstreaming adivasis, which insinuates the idea of making them adaptable to the social and economic norms of the 'developed' world. According to Saxena, writes, "Emulating their¹¹" conditions is the characteristic of development. The road to realising this goal lay in replicating their model and strategies (Saxena 2012, 26)

The logic of development plannings and models in the adivasi inhabited regions thus have always preceded by the identifications of the communities as economically impoverished and intellectually backward because of their entrenched connections with local ecology and distance from the capital-oriented social and economic behaviour. However, on the other hand, the adivasi villagers have expressed

¹¹ The highly industrialised seven countries sitting on the peak of the world's economic and political power.

their dissension to the development models because they interpreted the economic development projects as the destroyers of their adivasi identity. Hence adivasi identity or the politics of interpreting adivasi identity has become crucial to the development discourse.

Dayamani Barla- a senior adivasi activist who led the people's movement against Arcelor Mittal integrated steel plant- thinks that the ideologues of the developmental projects have the slightest understanding of adivasi interpretations of development. The inability of the project planners and executors to understand the adivasi perspective has caused havoc in the lives of the displaced Adivasis. In her words,

Sarkar ke paas adivasi samaj ke bare mein koi soch nahi hai, culture ke bare mein soch nahi hai, unki itihās ke bare mein soch nahi hai. (Barla 2016)

[The people in the government have no understanding of adivasi society. They do not have any idea about adivasi culture and history.]

According to Barla, the project planners and executors, without understanding *Jharkhandi* adivasi communities' history and culture, fail to understand how the “*jal-jangal-jameen*” -the local ecology plays a meaningful part in structuring the essence of adivasi identity. Therefore, the projects that alienate adivasi communities from their *jal, jangal aur jameen* (waterways, forest, and land) pose a severe threat to the members' ‘existence’ and ‘identity’¹².

Moreover, Dayamani Barla's words point out that the absence of the adivasi concept of self in the development models is the main loophole that needs immediate and serious attention from the development planners and executors. The dearth of

¹² Within the narratives of the women activists, adivasi existence and adivasi identity appear as umbrella terms that incorporate all adivasi communities who share mutual and harmonious relationships with the local surroundings of Jharkhand.

adivasi views within the methods of interpreting adivasi identity, therefore, points out the need to reconstruct the adivasi identity from the adivasi perspectives (Sen 2018; Munda 2002; Xaxa2008).

Virginius Xaxa's arguments on the impact of development projects on India's "tribal communities" echo Barla's perspective. In "Tribes and Development: Retrospect and Prospect", Xaxa has argued about the need "for reorienting development in tune with tribal ethos and tradition". (Xaxa Virginius 2012, 30-31). Therefore, understanding adivasi identity in relation to the environment-*jal, jangal, and jameen*- is essential to comprehend the anathema of the adivasi people towards the mainstream developmental projects.

The adivasi politicians, scholars, and social activists of Jharkhand have pointed out the epistemological lacuna present in the linguistic codes of Indian state administrations regarding the Adivasi identity. I argue that without considering the fundamental metaphysical ethos of the adivasis (specifically Jharkhandi adivasis), engaging with the adivasi identity could not be grasped. Hence, in the next section, I have tried to see how the metaphysical ethos of the Jharkhandi adivasis (referred to as *adi-dharam* by Dr Ram Dayal Munda) constitutes the sense of self (which includes social and cultural behaviours of the Adivasis) of the Jharkhandi adivasi communities.

Cultural Identity and *Adi-Dharam*

Adivasi scholar and activist Ram Dayal Munda has pointed out the importance of nature in orienting the identity of adivasi communities (Munda 2002, 2014, 2015,2017). The central argument of this section focuses on how the metaphysical dictum of *adi-dharam* structures the general adivasi beliefs about the relationships between adivasi-self and the natural surroundings (*jal-jangal-jameen*).

Munda used the term *adi-dharam* to create a pan-Indian structure of adivasi religious identity to elevate the confidence and consciousness of the future adivasi generations regarding the existence of distinct adivasi religious identity. He intended to consolidate the fundamental outlook of Jharkhandi adivasi societies towards nature/environment within the umbrella term of *adi-dharam*. He has referred to “*adi-dharam*” as the fundamental ethos of the adivasi communities, specifically the adivasi communities of Jharkhand. Based on the ethos of the *adi-dharam*, the adivasis possess a distinct way of describing their relationships with the *Parameswar* (the Great Spirit), *Shrishti* (Creation), *Prithwi* (world), *Manushya* (human beings) (Munda & Manki 2017, 39).

Approaching the distinct perspective of adivasi societies on the relationships between the dynamics of human existence and the environment from the standpoint of comparative literary studies helps us to connect Freya Mathews’ arguments on the ‘modality’ (social and cultural behaviours) of a community (Mathews 2006) to the communities’ interpretation (Halder 2004) of experiences. Mathews argues that “some conception of the basic inclination of the universe” orient a society’s “collective agency” or the cultural ethos (Mathews 2006). According to Mathews, the way community members understand the universe and the purpose of human existence shapes their cultural relationship with the non-human world.

On the other hand, Halder looks at a community's cultural practices from the performance perspective. She argues that “ways of speaking, clothing, dancing, playing, music, cursing, joking Etc.” reflect the culture of the community in everyday living. The “actual execution” or communication practice is the performance that reflects the social organisation of communicative forms and practices (Halder 2004, 108-109).

While Mathews emphasises the metaphysical moorings within culture, Halder points out how the culture gets coded within the performative representation of communication. Both the scholars have pointed out that cultural identity is related to the epistemological orientation of the community members. Community members translate their understandings of the “universe” into their specific communication. Therefore, I argue that the act of interpreting a community’s identity calls for an active engagement with the metaphysical anchorage of the codes, which are metalinguistic parts of communication. The inclusion of code thus extends the identity horizon from the empirical data's limitation.

Following this thread of the argument, I argue that the social and cultural ‘codes’ buried within the oral narratives reflect the ways Adivasis perceive their relationship with the Great Spirit, Creation, and the non-human world. Ram Dayal Munda tried to establish as ‘adi-dharam’ is the philosophical basis of the codes embedded in the adivasi way of living. Adi-dharam, according to Ram Dayal Munda, is the cornerstone of adivasi identity. These codes of communication or the social and cultural behaviours of the adivasi communities of Jharkhand also point out the basic value system of the Jharkhandi adivasi communities. This value system helps the members of society create their distinct “concept of self” (Clayton 2003, 5-6). The ways the community members express their outlook towards non-human others reflect the codes of their value system. That means a community's cultural identity bears the cultural codes that exhibit members’ perspectives towards their surrounding non-human world. Therefore, when adivasi villagers claim *jal-jangal-jameen* as the intrinsic part of adivasi self-concept, it is imperative to look into the connection between adi-dharam and adivasi identity.

In his book *Adivasi Astitwa aur Jharkhandi Asmita ke Sawal*, Dr Munda has argued that the adivasi way of looking at the world (*darshan*) structures the adivasi way of living and hence adivasi identity. In his words;

Adi-dharam ka sabse bari viseshta sambhavatah ye hai ki sansthaगत धार्मिक आवश्यकतयों के विपरित is dharam mein manushya aur prakriti ka sambandh parasparik nirbharta mein nirupayit hua hai., na ki srishti ke upar vijay pane ki bhawna mein. (Munda 2002, 46)

[The primary aspect of *Adi-dharam* is that, unlike other institutionalised religions, it has manifested itself in the mutual relationship between the human being and nature. It does not believe in the superiority of human beings over Creation).

Maintaining mutual relationships with the environment is the metaphysical grounding of *Adi-dharam*. The social structures, rituals, festivals, celebrations, and everyday living of the village community -in short- the multiple facets of adivasi culture reflect the ethos of *adi-dharam*.

Vrinda Dalmiya's arguments on care ethics and feminist epistemology focus on the meanings of the word *dharma* from the perspectives of careful and ethical ways of knowing. She claims that the word *dharma* bears two significances. It signifies "specific ethical duties/rules", which are controvertible. On the other hand, *dharma* also means the following social and cultural behaviours that would bring "the Ultimate Good" to the human and non-human elements that share valuable connections with a particular community (Dalmiya 2016, 103-104). The word *dharma* signifies the importance of maintaining relational balance in everyday living.

Hence, *adi-dharam* is the adivasi communities' perceptions of their ethical duties towards the other non-human ecological elements. The deep knowledge about the local environment is another reason that encourages the adivasis to value the non-

human elements that play specific roles in maintaining adivasi ways of living. That is why adivasi communities follow the ethics of maintaining ethical relationships of harmonious coexistence with the valued elements. Maintaining mutual and harmonious relationships is at the core of every jharkhandi adivasi community's culture and the foundation of the adivasi sense of self. At that point, the exigency of looking at Jharkhandi adivasi communities' cultural identity in connection to *adi-dharam* arises.

According to Munda, the metaphysical basis of *adi-dharam* acknowledges the embeddedness of human existence within nature. That is why securing and continuing the relationships with the elements of the *jal-jangal-jameen*, or the local ecology, plays a pivotal role within the adivasi value system. Dr Munda, while explaining the essential features of *adi-dharam*, has mentioned;

Adi-dharam ka sabse bari viseshta sambhavatah ye hai ki sansthaगत धार्मिक आवश्यकतायों के विपरित is dharam mein manushya aur prakriti ka sambandh parasparik nirbharta mein nirupayit hua hai., na ki srishti ke upar vijay pane ki bhawna mein. (Munda 2002, 46)

[The primary aspect of *Adi-dharma* probably is that, unlike the institutionalized religions, it has manifested itself in the mutual relationship of the human being and nature. It does not thrive on the concept of claiming superiority of the human beings over the other elements of Creation.]

That means the adivasi way of structuring the self-concept relates to nature intrinsically. In support of his claim, he cited the prayers and rituals of three major adivasi festivals of Jharkhand: Karma, Sohrai, and Sarhul. The prayers and the stories related to the festivals exhibit the codes of mutual and symbiotic relationships of adivasi individuals. The codes find their resonance in the Creation Myths of the adivasi communities.

Munda has cited the story of the Creation Myth of Mundas to establish his claim. According to the Munda Creation Myths of Jharkhand, The Great Spirit (Singbonga) and the Great Mother (Thakur jiu and Thakur maa for Santals, Dharmesh and Parvathi for Oraons) created the Earth with the help of aquatic animals. After that, He made various natural elements like rocks, mountains, streams, and wild animals along with the first man and woman. Hence, humans do not hold a unique position in adivasi cosmology. The Great Spirit then distributed works among His creations according to their virtues to maintain the balance in his created world. That is why the primary understanding of the various adivasi societies centres around preserving the harmonious coexistence with other natural elements to secure the balance within the creation. (Sen 2018, 43-56) (Munda & Manki 2015), (Munda 2002, 2009, 2015).

As maintaining symbiotic and mutual relationships with the landscape elements lie at the centre of the adi-dharam, the principles of relational existence form the basic framework of adivasi identity. Suppose a community's culture carries the ethos of maintaining mutual and harmonious relationships with every seen and unseen element of Creation. In that case, the members belonging to that culture tend to interpret and codify the reciprocal aspects of living in every sphere of living.

For example, the concept of hell and heaven is absent in adivasi societies. The deceased ancestors, as well as the spirits, coexist with the living souls. Conceptualising the living world as a holistic plane where dead and living, human and non-human, exist together by carefully keeping the balance of Creation structure a value system that honours and safeguards the ethos of equality. Munda has pointed out the outlook of adivasi society like this:

*Jharkhandi samaj ka mool Swarup, samtamulak hi
raha hai...Is shetra mein prachalit akhet padhati mein
kutte ko bhi manushya ke barabar gina jata hai...gaon
ki kisi baithak mein pratibhagiyon ka golai aur*

barabari mein baithna bhi isi samanta bodh ko lakshit karta hai” (Munda 2002, 113-114)

[Equality is the basis and the primary nature of the Jharkhandi society. The traditional *akhet system* of the Adivasi societies recognises the merits of dogs as equal to humans. The participants usually sit in a round and on the same level during a village meeting. The sitting arrangement indicates the sense of equality within adivasi society].

By referring to the sitting arrangements in the adivasi village council meeting, Munda has pointed out how Adivasis have translated the code of equality into their socio-cultural practices.

The claim finds its resonance in the arguments of Asoka Sen. According to him, two broad features of the adivasi perception of cosmology are recognising earth and its flora and fauna as part of divine creation and believing that maintaining the order is a moral act (Sen 2018, 63)

The Adivasis of Jharkhand care for the landscape as they perceive the practice of maintaining the symbiotic and mutual relationships with other non-human beings as the “moral act” of valuing the order of the Creation. The adivasi self thus conceptualises its existence in relation to the landscape or the *jal-jangal-jameen*. Hence, it is imperative to understand adivasi identity in relation to ecology.

Adivasis of Jharkhand have transformed the philosophical codes of the *adi-dharam* through the socio-cultural performances that include everyday living. The philosophical basis of *adi-dharam* emphasized maintaining the balance between different elements of nature, which is the primary order of Creation. The worldview of *adi-dharam* is the extra edge that orients the adivasi perception of personal and collective identity in relation to the local ecological elements. Protecting the balance between humans and other elements of nature becomes an essential aspect of adivasi identity. When development projects like large dams, extensive minings, and big

power plants destroy the surrounding ecosystems, the orientation of adivasi identity (both subjective and collective) loses its basis of ascertaining self. In the following passages, I have shown how the three adivasi women narrators have represented adivasi cultural practices as the continuous sustaining of the bonds between Adivasis and the non-human beings in their oral narratives. Here I have focussed on three main festivals of Jharkhand: *Karam*, *Dasai*, and *Sarhul*. These agrarian adivasi communities of Jharkhand observe the rituals of these festivals with great importance and enthusiasm. These three festivals represent the essence of Jharkhandi Adivasis cultural identity and its connection to *jal-jangal-jameen*.

Dayamani Barla's reflection on the *Karam* festival shows how the adivasi way of interpreting the agencies of natural forces forms the collective identity of the adivasis. According to her, *Karma* or *Karam* festival reflects kinship values in the agrarian adivasi society during the plantation time through its rituals and celebration. She has also described the *Karam* festival as remembering the meaning of taking rest in the adivasi societies. In the light of the *adi-dharam*, the notion of rest bears the purpose of restraining human beings from the overuse of natural elements. In Dayamani Barla's words,

Vo to prakriti ke saath adivasi samaaj ka jivanchakra chalta hai..aur karma teohar pahle ka jo hota tha , bara dhumdham se hota tha. Us mein adivasi ek jutta ka parichay jo tha vo milta tha....samaajik rista jabardast tha..vasant ke baad garmi aata hai, uske baad barsat aati hai,..adivasi sab log kheti ke kaam mein lage huye hai..to karma teohar manaya jaata hai khetibari ko leke, aur vo jangal ko leke..to jo abhi sabhi khetibari karke, thakke nikalte hai, uske vaad ye teohar manaya jata hai.” (Barla 2015)

[It is with nature that the lifecycle of Adivasis moves on. Earlier the adivasi villagers celebrate the *Karma* festival with great enthusiasm. The festival reflected the solidarity of adivasi society. The social bonds among the Adivasis were strong. We know that summer follows the spring, and monsoon follows the season of summer. During monsoon, Adivasis get busy with farming. *Karma* festival celebrates (the

agencies) of the farmers, farmlands and forests. Adivasi farmers get completely exhausted after finishing the hard work of the plantation. After the plantation work is over, they celebrate the festival of *karam*.]

By connecting the *karma* festival with the adivasi farming practices, Dayamani Barla has pointed out the close connections shared between adivasi cultural and livelihood practices. *Karma* festival is one of the constitutive elements of the cultural identity of the adivasi communities of Jharkhand. Barla specifies that *karma* festival as an adivasi identity indicator represents the value of farming within adivasi communities and also adivasi communities' close relation with farmlands. Barla's narrative syntax also points out how Jharkhandi adivasis agricultural practices depend on seasons. She has also described the festival of *karam* as the process of rejuvenating the natural balance that gets affected due to human interventions like tilling, ploughing, and sowing. *karam* festival, according to Dayamani Barla, also remembers the importance of restricting the extent of human interventions within nature so that other non-human natural elements return to their natural rhythms of life.

Dayamani's words also indicate the importance of taking rest in the adivasi culture. In the Munda Creation Myth *Sosobonga*, The Great spirit taught the first man *Latkum Haram* the knowledge of cultivation and set the ethical boundary of taking rest to restore the balance within nature. The time is not only about producing more but also about withdrawing from the work of production to sustain the balance within the Creation. Adivasis are also part of the Creation. To restore the farmers' energy and the farm lands' ecological balance, which gets temporarily disrupted due to interventions of farmers, the farmers must restrain themselves from overwork. The festival of *Karam* thus symbolises the celebration of human agency and a reminder of human responsibilities towards nature.

According to the Munda Creation Myth, *Singbonga* and the First Mother created the Earth and every single creature, including humans. Therefore, every single place on this earth is the physical manifestation of the desire of *Singbonga* and the First Mother. Therefore, celebrating *Karma* is a way of remembering the nature of relationships that should thrive between humans and nature.

The second part of *Sosobonga* emphasises the importance of sustainable living. According to the *Asura* story, *Asuras*, whom *Singbonga* and the First Mother also created, knew how to forge iron. The greed of dominating everybody pushed them to produce more iron. They chose to work day and night. Thus, the water, forest, field, the air got polluted. The asuras did not care about other humans and non-humans' health and well-being. *Singbonga* asked them to balance work and rest so that the “Earth can cool down” and “the sky can calm down”. The *Asuras* declined to listen, and finally, *Singbonga* sent sickness to *Asuras*, their children started dying, and then *Asuras* accepted the dictum of Creation that the world is for all. (Munda, 2015 71-217).

Dayamani Barla, in her reflections on the *Karma* festival, emphasised adivasi understanding of integrated living. According to her, the *Karma* festival is the celebration of solidarity. It is also a process of remembering how the adivasi ancestors have practised the ethics of maintaining a balance within the environment by restraining themselves from overproduction and exhaustion of natural elements through the principle of rest.

The celebration is to remember that “the land [is] for us all, the earth [is]for us all”. Sharing the land and Earth with all is the ‘ultimate Good’. The aspect of maintaining the environment's well-being is the basis of *adi-dharam*. This perspective on life may give an idea about the simple lifestyle of Adivasis and their practice of minimalism.

Following the thread of the above argument, one can interpret the adivasi festivals as the ways of remembering the ethos of adivasi value systems and reenacting the values of maintaining the ethos of the *adi-dharam*. The reenactment incorporates the present enactors' experiences, understandings, and reflections.

While *karma* is the festival of celebrating the social bonds, the performance of the *sohrai* (*dasai* in Santhali) festival acknowledges the importance of cattle in adivasi existence. The Adivasi communities observe *sohrai* during the month of *Kartik* and *Poush* (November-December). It is “basically an observance of honour of the cattle, which assist in the cultivation operations”. (Munda 2014, 21). I see this festival through the eyes of Munni Hansda. Munni Hansda is from the Santhal community. Like the Munda community, Santhals are also an agrarian society. Munni Hansda represents the celebration of *Sohrai* like this:

Sohrai mein saare bahan ko bulayega...saare bahan ko sohrai mein aana hi chahiye..bail ka bhi puja karega..bail ke sing mein dhan bandh dega..kahega ke bahen ka baal bandh diye..bail ke gale mein barabara pitha bandh dega aur jhuk jhuk ke us pitha ko lega..puja ke baad subah gaujagaa hota hai..ghar ghar mein mandar bajate hue jaayega, geet gaye ga..gaujaga ka geet hota hai..baha ka geet hota hai..sab ka alag alag geet hota hai..gaujaga ke baad hi naach-gaan shuru hota hai.” (Hansda 2017)

[Brothers send invitations to their married sisters to come home to celebrate the festival. The sisters must visit their paternal houses in *sohrai*. The villagers worship cows and oxen. They tie up the paddy sheaves on the horns of the cattle and mention the act of tying the sheaves as braiding the hairs of the sisters. The farmers adorn the cattle with garlands of rice cakes and playfully try to snatch the cakes from them. After the prayers, the following day, the (young boys and girls) visit each household with *Mandar* (indigenous drums) and sing songs to wake up the cattle. It is known as *Gau-Jaga* (cow waking). There are different songs for *Gau-Jaga*, and *Baha* (spring festival). After the *Gau-Jaga*, villagers gather and begin singing and dancing.]

Munni Hansda's narration shows how in this festival, her Santali community celebrate kinship with the cattle, which are the intrinsic part of adivasi agrarian communities like Santals. She has depicted how an affectionate brother enjoys teasing his sister; the male members of Munni Hansda's village community exhibit the same gesture towards their farming companions. The ways the villagers share the feeling of kinships with their cattle show the adivasi societies acknowledge the agencies of the animals in food security and adivasi people's sustenance. The prayers in the festival also reflect how the adivasi belief system cognises the cattle's roles in sustaining the families' well-being. A part of the prayer goes like this,

In our work, in our cultivation
Those who help us, those who assist us,
Those who stood by us
Those who faced hardship with us
For our welfare, for our well-being
Friend like bulls, mother-like cows,
We honour them; we greet them. (Munda 2014,23)

From the accounts of Culshaw, it also becomes apparent that during this festival, the families give new clothes and festive foods to the herdboys. "It is a happy season for the herdboys" (Culshaw 2018 reprint, 112). Thus prayer and the celebration of the *Sohrai/ Dasai* showcase the ways adivasi farmers cognise the contributions of the bulls and cows and the herdboys who tend the cattle in sustaining their well-being. Thus securing the well-being of these "helpers" and "assistants" is also the farmer's duty. The cultural codes of this festival point out that in the adivasi belief system farmer does not appear as the only important agent of agricultural production. A skilled farmer knows the perfect balance among the various agencies required for an excellent harvest. The rhythm of farming depends on interdependent relationships. The farmer cannot expect successful sowing of seedlings if the bulls are not healthy and happy enough to till the lands. The cows will not produce enough

milk if they live in miserable conditions. The herdboys play essential roles in maintaining the health of the cattle. The sense of well-being in this belief system includes the welfare of the concerned being's body, mind and spirit. Hence, a farmer cannot even ignore the herdboys' well-being if he intends to get a good harvest. Therefore, the need to take care of every agent connected directly and indirectly to the complex interrelational agricultural system – the backbone of adivasi self-concept – becomes crucial. The sohrai festival is about remembering how the adivasi ancestors realised the value of the non-human beings in relation to their sustenance and sustainability through their experiences.

Ram Dayal Munda has shown in his book *Adi-dharam* how the festival adivasi ancestors learned the importance of taking care of the cattle. The story of *Sohrai* tells once an adivasi ancestor, out of greed, mistreated his cattle and made the animals work day and night without any rest for more production. When all the farm animals abandoned adivasi farmers, The Great Spirit (*Singbonga*) intervened. He ordered the adivasi ancestors to establish a friendly relationship with the cattle. Following the order of Singbonga, the Adivasis arrange the Sohrai festival to acknowledge the contribution of the animals in the cultivation works. Thus, The Great Spirit reestablished the relationships of justice and balance between adivasi farmers and their cattle.

The idea of “taking rest” or “giving rest” to restore the energy balance within creation (as emphasised in *Asur Kahini*) finds its justifications in the principles of minimalism, restraining oneself from the over-exploitations of the ecological elements. The ethical code is a critical feature of sustainable living.

The third and last festival I mention here is the festival of *Sarhul*. The adivasi communities welcome a new agricultural year through the festival sarhul. Santhal

communities refer to the festival as *Baha*. Ram Dayal Munda explains the essence of the festival like this:

By extension, *sarhul* is the welcoming of nature in its new form through honoring the *sal* flowers...No Adivasi would bring home any new leaves or flowers or use them in any way before the village priest has formally welcomed it. (Munda 2014, 11)

Sarhul or *baha* is the festival of renewed hope for a cultivation year. For Nandi Kachhap, the celebration of *sarhul* is related to the onset of the new cultivation year and also remembering the contribution of the *sal* tree that once helped the spirit of a dead hunter to return to his home. Nandi Kachhap has learned the story from her elders. In this story, when a hunter passed away in the forest, his hunting mates, who could not bring back his body, covered the body with the flowers of the *Sal* tree. When the villagers returned to the forest to bring back the dead body for the last rites, they found that the flowers preserved the lifeless body of the hunter. The villagers then performed the proper death ritual, and the spirit of the dead hunter could find his way back to his home and could join the ancestors. (Kachhap 2016)

Leanne Betasamasoke Simpson argues from the perspective of her community- the Michisagig community of Canada- that the creation myth signifies indigenous people's sense of history. It is not only about what is remembered, but it is also about remembering "how things were done"(Simpson 2012, 22).

Within the adivasi belief system, the concept of heaven and hell is absent. The adivasis believe that the souls of dead persons come back to their own houses where spirits of the ancestors welcome them. As the concept of hell and heaven does not exist in the adi-dharam, the world of spirits shares the same space with the living human beings. The spirit world is the replica of the kincentric adivasi societies. According to adivasi belief systems, the departed souls find peace when it finds a

place among their ancestors. The adivasi family members maintain peace and harmony with the world of ancestors. In return, the spirits of the ancestors protect the living beings and guide the family members in dealing with the various worldly things in their time of need. Thus, the village is a sacred and secure place because the ancestors keep a watchful eye on the well-being of their successors. That is why villages for adivasis are not just the abode of living beings but also the abode of the ancestors and the departed family members. In her narrative, Nandi Kachhapp represents the spirit of the forest as the benevolent protector of adivasi culture and the adivasi worldview of bringing the deceased's soul to his home.

Nandi Kachhapp describes how the villagers of Nagri show their respect to the primal forest land that the Nagri village ancestors cleared to establish the village of Nagri. She has described how the rituals of *sarhul* begin at the village's *sarna sthal* (the sacred grove area). *Sarna* is the living memory of the primordial forest that allowed adivasi ancestors to settle in that part of the forest land. The presence of *Sarna sthal* signifies that adivasis came first to the place (Roy 2010 Fourth Reprint, 210). To Nandi Kachhapp and her fellow villagers, *Sarna sthal* of the village is the physical proof of the villagers' indigeneity (Kachhapp 2016).

The rituals of *Sarhul* encode the histories of adivasi village communities' gradual settlements in the forest lands and the adivasi cultures of sustaining symbiotic and mutual relationships with the local ecological elements. However, on the other hand, the place justifies the community members' traditional rights over the *jal-jangal-jameen* as the descendants of the first settlers.

The festival of *sarhul* is the celebration of the beginning of a new harvest year. The prayers talk about good rain for a good harvest and good health for everyone to carry on the farming endeavours smoothly. The *Sarhul* festival is a way of

remembering the relationships that the adivasi villagers share with nature. Dayamani Barla identifies the sarhul festival of adivasis as the process of remembering and recognising the importance of nature in adivasi existence. In her words,

Har vasant ritu ke agaman ke shuruat mein prakriti ko yaad karte hai. Vasant ritu mein nature mein naya patti aata hai, naya phool hota hai, naya phal lagte hain. Is ilake mein jitna bhi faldaar briksh hai, vasant ritu mein hi phalte hain. To ham logon ke dharam mein jabtak sarnasthal mein puja nahi hoti hai, tab tak naya phal koi bhi hum khaate nahin hai. Oos mein humlog yaad kar lete hain nature ko ke aapne insaano ko badiyan phal phool diya hai, to humlog pahle charak dete hai. (Barla 2015)

[At the beginning of every spring season, we remember mother nature. The new leaves, flowers, and fruits adorn the trees with the onset of spring. All the fruit-bearing trees of this land start to blossom in the spring. That is why no one plucks or eats new fruits in our religion until the villagers offer their worship at the sarnasthal. We offer our prayers by saying, “ you have given us -the humans- good fruits and flowers”. That is why we first give our offerings (to nature), and after that, we start eating/using nature’s bestowals.]

Dayamani Barla represents nature as the living subject with power beyond human manipulation. Hence, in the *sarhul* festival, adivasis reconnect with the principle of keeping harmonious and mutual relationships with the natural elements. It is a way of remembering that human existence is relational. Therefore from the adivasi perspective, the status of self-reliance thrives on the principles of co-dependency.

The adivasi festivals (like *karma*, *sohrai* and *sarhul*) encode the values of maintaining bonds with ethics of balance and harmonious coexistence. The ethics of harmony generates from the worldview that humankind is the “best in the entire creation and therefore has the right to control everything” kinship is the spirit of the Creation, and there is an eternity in the existence because the Great Spirit created the world to have companions. Adivasi cultural behaviours, which include languages,

song, dance, food, social norms, and ways of maintaining livelihood practices, are the codification of the Jharkhandi metaphysical ethos of harmonious coexistence (Munda 2014, 45-46, Munda & Manki 2015, xiii-xxiii). To observe those behaviours, the physical presence of *jal-jangal-jameen* is necessary for adivasi identity. Without land, forest, or waterways, the meanings embedded within the adivasi cultures would cease to exist.

The arguments above show that the adivasi way of identifying self shares a close connection with the cosmological orientation of the adi-dharam. Freya Mathews, in her argument, shows how cosmology orients the understanding of self in relation to the surroundings. In other words, the social norms of a community shape how the community members interpret their experiences in relation to the environment. The “normative tone” of the interpretation structure the expectation and aspiration of the community.

Primarily, perhaps, one of orientation—a cosmology serves to orient a community to its world, in the sense that it defines, for the community in question, the place of humankind in the cosmic scheme of things. Such cosmic orientation tells the members of the community, in the broadest possible terms, who they are and where they stand in relation to the rest of creation. Some conception of a cosmic scheme of things is active too in the prescription of a system of norms, or at least in contributing to the normative tone of the community. For its system of norms circumscribes the aspirations of the community, and aspirations are proportional to expectations. Expectations, in turn, depend in part upon information, and the conception of the environment. The conception of the local, empirically accessible environment helps to shape expectations in perfectly obvious ways, but since the nature and stability of the local environment depend on more remote, cosmological factors, the shaping of expectations is not independent of cosmological considerations either. (Mathews 2006, 4-5).

Matthews' arguments highlight how a community's belief in humankind's place in the "cosmic orientation" structures the community members' self-concept. As the cosmology of *adi dharam* holds a non-dualistic and equitable relationship with the ecological elements, jal-jangal-jameen becomes the mainstay of adivasi identity.

Moreover, following the arguments of historiography, one can say that each village community of every adivasi society build its distinct repertoire of memories and narratives that represent the "records of the encounter between life histories and the historical moment"(Chanda 2004, v). The personal experiences and reflections on the adivasi way of living merge with the collective consciousness and show how the adivasi histories stand within the complex maze of "time, human, society" (Chanda 2004, ii) and environment.

A community's identity depends on the community's collective history (what Simpson identified as a sense of history), emotional attachment, worldview, socio-cultural codes of conduct toward surrounding and community belief system.

From the perspective of adivasi cultural identity, the adivasi resistance movements against development-induced displacements of the adivasi villagers from the traditional homelands and jal-jangal-jameen are the coded communications that reflect the desire of the adivasi villagers to safeguard the basis of their distinct existence and hence identity.

Adivasi Identity and the Sense of Home

This section focuses on how the adivasi women narrators constructed their understandings of self in relation to their home, including village-community and the village ecology. How the women create meanings out of their experiences and how their physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual relationships with their

surroundings play crucial roles in the meaning-making process construe the basis of this section's argument.

Gene Myers and Ann Russell, in the introduction of their essay "Human Identity in Relation to Wild Black Bears: A Natural-Social Ecology of Subjective creatures", have argued that forming identity is a process that involves the realisation of self that consists of the individual's reflection on her "relatedness to others" (Myers and Russell 2003). The realisation of self or the perception of self, as pointed out by Clayton, contains three parts: autonomy or self-direction, relatedness or connection and competence (Clayton 2003, 49-51). It is important then to understand how the adivasi narrators have structured their understanding of self in relation to the adivasi way of living.

An individual's sense of autonomy and competence and her "feeling of self-sufficiency" paves the way for understanding competence (ibid). Therefore, knowledge of self, in a way, brings out the agency role of the knower. An individual's sense of autonomy and competence depends on how the person understands herself or himself as "the dynamic promoters of transformations". The feeling that she can change her state of being and play a decisive role in the change by using her skill and knowledge builds her self-perception and identity (Sen 2000, 189).

Sen has argued that an active agent possesses the capability to interpret her well-being. Her empowerment lies within her freedom in deciding to be a participant or non-participant in an act and "taking responsibilities for that decision"(ibid). Therefore, an individual's agency lies within her freedom to decide and choose the course of her "well-being". The choices depend on their knowledge of self.

Interpretations or the process of 'making meanings' is the hidden bridge that connects 'knowledge of self' to the 'agency factor'. A person interprets her well-

being from her epistemic location. The three adivasi women narrators who share their close connections with the cultures of adivasi agrarian communities have emphasised their relatedness with the local landscape to describe their position as adivasi, women, and activists. Hence, a close connection exists between their environmental identity and agency.

Griffin has shown that the process of making meanings exhibits the dependency of 'logos' on the connections of human society with nature (Griffin 2014, 214). Humans are a part of the ecosystem. The human body gathers experiences through the sensory organs, and the mind reflects upon those experiences. The mind and body share the relationship of co-dependence. The body continuously connects with the rest of the ecosystem and thus, gathers experiences. The individual mind then transforms those experiences into knowledge through reflections on the family's primary needs, environmental ethics, the worldview of the society, and the evolving culture.

Therefore, the epistemic standpoints depend on a plethora of experiences. The meaning of a particular object expands with time as new experiences pave their way into the individual's life within specific socio-cultural-historical and ecological locations. Susan Griffin points out that acknowledging the process of making meanings is essential as it challenges the hegemony of a fixed meaning/interpretation and, thus, a particular knowledge system. According to her,

meaning like life is interdependent. Like the process by which an ecosystem sustains itself, meaning arises from meeting and connection, overlapping boundaries, and shifting identities. No single perspective can reveal the truth of the whole. The truth exists in no particular site. No specific site can even be said to exist separately or permanently. And perhaps no written or spoken meaning can ever subsume or confine the

experience of meaning (or hope, or love) (Griffin 2014, 226).

The process of making meaning starts with the act of knowing. Thus, making meaning is part of an individual's sense of autonomy and self-sufficiency. An individual's relationships with the environment generate experiences. The process of making meanings starts with the reception of experiences. Therefore it is imperative to understand how the Adivasi women narrators have constructed the meanings of lands, forests, and waterways from their experiences and how these experiences led them to identify themselves in connection to their village space -referred to in this section as 'home'.

According to Alessandro Portelli, the personal way of telling history starts from the home's specific location and extends the boundary of 'self' by including society and culture through the process of interpretation (Portelli1992, 54). Here I intend to see how the personal experiences of the narrators have led them to choose the protection of *jal-jangal-jameen* over the economic development.

The personal history-telling of the adivasi women activists begins not in the field of movements but from their space of 'home'. The ways each of the narrators extends her sense of home becomes vital to understanding where her sense of agency lies. The inclusion of ecology within the home shows how the narrator uses her agencies to structure her ecological self.

According to Arne Naess, community members develop practice, tradition and culture concerning the landscape. Gradually 'the home-place becomes part of the self. The sense of 'home', situated within a distinct environment, evolves into a person's identity. Therefore, according to Naess, the ecological self is a realisation of the self's potentialities and esteem, involving reflection on experiences and empathy towards

relationships. The ecological self is not only limited to survival but goes beyond it. The environmental self evolves out of a more profound sense of connection. He has also argued that the ethos of coexistence acts as the central force in structuring the perceptions of ecological self (identifying self in relation to surrounding ecology) (Naess 1995, 225-239).

The three narrators, Dayamani Barla, Munni Hansda, and Nandi Kachhap, generate three distinct meanings of 'home-place' in their oral narratives. In their stories. Their sense of adivasi identity is rooted in their experiences. To the three women narrators, their villages have become the 'home-place'. In their narratives, the narrators' activities in and around their respective villages become part of their identity.

In her narrative, Dayamani Barla, from the Munda community, has interpreted home as the place of learning surviving skills from the community elders, where she had the freedom of expressing opinions and a sense of physical as well as psychological security. Munni Hansda describes how her mother fought for her rights over her late husband's land and how that ownership gave her widowed mother the confidence to send her youngest daughter, Munni Hansda, to school. Nandi Kachhap has referred to Nagri, the village she married into, as her 'home'. The family elders and the village community have helped her become a skilled and knowledgeable farmer and an essential contributor to the community. Thus, learning the 'cognitive reality' of sustenance that provides a sense of freedom to the perceiver has played a significant role in structuring the meaning of home.

Learning the skill, traditional knowledge and ethical values of adi-dharam through adivasi agricultural practices have shaped their understanding of self. Knowledge of agriculture requires 'pragmatic epistemic practices' (Dalmiya 2016,

127), including such practices' participatory and community-based nature. The epistemic practices have shaped their understandings of their 'agency factor.'

Dayamami Barla's father had lost his land to 'sahukar'- a traditional moneylender from a Hindu caste society. The moneylender tricked Jura Barla-Dayamani's father, who did not know how to read or write and grabbed the best quality land. Jura Barla moved to court to get justice and to get back the land. The 'sahukar' who was a *dabang* (a powerful and intimidating person), did not let the witness appear at the court of Ranchi. She says,

Byakti dabang tha, atank machaaya hua tha, kisi bhi byakti ko mere pita ji ke liye gavahi dene ke liye court mein charne nahi diya. Jab gavahi koi nahi deta court mein, to court case log harte hai. To mere father ke support mein bhi kisi ko charne nahi diya. To mere pitaji haar gaye case. Case larnе mein sara jo jameen-jot tha sara cheej chala gaya. Bandik ho gaya.(Dayamani, 2015)

[The person was intimidating. He had unleashed terror on us. He did not let anybody go to court as a witness in the case. Furthermore, if there is no witness, then one loses the case. So my father lost the case. In the course of fighting the court case, whatever land we had was gone. We had to mortgage the remaining lands.]

Dayamani was in the fourth standard when in the struggle to get back the land from the Sahukar, Jura Barla mortgaged the rest of his lands and sold his cattle and poultry. To the non-Adivasis, Jura Barla's passion for regaining his ground at the cost of everything else the family-owned may seem like foolish obstinacy. However, from the adivasi perspective, Jura Barla's struggle indicates the values of farmlands in the adivasi value system.

Ram Dayal Munda has argued that separating the adivasi from land is to stop his breathing" (Munda 2014, 9). Dayamani Barla's father- Jura Barla, and her eldest brother became *dhangars* (caretakers of the farm) and moved to the villages of their

employers. Dayamani's mother went to Ranchi and took the job of a maid-servant. Her second son also moved to Ranchi to complete his study. Mother and son did not get a chance to live together as the employer of Hisia Barla, Dayamani Barla's mother, refused to provide accommodation to her son. Dayamani Barla, a fourth-grade student in the village primary school, continued living in the village with her immediate elder brother (*chota dada*). They continued their studies in school and, in their spare time, worked as agricultural labourers within the village. Dayamani remembers how the abundance of fruit-bearing trees in and around her village helped her earn money to buy rice and oil for the lamp.

Barla interprets her hardship in the village as the process of learning the value of labour. In her words,

Lekin adivasi samaj mein child labour ka pratishabd Rahai nahi hai. Chote bachhe kaam nahi karenge to aage kayse janenge, ke hum ko mehnat karna hai. Aur mehnat ka roti kaya hota hai, unko kaise pata hoga? Agar mein kaam nahi karti, dusron ke khet mein, aur agar mein apna pet nahi palti, tab apna parhai bhi mein continue nahi kar sakti thi. To aaj mein ye duniya ko samajh rahi hoon, apne aap ko samajh rahi hoon, aapna samaj ko, apne raaj ko, aapne desh ko samajh rahi hoon, to wo shayad mujh mein ye samajh nahi aata. (Barla 2016)

[There is no concept of child labour in the adivasi society. How will a child know that in the long run, s/he needs to work hard if she does not learn to toil? How are they to understand what the meaning of struggling for food is? If I had not worked in others' fields or sustained myself, I could not continue my education. Without that hard work, I could not have structured my understanding of the world, myself, society, sovereignty, and country.]

Barla interprets working in the farming lands as learning the intricacies of cultivation, values of hard work and realising the capabilities and agency of self. The traditional adivasi way of learning involves a collective interaction-based learning

system that thrives on sharing experiences and knowledge about the value of natural elements.

Learning to work hard enables the engaged individual to gain agency as she can generate interpretations based on her relationships. Her sense of autonomy is rooted in her freedom to make meanings. Her sense of self-reliance evolves out of her sense of capability. So it is the sense that she is a valued participant in the knowledge-building system of self-sustenance-that structures her sense of capability. Dayamani's interpretation of agricultural practices as a learning model involves knowing from the community and sharing the knowledge with the community. Therefore solidarity is also the part of adivasi self.

When Dayamani came to Ranchi to continue her study and initially took the maid-servant's job for financial support, her experiences led her to understand the physical, psychological, and emotional vulnerability of adivasi woman workers in the dominant non-adivasi culture. The sense of autonomy and relatedness she acquired while working in the field as a labourer, fruit vendor, or participant in the village society was absent in the city space. Within the city-space, the dominant non-adivasi employers looked down upon her as an unskilled manual labourer. Barla understands the fear and anxiety of an adivasi woman or girl because she went through the same experiences. She understands how a competent farmer in the village feels humiliated when she works as a maid-servant. Barla, from her personal experiences, understands how an adivasi woman suffers from a sense of insecurity outside her village, fears assault and sexual harassment from the city men feels pressure to find a safe but cheap shelter for nights. That is why Dayamani Barla concludes that women, the economically solvent non-adivasi city dwellers perceive the people living at the margins of the dominant socioeconomic structure as exploitable objects. In the

village, she was poor. In the city, she experienced the loss of her agency in making choices. The experiences of humiliation and the loss of recognition are prominent in her words.

Oos samay mujhe ye samajhmein aaya ke main ek ladki hun aur is bich mein ek ladki ke saath har tarah ki harkate hoti hai. Ek garib ladki ko log insaan ke roop mein nahi dekhta hai. Oonko sirf ek dai ke roop mein dekhte hai, ek upvokta ke vastu ke roop mein dekhta hai. (Barla 2015)

[During this period, I realised that I am a girl and understood all the manipulations a girl experiences. People look upon a poor girl not as a human but as a maid, a consumable product.]

The humiliation embedded in the reduced identity and the realisation that a poor girl is the object of exploitation in the eyes of the non-advansi employers helped young Dayamani reinterpret her autonomy within her village community and marginalised subordinated position in the mainstream society.

The reservation of social dignity for certain groups and against others, has played a major role in the caste dynamics of modern times (Teltumbde 2018, 47).

The psyche of the caste-based social hierarchy, according to Teltumbde, has shifted its location in the modern-day Indian society which intends to emulate the cultural codes of the neo-liberal economy without changing the behavioural patterns. The methods of assessing the social hierarchy of an individual depend on the person's stake in the economic profit and capability to influence political power as well as administrative decisions. Following the norms of the caste system, the social dignity of the economic and political elites thrive on the process of denigration. In this process, the members of cash-deprived societies lose their rights over their labours, bodies, reflections, and decisions. The power to negate the agencies of others by

continuously inflicting physical and psychological humiliations demarcates the social hierarchy of an individual belonging to a group.

The major factor was that it (caste system) provided material power to the dominant castes, in a cascading manner, which gave the descending levels of the hierarchy a diminishing stake in its continuance (Teltumbde 2018, 115-116).

Adivasis in the Indian context holds the bottom level of the “material power” because of their less dependency on the money-centric economy. The power holders of the mainstream Indian society have identified the general adherence of the adivasi communities to the local biodiversities and village community for sustenance and self-reliance as the marker of their backwardness.

Dayamani’s experiences of physical and psychological harassment as a domestic servant and manual labour prove how the practice of caste discrimination exists in the urban social structure where economically solvent class people follow the outlook and codes of caste system.

After finishing her post-graduation, she worked as an office assistant cum accountant in an N.G.O. (Non Government Organisation). Though the organisation worked on adivasi education, Dayamani found that the officials did not bother to include Dayamani’s opinion in the work execution procedures.

Dayamani Barla understood that even after learning the mainstream language, she did not have the freedom and empowerment to establish her interpretation in a given situation; she felt dejected (Barla 2015). When she tried to participate in the successful implementation of the project meant for her people, the non-adivasi superiors reprimanded her for not following the work procedures. That experience of dejection made her aware of the value of the adivasi way of living. She decided to

join the Koel-Karo movement to safeguard the *jal-jangal-jameen*-the mainstays of the adivasi way of living (Barla 2015).

By juxtaposing her experiences of humiliation and dejection in the non-*adivasi* urban sphere with her experiences of freedom and sense of power in her village, Dayamani Barla has realised that the *adivasis* can retain their identity in their traditional settings. Her decision to join the Koel-Karo movement is the outcome of that realisation. For Dayamani Barla, home is the traditional *adivasi* village where the women enjoy the traditional rights and freedom of making choices as the active participants/agents in the decision-making process.

Dayamani Barla's decision to join the Koel-Karo movement reflects her refusal to be treated as an instrument or passive spectator. In my reading, she could relate to the Koel-Karo area's villagers because they also denied playing the role of the passive or mute spectators in the planning structure of the Koel-Karo hydroelectric power project. Dayamani Barla understood her *adivasi* identity in terms of her sense of agency.

Nandi Kachhap lost her mother at a very young age. Her maternal grandfather, who used to live in the Hehal Ranchi, raised her. As a young girl, Nandi Kachhap dreamt of becoming a nurse. However, she could not fulfil her dream as her grandfather had decided to marry her off to an agrarian family of Nagri as soon as she completed her tenth standard education.

She could not continue her study as she got pregnant. Her in-laws, like most of the other families of Nagri village, were keen on giving education to their children. She could not continue her institutional education, but she learned the skills and knowledge of agriculture. In her narrative, she has identified herself as a farmer instead of a banker's wife or homemaker. In her words,

Main bhi kheti par nirbhar hoon. Mera husband nanaukri kar raha hai. Kheti se hum saag sabji poora ooga lete hain aur dhaan aur marua. Ye sab kharid na nahi parta hai. (Kachhap 2016)

[I also depend on agriculture. My husband is the one who is into service. I grow various kinds of vegetables, paddy and millet. We do not need to buy all these things from the market.]

It becomes clear from her statement that she joined the Nagri movement from the standpoint of a farmer who understands the land as the source of food security for the family and a source of generating money in the food market. From the words of Nandi Kachhap, agricultural lands appear as the main component in structuring her distinct identity as a farmer. She is not just the wife of a bank manager. Her work on the farmlands provides economic relief to her family. Moreover, she perceives herself as an essential family member because she has authority in maintaining her family's food and nutrition security. Kachhap considers the family farmlands as the cornerstone of their present prosperity. Her in-laws managed to provide school and college education to their children by tilling the lands. In Dayamani's words, agricultural lands, generation after generation ("*purkhon dar purkhon*"), sustain the self-reliant status quo of the adivasi farmers (Barla 2016). Nandi Kachhap's sense of agency is the continuing history of the adivasi farmers. They adapted to the changing time without denigrating their traditional connections to the adivasi cultures and livelihood practices. Her sense of self includes her role as the mother in her family, as "*bari amma*" in the village, as an intrinsic part of Nagri village's adivasi culture and history of farming, and her agency as a knowledgeable, competent agricultural practitioner.

While explaining the value of farming land in the lives of Nagri women, Nandi Kachhap argues that in the adivasi social structure, the widow gets her right over the husband's land. The woman gets the support of the village members in

cultivating and maintaining her lands even if her husband's brothers refuse to help her. She can exercise her agency as a farmer and survive as an independent individual. Nandi ji gives the example of Parveen Toppo, which is how the narrative of Parveen Toppo's narrative becomes the metanarrative of Nandi Kachhap.

According to Parveen, Toppo-another woman participant in the Nagri resistant movement- the system of *madait* and *sajha kheti* helped her raise her minor children after the demise of her husband in government service.

sajha kheti mein jin ke paas khet nahi hai, ya kam hai, un ligo ko hum khet de diye. Wo fasal ooga ne ke baad do jagah upaj ka batwara hota hai. Unaka bhi ghar chalta hai, hamara bhi ghar chalta hai. (Toppo 2016)

[In the partnership system, we give land to landless or small farmers. The owner of the land gets half of the farm produce. That is how the families (landowner and the small farmers) run their respective households from the farm produce.]

She also tells how the system of *madait* not only helped her to sustain herself but also helped her eldest son to learn about the various cultivation processes. *madait*, Praveen Toppo has explained like this :

Ab ye padosh mein kheti ka kaam ho raha hai, wo sab ko bol dega. Sab mil ke jaayega kaam karne ke liye. Sirf khana pina dega. Paisa dene ka koi baat nahi. Us tarah mera bhi koi kaam hoga, to wo sab aayega. (Toppo 2016)

[If my neighbour needs help in farming jobs, she will ask the village community to help her. The community members will come together to lend their support. The landowner will arrange the food and drink for the helpers. The question of giving wages does not arise. Likewise, that neighbour will lend her support in need of other village members.]

The traditional community support system thus provides livelihood security to single mothers like Parveen Toppo. The literal meaning of *madait* is 'to help'. The village community offers volunteer service to help a family that requires help in

laborious jobs like collecting firewood from the forest, logging, sowing seeds, planting rice saplings, harvesting, building houses, mending roofs and other laborious works. Women like Parveen Toppo and Nandi Kachhap, who came to live in Nagri after their marriages, have built physical and emotional connections to the landscape and village community through socio-cultural practices like *Madait*. For both Toppo and Kachhap, their sense of home signifies the camaraderie that they share in the agricultural fields.

If the collective celebrations of the festivals on the village community ground or *akhara* exhibit the cultural code of harmonious existence, the primary ethos of *adidharam*, the social practices like *madait* represent the social codes of that harmony. Nandi Kachhap, a zealous farmer and head of *Mahila Samiti*, has earned a respectable position within the village community by showing extraordinary care and courage during the Nagri movement. She participated in the resistance movement because she worried about the village children's future. According to her, families cannot provide their children with proper health care and education support without the farmlands. Her concern for the children is also part of her personal experience. When she lost her youngest son in an accident, she found peace caring for the village's children and women. The act of taking care of others healed her pain. Nandi Kachhap, known as *bari amma* in the Nagri village, made it a point to protect the interests of the village children.

Nandi Kachhap perceives the village space as her home because she identifies her distinct and meaningful existence in connection to her village society, ecology, and tradition. Nandi Kachhap's sense of self includes her relatedness to the villagers, specifically the women and the children. She believes that her agency as a farmer,

mother, and caregiver exists as long as she can have her traditional rights over the lands and as long as Nagri village can maintain its integrity as an adivasi village.

Adivasi women enjoy social and traditional rights over the land and the landscape, providing women food security and an alternative to the market economy (Mehta 2009). Adivasi women's understanding of home also involves having "effective and independent rights" on the lands. Bina Agarwal has shown that "effective and independent land rights for women are important on at least four counts: welfare, efficiency, equality, and empowerment" (Agarwal 2002). Women with direct access to production gain a security shield from poverty, malnutrition, hunger, and destitution. Women can take care of their children in a better way.

Munni Hansda narrates the story of her mother, Sobha Hembrom, to enunciate the importance of lands to the Santhal women. Hansda's relationship with her village Jhilli begins with the story of her mother, Sobha Hembrom. Munni Hansda-the, fifth and the youngest child of Munshi Hansda, begins her narrative with the legal battle her mother fought to regain her rights over the husband's property. When Munshi Hansda died, his brother tried to disown his widowed wife- Sobha Hembrom, from the property. Sobha, then the mother of five minor children, filed a case in Dumka court. She shifted to Dumka with her children, struggled to survive and continued her legal fight. At last, she won the inheritance rights over her husband's lands. Munni Hansda says,

Mera maa majdoori karti thi dinbhar..Hum panch bhai bahan chote chote the, majdoori karne layak nahi bane the...fir hum case jeet gaye aur us ke baad hum ghar gaye. Case jeet jaane ke baad kathikunj bajzaar ke log mere maa ko B.D.O (Block Development Officer)¹³ naam diya. Oos jamana mein case larna

¹³To the village people, Block Development Officer or B.D.O is considered a powerful and honourable person. Therefore, the village people exhibited respect by giving Sobha Hembrom the nickname B.D.O.

bahut kathin tha. Phir meri maa akele case larke jeet bhi gayi. Is liye Kathikund bajar ke log unhe pyar se b.d.o bulate the. (Hansda 2015) [My mother worked as manual labour. We, five siblings, were too small to get any employment as labourers. After that, my mother won the case, and we returned home. In the market of Kathikund, people gave my mother the nickname b.d.o.

In those days, it was tough (for a woman like my mother) to fight a court case. My mother alone fought the case and won it. That is why people called my mother to show their affection and respect.]

After that, Sobha Hembrom built her house, cultivated her land and secured an all-year-round rice supply for her children and herself. After that, she and her children went to work for others to meet the family's cash needs. For Munni Hansda, home means the hard-earned rights of her mother. It also signifies a place where her mother brought them up with dignity. At the same time, the agricultural land signifies the cornerstone of self-reliance. Life was tough, but it was not without hope for Sobha Hembrom and her children. They worked on their lands as well as on the lands of others. The nearby forest and common village lands were the sources of firewood, fodder and food.

In his book *The Santhal Women: A Social profile*, Chaturbhuj Sahu has pointed out that Santhal women, in general, are more conscious of their traditional rights (Sahu 1995, 136-138). For an adivasi woman inheriting her husband's property ensures her security over food and the future. Within the land, she is skilled labour with knowledge of seeds, flora and fauna and how to maintain effective relationships with the natural elements. That knowledge of competence and security play significant roles in adivasi women's perception of self.

As the narrative of Munni Hansda unfolds, the listener learns that other family members and villagers supported Sobha Hembrom and helped her resettle in the

village. Nitya Rao emphasises the importance of kinship in forming the adivasi women's identity. According to Rao,

It needs to be reiterated that operationalizing land claims requires local social support and recognition, and without this, even a legal victory cannot realise the right. Women's first call in terms of making claims, therefore, remains the local kin group and village council, and if no consensus is reached here, the district courts are used. The courts are nonetheless dependent on the woman securing some kin support as they call village leaders as witnesses and respondents for any case filed in them (Rao 2005, 730).

Sobha Hembrom's return to the village meant that village elders supported and acknowledged her claim to her husband's land.

The produce from the farmland, the support of the village community, and the agricultural works available within the home space were the pillars of sustenance for Munni Hansda's family. Endowing women with land would empower them economically as well as strengthen their ability to challenge social and political gender inequities (Agarwal 2002).

When Sobha Hembrom decided to send her youngest daughter Munni Hansda to school against the general norm of the village, one can understand how her experiences of Sobha Hembrom made her resolute regarding taking decisions. She showed the same determination when Munni Hansda had to move to the school hostel for further education. Munni Hansda remembers how her mother decided against her son, broke the norm of early marriage and encouraged her daughter to learn. Hence for Munni Hansda, the village and the land signify a sense of dignity and autonomy that her mother earned.

Another person who influenced Munni Hansda was her primary teacher. She was adivasi and Christian. She encouraged Munni to continue her education. She convinced Sobha Hembrom about sending Munni Hansda to middle school.

According to Munni Hansda, earning wages to meet the expense of school education was part of her life, but that did not make her feel less because there was hope. By that time, her brother had joined the army service. He used to send money. While reminiscing her school days, Hansda says,

Oos samay dada paisa bhejta tha, chawal kheti se chal raha tha. Kheti ka kaam make saath humlog bhi karne jaate the. Middle school mein kheti chutti milta tha. Barsat ke din pandra din chutti rahta tha. To oos chutti mein hum majdoori karte the. Barah saal se hamne majdoori karna shuru kar kiya. Vahi teacher ke ghar hum majdoori karte the. Oosi ke ghar mein hum dhaan ropna sikhe. ..Oos samay humko koi sankoch nahi tha ke hum parte hai aur kaam bhi kar rahe hai. Ve sab feeling humko nahi tha. Hum jaate the kaam krenge to paisa milega, paisa milega to kitab-kalam kharid sakenge, school dress bhi kharidenge. (Hansda, 2016)

[At that time, my brother used to send us money. We got the required rice from the land. We used to work on the land with our mother. In middle school, there was a vacation for cultivation. On the monsoon days, we got fifteen days of vacation. I used to labour on the farm in those days. From the age of twelve, I took up hard labour. I used to work on the farmland of that teacher (primary). I learnt to sow the paddy saplings in her house. That time there was hardly any hesitation from my side. As a middle school student, I did not feel humiliated to toil on the land. That feeling was not there. I knew I would get the money to buy books, pens, and school dresses.]

When Munni Hansda uses the word “ learn” in relation to her status as farm labour, she describes farmland and farmwork as the pedagogical institution. Thus in her narration, Munni Hansda adds value to the farming process. The knowledge she acquired in her childhood has made her a capable individual who can manage the intricacies of her farming and pass it on to the next generation. The knowledge is valuable as it helps the knower protect her family's food security. The required conditions for exercising this knowledge are to have the land and suitable socio-ecological conditions. The socio-ecological conditions include fertility of lands,

proper irrigation, availability of various types of farm workers required for different kinds of farm jobs, presence of natural pollinators like bees, and presence of farm animals. In the indigenous agricultural system, the adivasi farmers use forest biodiversity for firewoods, food products, medicines, fertilisers and many more. The women venture to forests to collect firewood and other products of the jungle (like mushrooms during the time of monsoon, they possess vast knowledge about the flora and fauna of the forest lands. They are also deft in managing forest biodiversities (Shiva 2014, 58).

Without the support of her mother, Munni Hansda could not become the first woman with a higher secondary degree within her family and village. Without the land and village community, Sobha Hembrom could not possibly find the courage and means to send her youngest daughter to higher secondary school against social norms. Hence, Munni Hansda's sense of home incorporates the sense of freedom and the sense of holding courage against odds.

In the village landscape, the adivasi enjoy the freedom to be an intrinsic part of the decision-making process. This sense of freedom is also part of her adivasi identity. The narratives of Munni Hansda substantiate this claim of mine. As an N.G.O. (Non-Government Organisation), she worked with the adivasi women of Kathikund block regarding health, women empowerment, and women's education.

Humko gaaon mein mahila mandal banana tha aur khetibari karwana tha. Adivasi log ootna sabji khet nahi karte the, to sabji kheti kayse karni hai, vo sikhate the. Oonko beej dete the. Oos ilake mein log bachho ko padai ke liye iskool nahi bhejte the, to humlog unlogon ko samjhate the ke bachhon ko parvane se unka kya adhikaar milta hai. Mahila kanoon ke bare mein batate the. Adivasi gaaon mein sabji kheti, aur mahilayon ko sashakt karne ki baat karte the- baccho ko dekhbhal karna, garbhavastha mein mahilayon ko tikakaran karwana ye sab sikhate the. Paisa bhi humlog bachat karwate the. (Hansda 2015)

[I worked on building women groups and encouraging the group members in vegetable farming. Adivasis were not keen on vegetable cultivations. That is why we taught them how to produce vegetables and provide seeds to them. In those areas, villagers did not send their children to school. We used to tell them what kind of rights /benefits their children were supposed to get if they got a school education. We told the women about their legal rights. In the adivasi villages, our work focussed on vegetable farming and women empowerment. We talked about looking after children and the vaccination of pregnant women. We also taught them about saving money].

Hansda, in her narrative, states that the adivasi women were at first suspicious about the intentions behind the project. However, once the women gained confidence in the efficacies and adaptability of these new ideas in their ways of living, they slowly started adopting the new ideas. The incident narrated by Hansda shows that the adivasi women's first and foremost concern is safeguarding their relationships with the village communities and local ecological elements. However, Adivasi village women are open to changes if, after observations and reflections, they find that new ideas would strengthen their traditional rights and alleviate their sense of self-competence.

For adivasi women, the sense of home means a sense of empowerment. Hence her sense of home includes both the village community and the landscape. Hence, alienation from the land and the disintegration of the village community disrupt their sense of autonomy and self-reliance.

Adivasi women's knowledge of the local ecology structures their sense of autonomy. In this process of knowing, an individual cognises the reality through active participation and shares their obtained knowledge with the community as an accountable member. The self-knowledge of an environmentally responsible knower includes 'emotional response towards various relationships', 'understanding the

importance of maintaining mutual relationships’, ‘reflecting on the knowledge of the elders’ (Buege 2014, Indian reprint, 103-106). Hence, the adivasi communities must maintain harmonious and mutual relationships with the local ecology to preserve their identity. If, due to the development projects, adivasi communities suffer from ecological alienation, Adivasis would lose their authority over their knowledge. In this situation, either adivasi cultural practices would cease to evolve and would become, in the long run, a conglomeration of meaningless rituals. That is why in the next section, I have discussed how the development projects that cause displacements of the adivasis from their *jal-jangal-jameen* are a threat to adivasi identity.

Development as a Threat to Adivasi Identity

The idea of development or, more precisely, economic development by establishing heavy industries first bloomed in the USA. After the second world war, in 1949, President Truman of the United States of America (USA) in his speech announced that the agenda of the USA- then formidable master of industrial production and economic growth- was to develop (consolidation of improvement and growth) the underdeveloped areas through the benefits of North America’s “scientific advances and industrial progress”(Esteva 2010, 2). Esteva has argued,

Underdevelopment began then, on 20 January 1949. On that day, billion people became underdeveloped. In a real sense, they ceased being what they were from that time on, in all their diversity. They were transmogrified into an inverted mirror of others’ reality: a mirror that belittles them and sends them off to the end of the queue, a mirror that defines their identity, which is really that of a heterogeneous and diverse majority, simply in the terms of a homogenizing and narrow minority. (Esteva 2010, 2)

Esteva has further argued that “the precursors of economic development transmogrified primitive identity into the identity of underdevelopment” (Esteva

2010, 6-7)). With the “transmogrification”, what remained unchanged is the reductionist attitude of modernity towards the other who possessed different metaphysical planes and thus exercised distinct rationalism. The economic development planners negate the knowledge and logic of the diversified indigenous communities by identifying the latter as backward, irrational, or underdeveloped.

The argument of Esteva proves right in the context of India, where the Schedule Tribe status of the Adivasis makes them underdeveloped in the eyes of the mainstream elites. British colonisers used the term tribe to signify a human society that progressed slowly in human evolution. The colonial masters established the traits of European civilisation as the standard of evolutionary progress (Sen 2018, Xaxa 2008). In other words, the people of the tribal societies" lack the positive traits of modern society" (Xaxa 2008, 29). The contribution of the British ethnographers, anthropologists, and administrators in structuring the primitive, backward identity of Adivasi communities is irrefutable (Xaxa 2008, 14). The non-ativasi scribes of the Indian Constitution designated Adivasis as the scheduled tribes. The term scheduled tribe refers to a group of people who, according to the state administrators, live primitive, backward ways of living and need assistance from the outside world to be part of mainstream Indian society. Among various other identifiers, the over-dependence of adivasi communities on the local ecosystem and their reluctance to participate in the machine-like individualistic way of living are the two significant markers of their primitivism and backwardness. Therefore, the term scheduled tribe fails to acknowledge the role of ecology in constructing the distinct identity of Adivasis. The ways adivasi communities value their ecological relationships are different from the dominant or mainstream Indian society (Munda 2002, 41-42).

Thus, displacing adivasi villagers from their ancestral lands and local ecology does not seem unjust to the development planners. However, sustaining the local ecology or *jal-jangal-jameen* gets the least priority in the development planners' thought patterns because the fundamental modality of economic development focuses on the exploitation of natural resources to generate more profit in the market. Hence within the idea of economic development, instead of need-based consumption of the natural resources, the limitless desire to consume more natural resources plays the central role.

The metaphysical premise of modernity from which the idea of development has sprung, according to Mathews, is 'materialism', which is, according to her over-emphasis on "physical reality" and complete negation of "subjectivity spirit, sentience, agency or conativity"(Mathews 2006). She has argued that "Empirical inquiry and causal explanation" are the two criteria for acquiring knowledge in the world of materialism. This way of acquiring knowledge has become recognised as "science". Freya Mathews has argued that this market-controlled science and the scientific method aim to increase the extent of the "technical ability to control environment". According to her,

Scientific method leads to ever-increasing understanding of natural phenomena, where this in turn makes possible ever increasing technical control of the environment. Such control allows for an ever-increasing capacity to satisfy people's material needs and desires. Moreover, since there are, as we have seen, no moral constraints, from a materialist perspective, on the use humanity may make of the natural environment, and since we are therefore morally free, with the help of science, to exploit nature to the limit, we are enabled to " progress " and "develop". (Mathews 2006, 89-93)

As the persons oriented with the materialistic mindset do not consider dependency of human existence on nature, controlling the natural conditions with the help of technologies to fulfil the unleashed materialistic desires of the ‘modern-man’ is the primary motivation of this “modernity”. This worldview is the mainstay of heavy industry-based development ideas. (Mathews 2006, 1-4).

The word development, interpreted through the narrow and discriminatory lens of economic growth, fails to see how the violation of ecological balance affects the eco-centric people’s economy, livelihood, and knowledge system and thus the issue of ecological sustainability.

The dominant interpretation of development standing on the bedrock of the “Euro-Atlantic idea of growth” views industrialisation as the only process to reach “at the top of the social evolutionary scale” (Sachs 2010, xvi-xvii). Development projects which claim to reduce the economic poverty of the underdeveloped countries by establishing heavy industries have played pivotal roles in the degradation of local ecology. Ironically, the development planners have negated the relationships between natural-resource-dependent macro industries and environmental degradation for an extended period.

Poverty was long regarded as unrelated to environmental degradation, which was attributed to the impact of industrial man; the world’s poor entered the equation only as future claimants to an industrial lifestyle. But with spreading deforestation and desertification all over the world, the poor were quickly identified as agents of destruction and became the targets of campaigns to promote ‘environmental consciousness’. (Sachs 2010, 27)

In the dominant development discourse, the people demarcated as underdeveloped hardly get any opportunity to interpret development from their self-

perception. In the Indian context, Shashank Kela has pointed out the stereotyping of adivasi communities like this :

By redefining and homogenizing the dominant culture and attenuating some of the occupational and regional differences within Hindu society, it created a new sense of 'us' and 'them'. On one side stood Indian elites at the apex of a bourgeoisie seeking to integrate the institutional and economic worldview of the West with its own cultural traditions. On the other side stood adivasi societies regarded as inferior in terms of the received ideas of tradition *as well as* the new ideals of modernity (Kela 2012, 237).

Therefore, it becomes the onus of the Indian elites who identify as developed to bring the Adivasi communities to the mainstream or market economy by introducing heavy industrial projects in the adivasi lands. Therefore, the projects designed for mainstreaming adivasis cause displacements of the adivasis from their village and landscape.

Trisha Kehaulani Watson, in her doctoral dissertation "*Ho'i Hou iā Papahānaumoku: A History of Ecocolonization in the Pu'uhonua of Wai'anae*", identifies the encroachment of indigenous landscape as the act of 'ecocolonisation'. She proposes the lens of 'ecocolonization' to understand how the colonisation of the indigenous people is related to the colonisation of natural resources. According to Trisha,

Ecocolonization speaks of the land and its indigenous people as a single unit, although the patterns of colonization throughout the world have not treated them as such. Imperial ideologies, without an appreciation of this fundamental link between the people and land, sever them in discursive discussions. They talk about the land and the people as separate entities when they are not. Understanding the ways communities remain socially dysfunctional requires a serious investigation into the damage done to surrounding natural resources. (Watson 2008, 20)

Watson's understanding of ecocolonisation involves controlling the environmental elements in a certain way to cater for the need for economic growth from outside. Those who act as the controller views nature as the supplier of exploitable resources. According to her, the theoretical approach of ecocolonisation emphasises how the alienation of the indigenous people from their ancestral land makes them "socially dysfunctional" (Watson 2008, 20). In other words, losing the rights over their local ecology disintegrates the indigenous societies. When the bonds that structure the basis of adivasi identity disappear from the lived space of the disintegrated village communities, their identity gets susceptible to identity encroachment. That means economic and political decision-makers would get the absolute power to encode and interpret adivasi self and would establish their interpretation as the absolute truth. Without ecological relationships, the adivasis would lose the power to create meanings of autonomy, self-reliance and competence. Therefore, they would lose the capability to create self-perception from their cosmological and metaphysical background.

The disintegration of the village community and dissolution of traditional adivasi rights over the local ecology affect the adivasi women physically, psychologically and spiritually. The dissolution of the adivasi community due to development-induced displacements and the alienation of the women from the traditional villages and landscapes dismantle the adivasi women's sense of agency (Mehta 2009) (Padel 2015 Reprint).

In *Visthapan Ki Dard*, Dayamani Barla and the members of *Adivasi-Moolvasi Astitva Raksha Manch* have documented the experiences of the displaced villagers of Jadugorah (Uranium mining projects), Chandil (Chandil dam project) and Bokaro (Bokaro thermal power project). The displacements, the interviewees narrated,

shattered their sense of self-competence and autonomy. The displaced villagers have reminisced how the ecological abundance used to provide food security, sufficient water supply, free firewood, the scope for animal husbandry and the time for the rest of the villagers. However, in the rehabilitation centres, the non-*adivasi* architect usually designs quarters that do not support the *adivasi* way of living.

Adivasis have seen all too clearly what happens to displaced communities. Almost no correlation exists between handsome promises and fine-looking ‘packages’ on the one hand, and an endless saga of neglect and injustice on the other (Padel 2015 Reprint, 30).

In the Gangudih resettlement colony, government authorities have provided each family with a tiny one-room house, two half-dug wells, four bore wells and a primary school within the colony. According to one of the residents of Gangudih, the houses are suitable for pigs and not human beings. There is no provision for electricity and no healthcare facility available. In a traditional *Adivasi* village, each family has a provision to rear cattle and poultry in the house. The authority provided no such provision in the colony (Barla 2007, 13-14).

Women are the worst victims of development-induced displacement. In a traditional *Adivasi* village, women have rights over common land property, cattle and forest products. However, in the resettlement programme, the *Adivasi* women are interpreted in terms of the patriarchal values prevalent in mainstream society. Hence, the customs and traditional rights of *Adivasi* women never get proper focus within development discourse.

Lyla Mehta points out how the development executors neglect the “informal and traditional rights” of the *adivasi* women while planning the rehabilitation programmes. Mehta writes,

Largely, policies and programmes neglect informal and non-encoded rights, assets and institutions. However, women largely have rights and control over resources in customary law or informal arrangements. For example, land rights can be both formal and governed by customary law. Often, women have rights to property, water, and land in informal institutional arrangements that might be corroded by the creation of new formal institutions to govern land and water resources. (Mehta 2009, 49)

In the context of rehabilitation programmes for the displaced villagers, Dayamani's narrative points out how the Koel-Karo hydroelectric power project officers failed to provide ideal rehabilitation to two villages as per the villagers' demands. 'Ideal rehabilitation' from the adivasi perspective provides an ecologically rich landscape where the adivasi village community can settle together and continue the traditional way of living. The villagers from the Koel-Karo region understood that if the authorities could not rehabilitate two villages according to the villagers' demands, rehabilitating two hundred forty-five villages would be impossible. Then the villagers refused to leave their lands (Barla 2015). In general, the quality of life of displaced people undergoes continuous degradation. Once displaced, skilled agricultural practitioners transform into unskilled labourers and become daily wage earners. In the labour market, Women get lesser wages than men. The other employment for displaced adivasi women is to become maidservants in the big cities. The adivasi farmers can not adjust to the pressure of daily work of wage labourers.

The women bear the maximum loss due to development projects. With the absence of common land, grazing land, nearby forest, community support, and traditional land rights in the Resettlement areas, the women lose their ground of self-reliance (Rao 2009, 56).

Moreover, the displaced villagers never get to choose the locations of their place in the new village. Every traditional village bears a history of origin. The villagers remember how the ancestors, following some signs from nature, chose that place suitable for the village. Selecting the proper places for sarna/jaher, *akhara*, common lands, forest, river, the abode of ancestors, and village gods and goddesses along with agricultural lands and houses are part of the traditional adivasi village planning. To perform rituals and celebrate festivals, adivasi villagers require a proper community ground *akhara* for the congregation of the village community. Adivasi village communities hold spiritual connections with these places. When adivasi villagers get alienated from their village, ecology and community, they lose their spiritual connections with ancestors, hill spirits, forest spirits, and river spirits. When adivasis get displaced from their traditional lifestyle and ecological connections, the rituals become a meaningless and spiritless performance to them. Hence forced displacements cause gradual but inevitable degradation of adivasi culture. All these changes incur despair and exhaustion among the displaced adivasi villagers. According to Barla,

Jameen hai to humlog hai aur humlog hai to hamari sanskriti hai, bhasha hai itihas hai. Oos se alag hoke aur hatke hum adivasi apna bhasha aur sanskriti ke baat nahi kar sakte hain. (Barla 2015)

[If the landscape survives, we survive. Our culture, language, and history continue to exist. We adivasis cannot dissociate our language and culture from our land]

The destruction of the adivasi village ecosystem due to development projects severely causes displacements of the adivasis from the livelihood skills, the disintegration of the village community, erosion of traditional knowledge about the local bio-diversities, loss of vocabulary and overall degradation of adivasi knowledge

systems. In other words, the Adivasis displaced due to development projects would eventually lose to identify their distinct ways of interpreting the world.

Development projects play instrumental roles in taking away the traditional rights of the adivasis over the ecological resources. Without free access to the landscape, the Adivasis have no choice but to adjust themselves at the margin of the economic growth. The displaced Adivasis become menial labours without the means and knowledge of self-sustenance and without the freedom of creating meanings out of lived experiences. Hence, development plannings that colonise the local ecology of the adivasi communities, in reality, cause the erosion and annihilation of adivasi identity. The problem arises when executors of development tend to negate all other value systems and interpretations for the sake of one particular understanding. The cases of conflict occur when a community inhabiting a specific geographical territory and believing in a particular worldview find the hegemony of a specific interpretation is a direct threat to their distinct existence.

Conclusion

Adivasi interpretations of development incorporate a general understanding of integrated growth with natural elements. The adivasi identity that describes 'self' in relation to the various non-human elements of the environment and thus acknowledges diversities as part of human existence poses a challenge to the monolithic and unidimensional interpretation of economic development. Therefore, it is essential to draw upon adivasi ways of interpreting the 'adivasi self' to construct a counter-argument against the hegemony of modern men's interpretations of Adivasis as underdeveloped societies. Adivasi perspectives on adivasi identity and development are also essential to understand why the adivasi communities interpret

their displacement from the land, water, and forest as a direct threat to the adivasi existence. In this chapter, I have shown why understanding adivasi identity in connection to *jal-jangal-jameen* is imperative to challenge the dominant semantics of adivasi identity. By bringing in the multiple adivasi perspectives on adivasi identity, I have pointed out that the adivasi identity coexists with *jal-jangal-jameen*. The tendency to interpret adivasi resistance movements against development-induced displacements from their *jal-jangal-jameen* as the protests of primitive groups of people reflects the racist and supremacist psychology of interpreters. As post-development discourse means opening up the term development to multiple and alternative interpretations, the first aim of the researcher is to challenge and deconstruct the dominant codes of identifying developed and underdeveloped communities. Understanding adivasi identity from the adivasi perspective is one of the ways to reconstruct the alternative semantics of development.

CHAPTER – 2

Understanding the Conflict between *Vikas* (Development) and

Abua Disum, Abua Raij (Our Land, Our Rule):

Adivasi Sovereignty and Adivasi Ways of Interpreting 'Well-Being.'

Birsa Munda ke saath Adivasi samaj angrejon ke khilaf larai lara, uske baad se jo larai hai, wo jaari hai. (Barla 2016)

[Adivsi societies fought along with Birsa Munda against British colonials. The Adivasis are still carrying on the resistance struggle of Birsa Munda].

Dayamani Barla believes the need to remember the courage and spirit of Bhagwan Birsa Munda's *Ulgulan* is still relevant for *Jharkhandi* Adivasis because they are yet to establish their rights to rule (*raij*) on their land (*dishum*). According to her, the demand for *abua dishum, abua Raij* (*Our land, our rule*), would continue to thrive in the heart of *Jharkhandi* adivasi societies so long their traditional connections with *jal-jangal-jameen* (waterways-forest-land) will continue to exist.

Bhagwan Birsa Munda led Munda *Ulgulan*, or uprising (1899-1900) in Ranchi and the northern part of Singbhum. Under his leadership, the Mundas and the other adivasi communities of the Chotanagpur region¹⁴ reclaimed their traditional rights over the territory (*dishum*) from the “influence” of the non-adivasi middlemen, the British administrators, and the European missionaries. Birsa Munda and his comrades aimed to regain the traditional adivasi governance rights (*raij*) over their

¹⁴ By the end of the 18th century, the Indian Forest Act paved the way for further destruction of the traditional adivasi rules on managing lands and forests. The Adivasis found that the new system of governance denigrated their traditional rights over the landscape. The non-indigenous landlords, merchants, and forest contractors acted as the accomplices of the British Government. The local kings who wanted to overpower the proud and independent adivasi societies saw the new rulings as the golden opportunity to dismantle the authorities of adivasis over the land. [Singh 2008 (3rd Reprint), 23-54]

landscapes because, under the Indian Forest Act VII of 1882, British colonial rulers had declared adivasi landscapes as state property. (Singh 2012 second reprint, 17-18, 52-53). Therefore, one can conclude that the spirit of *ulgulan* centred around the hope of regaining the traditional freedom of Adivasis in making choices regarding their ways of living and deciding the course of well-being.

According to Dayamani Barla, the adivasi resolution of *Ulgulan* has not lost its relevancy because the adivasi societies of Jharkhand have not still retrieved their ancestral rights of governing their landscapes according to the norms of adivasi culture. In the name of “development,” adivasi communities are forcibly displaced from their landscapes and village societies by the development executors. Hence, the Adivasis of Jharkhand bear the responsibility to finish the work of Birsa Munda. Until the adivasis regain their traditional rights of governing the landscapes, adivasis will continue the struggle which the adivasi leaders initiated in the early days of the colonial era in India.

In the context of the adivasi resistance movement against development-induced displacements from the ancestral landscape, development executors encroach on the adivasi villages and their jal-jangal -jameen because most of the adivasi settlements are on the mineral-rich landscapes of Jharkhand. The destruction of local ecology is the most common method of any mainstream development project. Adivasi resistance movements against those economic development projects are about conserving the local jal-jangal-jameen. While the state government's land management policies keep the question of ecological balance at bay, preserving the ecological balance of the local landscape is the central aim of the Jharkhandi adivasi communities' land management policy.

One can claim that the adivasi communities' value system differs from the value system of development policymakers. Based on the value system, the idea and interpretation of the well-being of the adivasis vary from the development executors.

As the idea of the citizens' overall well-being structures the governing policies of the nation-state, it is imperative to comprehend (in the context of adivasi resistance movements) the meanings of *raij* (governance) from the perspective of adivasi identity (discussed in the first chapter). Therefore this chapter aims to explore the connotations of jurisdiction and sovereignty from the adivasi perspective to understand the connection between adivasi *raij* (governance) and *jal-jangal-jameen*.

The Need to Rethink Sovereignty from the Adivasi Perspectives

In one place of her narrative, Dayamani Barla has argued that the Jharkhandi adivasi resistance movements against the development projects as the struggles of the adivasis to protect their constitutional rights. In her words,

Sarkaar to bariyan bariyan kannon diya hai yahan (Jharkhand) ke logon ke liye. Bhartiya Sangvidhan mein har kisi ko jine ka adhikaar diya hai maan aur samman ke saath. Oonke adhikaron ki Raksha karne ke baat kahi gayi hai. Lekin Sarkar aaj oos Sangvidhan ka abhelna karke wo tamam kannon lagoo karne jaa rahi hai jo corporate gharano ko munafa pahonchane ke liye yahan ke nagarikon ka adhikaaron ka hanan karke daman kar raha hai. Hum log bol rahe hai fifth schedule mein jo graam sabha ko jo adhikaar diya hai oos adhikar ko aap implement kijiye. Par sarkaar oos gramsabha ke baat nahi manti hai. Humlogon ke larai to sangwidhan ke adhikaron ko implement karne ke liye aur sangvidhan ke Raksha ke liye hai. (Barla 2015)

[Indian State has constituted excellent laws for the people of this place (Jharkhand). Within the Constitution of India, every citizen has the right to live with dignity and respect. Though there are constitutional codes to protect the rights of these people, the present government incumbents are trying to implement new laws that disrespect the constitutional rights (of the Adivasis). These laws would be beneficial for the corporate houses but

would be oppressive and exploitative for the people of this land because the rule would curb the constitutional rights of the people (Adivasis). We are asking the legislators to implement the laws that immune the authority of the *gram-sabhas*¹⁵ under the fifth schedule of the Indian Constitution. In reality, government office holders ignore the decisions taken in the *gram-sabhas*. Our (*Jharkhandi* adivasis) struggles are for the implementation and protection of our constitutional rights.]

According to Dayamani Barla, Jharkhandi adivasis have tried to communicate that the adivasi villagers are not against the development projects that protect the traditional rights of the adivasis regarding accessing and managing their lands in adivasi ways through the resistance movements. Barla refers to the fifth and sixth schedules of the Indian Constitution to show that the Indian Constitution of the Indian Nation-State has acknowledged adivasi people's traditional rights over the landscapes or *jal-jangal-jameen*. Hence, the forced displacements of the adivasis from their landscapes on the pretext of development are unconstitutional as the acts of displacing Adivasis against their will defy the constitutional codes.¹⁶ Therefore, one can read the

¹⁵ Under Article 243(b) of Indian Constitution Gram Sabha (Village Council) is recognised as the primary body of the Panchayati raj system. It is a permanent body of the electorates. The decisions taken by the Gram Sabha cannot be annulled by any other body. The power to annul a decision of the Gram Sabha rests with the Gram Sabha only. (<https://vikaspedia.in/social-welfare/role-of-gram-sabha>)

¹⁶ Government of India's Ministry of Tribal Affairs published a book titled *Land and Governance Under the Fifth Schedule: An Overview of Law* describing the legislative protections available to the tribal communities of India. The section of the book that focuses on the effectivities of the laws, points out the injustice and inequality faced by the people of the scheduled areas like this, As stated earlier, in compliance of Paragraph 5(2)(a) of the Fifth Schedule, most States have enacted legislations restricting/prohibiting the transfer of land from tribals to non-tribals in Scheduled Areas. However, these legislations have not been able to fulfill the constitutional objective of ensuring that tribals retain control over their homelands. Even though most litigants which approach the Courts meet a positive result, it is still true that these laws rely heavily upon their activation by the affected parties, and the number of cases which are actually activated in courts are a mere tip of the iceberg. According to a Report of the Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, 78 in July 2013: 3.75 lakh cases of tribal land alienation were registered covering 8.55 lakh acres of land; Out of the above, 1.62 lakh cases (43.2%) were disposed of in favour of tribals covering a total area of 4.47 lakh acres (58.28%); 1.55 lakh cases (41.1%) covering an area of 3.63 lakh acres were rejected by the courts on various grounds. The above data demonstrates that 41.1% of cases filed by tribals for restoration of alienated lands were rejected by the Courts, an alarming figure given that tribals tend to have poor access to the judicial systems and to legal advice and representation in the first place. (Ministry of Tribal Affairs 2016, 57-59)

narratives of the resistance movements as the representations of the adivasi existence share conflicted connections with the state power.¹⁷

On the one hand, in the name of development, the development executors perpetrate violence against the Adivasis and force them to leave their village-landscapes. On the other hand, the Adivasis have their constitutional and legal rights to lead their ways of life and livelihood in their landscapes. In the context of economic development projects, these ambiguous stances of the Indian State get so much scholarly attention that the interpretations of adivasi *raj* from the adivasi perspectives remain buried between legal interpretations of tribal autonomy and jurisprudence of the state sovereignty.

Within the dominant interpretation of state sovereignty, human subjects appear as passive spectators who are bound to obey the order of law without reflecting upon the compatibilities of the order with their everyday living. Therefore, the freedom of a sovereign state does not necessarily signify every citizen's sense of freedom. By alienating human experiences from the social and political order (governance policies), the State's sovereign power means enforcing particular kinds of socio-political-legal-economic order under a homogeneous state culture. In reality, the culture of the State represents the culture of political elites. The ordinary people's role is to abide by the set of orders approved and propagated by the State's political elites. Prozorov, in his argument, has pointed out that the sense of freedom that emerges

¹⁷ This approach to equality, which recognises the need to correct historical wrongs in order to achieve substantive equality, in the present and the future, with a core commitment to distributive justice and the reduction of economic inequalities, has informed the entire constitutional dispensation with regard to marginalised peoples in general, and Scheduled Tribes in particular. Therefore, the constitutional provisions relating to Scheduled Tribes under Article 244 and the Fifth Schedule must always be placed within this larger constitutional perspective, before undertaking any textual analysis with regard to a specific fact situation or issue. When read together, these constitutional provisions create a distinct dispensation for tribal homelands which have been recognised as such through the process of scheduling of such areas, based on the recognition that tribal or indigenous peoples have historically suffered at the hands of people from the 'mainland', including the colonisers, and require special protections at a constitutional level to ensure that these historical wrongs are not repeated, and are reversed. (Ministry of Tribal Affairs 2016, 6-7)

from the “concrete experiences” of the common mass is the irreducible factor which can reconnect sovereignty with the signification of freedom of mind. He argues that,

When it (*freedom*) is linked to the form of order, freedom begins to be conceived as an abstract endowment, a constitutionally guaranteed right, rather than a concrete experience or a practice. This reduction effaces the possibility of problematising the very sense of ‘unfreedom’ that is widespread informally ‘free’ regimes and, as the history of the twentieth century demonstrates, has frequently led to the demise of the ‘formal’ freedom itself. Moreover, the abstraction of the concept of freedom from its practice enables its infinite abuse, as it loses all reference to the concrete experiences of subjection and liberation and is rather inscribed in the structure of the political system and its rationalities of government. When we so insistently link freedom to the form of government, we need not be unpleasantly surprised when freedom begins to function as its instrument. (Prozorov 2007, 3)

Following the argument of Prozorov, one may conclude that the social, political, legal, and economic orders of a community depend on how the members of society found the efficacies of the orders/laws/rules in safeguarding their “preferences” which they learned to value through their everyday multilevel interaction-induced experiences (Norton 1996, 128). Thus place-based knowledge becomes the denominator of a community’s governing rules. That means the kind of relationships a community forges with ‘Earthothers’ determines the values lying within the idea of sovereignty. The community structures specific codes of interactions within the local landscape (Bauhardt & Harcourt 2019, 9-10). These behavioural codes influence the general governance policies of the community. Therefore, An indigenous community practising the culture of maintaining ‘care-full’ relationships with every element of its local landscape interpret ‘freedom’ differently from the capitalist culture that has forged exploitative relationships with nature (Bauhardt 2019, 22).

Within the state culture, sovereignty becomes an abstract idea. State sovereignty signifies the supreme power of a state to implement state-approved orders on the ordinary mass living within the State's jurisdiction. On the other hand, the sovereignty standing on the people's experiences signifies people's freedom in choosing specific laws that protect their preferences regarding sustenance and well-being. For the people of a community, protection and maintenance of life and livelihoods of the community members are the primary driving force behind the codifications of community laws. Thus, the demand of *ulgulan*, that is, the re-establishment of adivasi rights over accessing and managing the local forests, rivers, and lands, indicates adivasi people's claim for protecting and sustaining their lives and livelihoods. *Jal-jangal-jameen* is the cornerstone of adivasi ways of living. Therefore, it is imperative to comprehend the connection between *jal-jangal-jameen* and adivasi sense of sovereignty regarding ways of living and livelihood.

As *jal-jangal-jameen* are primary sources of food in the Jharkhandi adivasi societies, I argue that one of the significant ways to read adivasi demands for having freedom of accessing and managing the local landscapes (*jal-jangal-jameen*) is from the lens of food sovereignty. The website of La Via Campesina¹⁸ defines food sovereignty like this:

Food sovereignty is the right of people to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through sustainable methods and their right to define their food and agriculture systems. It develops a model of small-scale sustainable production benefiting communities and their environment. Food sovereignty prioritizes

¹⁸ The 'wider movement' for food sovereignty has started apparently in "Central America" in the mid-1980s as a response against state policy that withdrew state support for agricultural and favoured import of food from the United States. The issue of food security evolved into the question of food question with the formation of La Via Campesina. This organisation came into being in 1993 at Mons Belgium. A group of farmers' representatives of four countries came forward to set up this organisation. The vision of the organisation is to build solidarity among the small holding farmers and the people who are directly related to the landscape and the means of food production — the campaign advocates for the participation of the marginal voices in the decision-making process.

local food production and consumption, giving a country the right to protect its local producers from cheap imports and to control its production. It includes the struggle for land and genuine agrarian reform that ensures that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, water, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those who produce food and not of the corporate sector. (La Via Campesina)

Thus, food sovereignty is the people's freedom to choose "culturally appropriate" food. Food sovereignty argues for the indigenous communities, landless peasants, small-scale farmers, and people depending on local ecologies for food and livelihood because they are the most vulnerable groups in the corporate-controlled market economy. As the adivasi food systems are dependent on *jal-jangal-jameen*, the alienation of the adivasis from *jal-jangal-jameen* causes deterioration in the adivasi socio-economic structure. They transform from a self-reliant community to market-dependent people who cannot adapt to the culture of the money market.

The culture of food production and consumption has its distinct characteristic. Dayamani Barla describes the relationships of the Adivasis with the land, forest, and water bodies from the perspective of the adivasi culture of food production and consumption like this:

Adivasi samaj mein aaj hi sara cheez jama kar lenge ye nahi hai. Asli mein culture mein usko isi tarah sikhla diya hai. Poori tarah se wo jal-jangal-jameen par,mausam par depend hai. Teen mahina mehnat karta hai, teen mahina usko dekhta hai, aur phir usika upaj mein wo khata hai. Phir cha mahina se fal, kand, mool milta hai jangal se. Wo sab ayse hi jangal maane prakriti provide karta hai. To vahan se uthake laata hai, khata hai. Toh oonmein jo ye (upaj) reserve karne ka bhawana hai, wo nahi hai. Haan, ek cheez preseve karne ka bhawna hai-jangal ko bachana hai, jameen ko bachana hai, gaaon ko bachaana hai-aur lakri ko anabashyak nahi kaatna hai, ye bhawna oos mein hai. (Barla 2016)

[The idea of storing is not present within adivasi societies. They have not learnt to store (in excess) from the (adivasi) culture. They are fully dependent on the *jal-jangal,jameen* and weather. The Adivasis work

on the cultivation lands for three months. For the next three months, they look after it. Thereafter they consume the produces. Various kinds of edible fruits, tubers, and roots are available in the forest for six months. These foods are provided by the forest, that is, nature. They collect those forest foods for consumption. That is why they do not have the idea of (unnecessary) hoarding. Yes, they have the idea of preserving only one thing. They believe in saving forests, lands, and villages. That they should not unnecessarily cut down the trees – is the concept they have.]

According to Dayamani Barla, specific culture codes exist within ecology-centric adivasi culture regarding the production and consumption of food. The diversified food habits of the adivasi societies are also part of the general adivasi culture. Therefore, protecting *jal-jangal-jameen* means not only securing lives and livelihoods but also retaining deep knowledge of local ecologies. The self-reliant characteristics of the adivasi communities, their less dependency on the cultural codes of the money-controlled market system, depend on the sustenance of the local ecological systems. An adivasi villager can fall back upon the lands, forests, and water bodies are the three food sources in time of need. Thus, adivasi sovereignty from the adivasi cultural standpoint means the freedom of the adivasi communities to sustain their traditional foods and food systems according to adivasi cultural practices. Therefore the way adivasi communities look at their ecological elements beyond the economic growth is the political dimension of adivasi sovereignty (Grey & Patel 2014, 431).

Hence food sovereignty does not only focuses on food. It includes the knowledge (both cultural and traditional) and rights of the communities over their ancestral land and territory. That means food sovereignty advocates for the freedom of choices. Without proper management of the ecological surroundings, the sustainability of the traditional food sources would be in jeopardy. Therefore, it is

imperative to structure appropriate rules to manage local ecologies. The adivasi interpretation of *raij* or governing the land means having the freedom to look at the local environment beyond economic growth and the right to maintain the codes of adivasi food culture.

In her interview with Hannah Wittmann Itlevina Masioli -a member of the National Coordinating Council of the Brazilian Landless Rural Workers Movement and representative of the International Coordination Commission of La Via Campesina, connects food sovereignty with the struggle for autonomy. According to her, ‘autonomy’ is not individualistic but the collective rights of the community. The adivasi desire for autonomy is a right of communities, of the people to construct their destiny, concerning their rights to culture, territory, and the goods of nature (Wittman et al. 2011, 34). Therefore, one of the ways the adivasi sense of autonomy is the sense of freedom of accessing and managing lands following the adivasi culture to protect the sustainability of the food and livelihood sources.

The sense of self-reliance regarding the production and consumption of food is another constituent element of the adivasi sense of freedom. Thus adivasi governance is about adivasi ways of determining the autonomy of the adivasi self. In *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*, Taiaiake Alfred has cited his conversation with Atsenhaienton to highlight the distinctiveness of indigenous understanding of sovereignty. Atsenhaienton, who “is a *Kanien’kehaka*, and a member of the bear clan”, has described the term sovereignty from the perspective of survival.

To me, it’s the Mohawk people using our terminology to express our self-determination-how we will exist, how we will relate to each other and other people. We will make those decisions, and we will make decisions that affect our culture, our language, and how we teach our children. It’s about decisions on survival; everything’s based on survival. (Alfred1999, 101-110)

Seen from the perspective of “survival”, the issue of adivasi villagers’ choice on how to survive is an intrinsic part of adivasi sovereignty. The relationships with the food give them the freedom of ‘autonomy’. In other words, the relationships empower the adivasi communities with the authority of self-determination. When Dayamani says that adivasi culture does not teach an adivasi farmer to toil relentlessly on his land, she refers to the freedom of the adivasi villagers to choose among food diversities available in their local landscapes. The knowledge about the free food available in the local ecology and traditional seeds are the cornerstone of adivasi autonomy.

When the displaced adivasi families have to adopt the codes of the non-adivasi economy-centric way of living, the sense of lost autonomy becomes the main reason for their trauma. The voices of the displaced villagers recorded in the booklet naming *Visthapan Ki Dard* Dayamani Barla justify my claim. In the wake of the Arcelor Mittal project in Khunti district in 2006, villagers from the villages of Khunti district created a survey committee to understand the effect of displacements on the adivasi villagers. The committee went to the rehabilitation centres to know the situation of the displaced families. During that survey, they went to the rehabilitation centre meant for the displaced villagers of Nandup village. The UCIL (Uranium Corporation of India Limited) company encroached on the lands of Nandup for uranium mining. Vinod Sinku and his wife Dashma, who were residents of Nandup village, told their experiences in the rehabilitation centre to the survey committee like this :

Sawal- aap ko yahan ke ghar mein rahna achha lag raha hai, ya pahle ka ghar achha lagta tha?

[Question:- Do you feel reasonable staying in this house, or the previous one was better?]

Jawab- yahan kaya achha lagega. Yahan to humlog majboori mein rah rahe hain. Dekhiye na is chota se kuriya mein kaun rahega. Isi mein hum dono, saath

bachhein aur aane jaane wale kutumb bhi ek saath shote-uthte hai. Yahan to na lakri jhuri milta hai, na kisi tarah ke saag-paat, laar-jhar. Kuch bhi nahi milta hai. Apne gaon mein the to khet-bari mein saag paat oogate the. Nahi bhi ugaye to kuch na kuch hota hi tha. Dhaan-chawal thora bahut ho hi jaata tha. Yahan to roj khaato, to 70 rupay milta hai. Oosi se sab cheez kharidni parti hai. Yahan paani tak nahi milta hai. Roj teen -chaar baje subah nal se lane ke liye jaatein hai. Agar aap log garmi mein aayiyega, to ek gilaas paani bhi nahi pila saktein hai. Kyunki paani hi nahi milta hai.

[Answer:- What is here to feel good about. We are living here out of compulsion. See by yourself who wants to live in this small hut. We live here with our children and there are relatives to welcome. We, all have to dwell in this small place. Here we don't get fire woods and dry tinders. Neither we get green leafy vegetables. When we lived in our village, we used to produce vegetables in our lands and in the courtyard. Even if we don't cultivate vegetables, we could get something or the other (from the surrounding). The paddy that we used to cultivate was sufficient for us. Here (in the rehabilitation area) you have to work every day. Then only you can earn seventy rupees. Moreover, you have to buy everything from that earning. Here availability of water is also scarce. Every day I have to wake up as early as three or four in the morning to fetch the supply water. If you come here in the summer time, we could not offer you a glass of water. Because we don't get water. (Barla 2007, 6-8)

Dashma Sinku's words point out how she understands her loss of autonomy in the rehabilitation centre. In the village, she was not bound to wake up at dawn to fetch water. She could decide over time of work. She did not have the pressure to cultivate vegetables. She had the option to collect diversified vegetables from the surroundings. She did not have to buy firewood. They had enough space to accommodate relatives. Keeping close connections with relatives have a significant significance in adivasi culture. Dashma has shown her dislikings regarding the compulsion to work daily to earn money. As the family has to buy everything from the market, this displaced adivasi family cannot determine the time of work and rest. The absence of 'free food' options (Pereira 2016, 34), complete dependency on the market economy, the

compulsion of labouring every day to secure daily meals, and losing authority over determining the time and type of work. Like Dashma, the displaced adivasi women lose their control over the adivasi knowledge of food diversities and the skill of accessing and managing the sources of food.

Bio-diversity is the cornerstone of sustainable living. Women who work closely with the various biodiversity sectors know how to intervene and when to intervene in the local ecological diversity. Sustainable sustenance also requires a knowledge of sustainable consumption. Following the logic of Sen's capability approach, one can say the women act as active agents in the adivasi village space because they decide how much to intervene and also reflect on when to restrain from excess intervention.

The knowledge of active intervention and passive intervention makes women's existence relational. At the same time, the experience of seed selection, seed preparation, germination, managing the farm animals, and maintaining dairy supply are examples of active intervention. Knowledge of identifying various food, fodder, fertiliser, firewood and procession of that material in different contexts is an example of passive intervention.

In the introduction pages of her travelogue, *Do Duniya*¹⁹ Dayamai, while reminiscing her childhood, has referred to several leafy vegetables like *choksr saag*, *silyarti*, *meromguchu*, *kudroop*, *koyenar saag* and fruits like *Karanj*, *jackfruits*, *mangoes*. She has described how she used to collect them from different parts of the village landscape to eat and sell in the market (Barla 2009, 7). Dayamani's description depicts how a Munda adivasi girl experiences, understands and learns about her

¹⁹ Dayamani Barla went to US to receive L.M Lutz Award in 2008. In *Do Duniya* she has registered her experiences of America.

landscape. Her words also reveal that relationships demand active engagement with the surrounding.

The word sustenance is closely related to nature. The word subsistence is also associated with acquiring knowledge of the surrounding. Dayamani, as an individual, gathered the knowledge from her community elders and peers. Here what precisely Dayamani pointed out is the knowledge of various kinds of foods that are available in the landscape. The freedom to collect the same and sell those in the market is inversely associated with the privilege of earning money to buy something necessary for sustaining life. Dayamani Barla thus recognises *jal-jangal-jameen* in connection to sustenance. Without the free food, the Dayamani and her elder brother could not continue studying in their village school.

Dayamani's father mortgaged all his lands to fight a court case against the local moneylender. The family needed cash to pay back the mortgage. Hence Dayamani's parents and two elder brothers left home to search for work. Dayamani and her third elder brother remained home as they had to finish their middle school or class eight examination. During this time, Dayamani and her brother learned about the food diversities present in the landscape from the village elders. To Dayamani, *jal-jangal-jameen* is also the benevolent provider that once helped two children to survive with dignity. Adivasi sovereignty for Dayamani is autonomy to maintain the relationships with the landscape that preserve the self-reliant status quo of the adivasi communities. That is why Dayamani has argued that the adivasi way of managing the landscape means "preserving" the health of *jal-jangal-jameen* (Barla 2016). Dayamani-mentioned adivasi culture of preserving nature is what Ram Ram Dayal Munda describes as the adivasi ethos of maintaining 'symbiotic' with nature (Munda 2002, 46).

A community must decide the limit of optimum human interventions in the local ecology to translate the ethos of mutual and harmonious coexistence into everyday living. A community's understanding of the optimum limit of human intervention depends on the member's collective knowledge that notes down every change in the ecology and the impact of the change through close observations of the ecological elements. Without maintaining a close connection with the ecology, a community cannot closely observe the local surroundings. The understanding and knowledge of optimum human intervention are the cornerstones of the adivasi communities' ecological sustainability-centric ethics. On the other hand, the cultural codes of adivasi *raij* have emerged from the adivasi ethics on environmental sustainability.

Food sovereignty in adivasi culture signifies having authority to maintain a relationship of reciprocity with the environment. Adivasi sense of *raij* or governance thus means the establishment of adivasi rules that predominantly focuses on the sustainability of ecologies that is *jal-jangal-jameen*. Adivasi communities' knowledge regarding the ways of accessing and managing the landscapes is the cornerstone of adivasi people's sense of freedom in structuring the course of their lives and livelihoods. Alienation from the local ecologies bereaves the adivasi societies of the existing knowledge on food diversities and ecological sustainability. The absolute impoverishment of the adivasi communities begins when they lose their autonomy over survival policies.

Why could the Spirit of Birsa Munda not Rest in Peace?

In the context of adivasi resistance movements against the state-mediated development programmes, the theme of adivasi sovereignty takes the central stage.

Dayamani Barla commented on the relevance of “*abua dishum, abua rajj*” like this:

pandrah november ko sarkar Jharkhand Sthapna Divas manati hai. Pura Adivasi samuday Jharkhand sthapana divas nahi manati hai....Kyunki Adivasi ka yahan raaj to pahle se hi tha. Parampara se hi hamare yahan raaj tha. Abhi to Jharkhand rajya ka punargathan hua hai.. lekin alag rajya punargathan hone ke baad bhi adivasi ka jo swapna tha..is mein jo jangal hamara hai, jameen hamari hai, bhasha hamara hai. Jharkhand alag rajya ka adivasi ka jo swapna tha us sangskriti ke saath jngal jameen ke saath hamara jo vikash karenge ye swapna to pura nahi hua. (Barla 2016)

[Jharkhand Government celebrates November 15th as the Jharkhand State Foundation Day²⁰. All the adivasi societies do not celebrate this day as the Jharkhand *Sthapna Divas* because adivasis have been ruling this land from the beginning. We are the traditional rulers of the land. They have restructured the territory of Jharkhand. The dream of the adivasis -including our forest, land, and language has not reached fruition. The vision of the adivasis we shall develop according to our cultural tradition has not come to its realisation.]

According to Barla, if the adivasi societies of Jharkhand do not have the power to decide and plan the course of their course of well-being that would sustain and proliferate the fundamental essence of the adivasi cultures, the actual objective of founding the State of Jharkhand will remain neglected. The aim of establishing the Jharkhand state was to ensure that the traditional adivasi communities could regain their freedom to access and manage the local landscapes, which are the foundation of

²⁰ The 28th state of the Indian Union was brought into existence by the Bihar reorganization Act on November 15,2000- the birth anniversary of the legendary Bhagwan Birsa Munda. Jharkhand is famous for its rich mineral resources like Uranium, Mica, Bauxite, Granite, Gold, Silver, Graphite, Magnetite, Dolomite, Fireclay, Quartz, Feldspar, Coal (32% of India), Iron, Copper (25%of India) etc. Forests and woodlands occupy more than 29% of the state which is amongst the highest in India. (<https://www.jharkhand.gov.in>)

the local cultures of the adivasi communities²¹ and envisage a future following the ethos of adivasi culture. That is why she interprets November 15th not as the Jharkhand State Foundation day but as the day of remembering Bhagwan Birsa Munda, who laid down his life to re-establish adivasi communities' traditional rights.

K.S Singh, in his book *Birsa Munda (1872-1900)*, has claimed that the driving force of *Ulgulan* was to get back the freedom to determine adivasi ways of living, which were withering away under the sovereign power of the British Raj. The objective of *Ulgulan* was to re-establish “Munda’s old rights” over land and forest.

There were more pointed references: The Mundas were the true owners of the soil, they appointed the Maharaja, rent was paid to him by way of contributions towards his maintenance and not in the acknowledgement of his rights in the land, and all non-aboriginals were interlopers and land -grabbers. (Singh 2002,58)

The colonial regimes driven by the interest of industrial capitalism tried to obtain every sphere of economic surplus through political control. Economic surplus helped to strengthen technological progress, which, in turn, helped expand consumerism's logic. Materialism- the metaphysical premise of modernity thus entered into the lives of the colonised citizens through the language of state rules (Guha & Gadgil 1995, Guha& Gadgil1992, Seabrook & Pereira 2006). Ironically, in the context of economic development, the development executors, instead of envisaging new models of need-based development (appropriate and suitable for the local communities), followed the “Euro-Atlantic” (Sachs 2010) model of economic growth. With the establishment of the homogenised, monologic idea of progress, the hegemony of the Global North in defining the codes of “good life” continues to

²¹ The tribes of Jharkhand consist of 32 tribes inhabiting the Jharkhand state in India. The Scheduled Tribe (ST) population of Jharkhand State is as per 2001 census 7,087,068 constituting 26.3 per cent of the total population (26,945,829) of the State. The Scheduled Tribes are primarily rural as 91.7per cent of them reside in villages. (<https://www.jharkhand.gov.in>)

prevail in the Global South. The political elites of the Global South use the state-sovereign power of the states to facilitate the growth of the economic elites. While discussing the tacit connection between the political power of the State and the neoliberal economy Asish Nandy has argued,

The idea of the nation-state entered most Southern societies through the colonial connection, riding piggyback on the concept of the white man's burden. When, after decolonization, the indigenous elites acquired control over the state apparatus, they quickly learned to seek legitimacy in a native version of the civilizing mission and sought to establish a similar colonial relationship between State and society. They found excellent justification for this in the various theories of modernization floating around in the post-World War II world. The payments that had once been made to colonial regimes for their civilizing mission were now demanded by those controlling the indigenous states as agents of modernization and guarantors of national security. Instead, now they were no longer called payments. Now they were called sacrifices for the future of one's country, and they invariably came more from those who had less access to –or facility in –handling modern institutions. (Nandy 2010, 301)

The streak of violence embedded within the Modern nation-state sovereignty exists within its desire to structure a homogenised state culture of 'progress' as it violates the rights of indigenous people to interpret and envisage progress from their pluralistic cultural standpoints. The people like Adivasis who have "less access" to the functionings of the "modern" institutions remain outside the development planning and bear the burnt of displacements.

In the narratives of the adivasi activists, we find that the Jharkhand adivasi societies learn about the upcoming development projects and their impending displacements at the last moments. The villagers experience the second exclusion when they try to reason with the administrators about choosing arid lands over the fertile lands. State-orchestrated violence is the third stage of segregation of Adivasis

from the sovereign power of the democratic State. The project of mainstreaming the Adivasi populace in the state culture ends with the raw exhibition of violence. The death of adivasi protestors in police firing has become the norm of the development projects²². There is hardly any development project in India that has come into being without violating the ecological, hence human rights of the displaced villagers.

Like Arecellor-Mittal and Kathikund movements, Nagri *Andolan* against the land acquisition for the three premier educational institutes, namely IIT (Indian Institute of Technology), IIM (Indian Institute of Management) and National Law University, went through the three stages. The state authorities sighted justification of sovereign power of the State to negate the reasonings of the villagers in every step of the movement. Jharkhand Government planned to build IIT (Indian Institute of Technology), IIM (Indian Institute of Management), and National Law University on the two twenty-seven acres of agricultural lands of Nagri village. In January 2012, higher administrative officials visited Nagri village along with five hundred police personnel. They declared that the then Bihar government acquired the lands in 1957-58 to extend the function of Birsa agricultural university and a proposed seed bank (Kachhap 2016) (Dungdung & Minj 2013).

Nandi Kachhap and her fellow women confirmed that their forefathers told them about providing lands to build Birsa Agricultural University long ago. The village elders were unaware that the state had acquired the rest of their cultivation lands for seed bank projects or extension of the Agricultural University. In 2012 the

²² In 2001, police open fired and killed eight villagers who participated in a peaceful demonstration against the Koel-Karo Hydro-Electric Power Project.

During the Kathikund resistance movement against RPG Thermal Power Project police open fired on mass rally. Two villagers died.

The police lathi-charged on the women demonstrators who tried to demolish the wall of the law university after the supreme court declined to listen to the appeal of the Nagri villagers. Several women got injured. (Dungdung & Minz 2013);(Barla 2015);(Hansda 2016) ;(Kachhap 2016)

development planners of the Jharkhand state government planned to establish IIT (Indian Institute of Technology), IIM (Indian Institute of Management), and the Law University on the marked lands for seed-bank (Kachhap 2016).

The villagers learned about the project when workers started building the institutes' walls under police supervision. They also came to know that these institutions for higher education would leave them with just houses and nothing else. The demarcated lands were fertile and produced multiple crops. Most Nagri villagers, specifically women, are actively involved in farming.

If an adivasi child shows more interest in learning the farming skills, the family elders allow them to follow their desire. In the narrative of Dayamani Barla, we get the reference of her eldest brother, who did not like to be part of the institutionalised education system.

Mere maa ki man mein ichha tha ke hamare bachhein pare, Teen bhai mein sab se barawala bhai nahi parta tha. Unko bhi maa bhejti thi. Par wo bota tha ke nahi hum bail hi chalayenge. To wo (school) nahi gaya.
(Barla 2015)

[That all her children would learn to study was my mother's wish. Of my three elder brothers, the eldest one did not go to school. My mother admitted him to school. He said that he would rather be in farming. So he stopped going to school.]

In adivasi societies, the parents encourage the children to learn the skills of farming as an essential life skill. In the case of Nagri, most of the women members of the village are into agriculture. If the men of the family are in other services, women work on lands, and the family enjoys the double security of food and cash. For example, Nandi Kachhap's husband works in the bank, but Nandi Kachhap is an active farmer. Nandi Kachhap's family do not have to buy cereals, pulses and vegetable from the market. She sells the surplus of her farm production in the food

market. Hence she is financially independent and very aware of her contribution to the family's well-being.

According to Kachhap, with the farming skills, the elders teach the younger generation about the village landscapes and their rights. Kachhap has learned the story of Birsa Munda Agricultural University and how the villagers agreed to give their lands for the institution from the elders. Hence she argues that had the village elders given all their agricultural lands to the government, they would have told their successors about that.

*Hamare bujurg agar jameen dete to humko pata nahi
rahta ji, boliye?* (Kachhap 2016)

[Tell us, If our elders would have given the lands to
the government, should not they inform us about that?]

After the villagers of Nagri came to know about the proposed development projects, they requested the development executors to shift the project to the nearby arid land instead of acquiring the most fertile lands of the villagers (Kachhap, 2016). Universities can function in the arid landscape, but agricultural practices require fertile agricultural lands for the successful production of food. The government officials did not listen to the villagers.

Nagri villagers took the legal measure and appealed to the Jharkhand High Court and later went to the Supreme Court. The High Court ordered the immediate construction of the Law University. The Supreme court judges did not “open the file and threw it on the ground” (Dungdung 2013). Nandiji enacted the incidence at court while narrating it.

Judge ne to kagjad uthake aise patak diya (she
gestured with her hand the way the judge slapped the
petition paper on his table) *aur hamari baat shun ne se
inqar kar diya*”. (Kachhap 2017)

[The judge took the court papers and slammed them
on the ground. He denied hearing our appeal.]

According to Dungdung, the villagers rightfully possess the demarcated lands

because:

According to the Bihar Land Reforms Act, 1950 (amended in 1972), land acquired before 1972 and not used for the said purpose has to be returned to the tenants. This act is applied in this case precisely because when the land was said to be acquired, the area was under the State of Bihar. ...The government had not taken possession of the land of Nagri for 60 years. Hence, it is free from acquisition. ..But why is the High Court mum on the above facts? Is the court deliberately covering up the laws, which are in favour of Raiyats? (Dungdung 2012, 101)

Wherever the people in power violate the constitutional and legal rights of the adivasi villagers, the political and administrative elites like to communicate with the villagers through the language of violence. In the context of the Nagri village movement, Dayaman Barla has pointed out the tacit relationship between the violation of adivasi societies' traditional and legal rights by the development planners and the state-perpetrated violence against the adivasi villagers. She says,

Sarkar bol rahe the ke 1957 saal mein ye jameen hum le liye the. Gawonwale bolte hai ke humlog jameen beche nahi hai. Wahan pe 227acre jameen jo sarkar lena chahti hai, wo puri tarah se upchaao jameen hai. Us ko pura poora police laga ke gher ke rakhha tha. Roj wahan teen chaar tho RAF (Rapid Action Force) ke gaari jaati thi. Main RTI (Right to Information) kar ke taman kaagzaad nikali aur tab samajh mein aaya ke jameen abhi bhi gaonwalon ke kabje mein hai, aur maalikana haq bhi gaonwala ka hi hai. (Barla 2015)

[The government officials said that the lands (demarcated for the development project) were taken by the state government in 1957. The government wanted to encroach on 227 acres of land. These lands were fully fertile. The police barricaded the whole area. Every day three or four vans of the Rapid Action Force went to Nagri village. Through Right to Information, I got hold of the information on the land status of the Nagri village. I understood that the lands belonged to the villagers and the villagers had the landholding powers.]

Nagri villagers went to Dayamani Barla to take her help regarding the movement. The survival of the villagers was in jeopardy, and the officers were not ready for dialogue. Hence organising a resistance movement was the only option left to the villagers. The police officers did not let the villagers enter their cultivation lands ready for the harvest. For a farming community, harvesting is time-bound and the source of sustenance. The act of debarring farmers from entering their fields where they toiled during cultivation season was an example of crude violence. The incident shows how the State -authorities blatantly denied the traditional and legal rights of the Nagri villagers to access and manage their agricultural lands.

The narratives of Dayamani Barla, Munni Hansda and Nandi Kachhap point out that the government officers and constitutional rights never held meetings with the *gram sabhas* about the proposed development projects. The villagers' sense of deprivation begins at that point. The development planners and executors never disclose any information to the villagers about the projects, intended appropriations of the lands, and the rehabilitation planning till the moments of land acquisitions. Dayamani Barla learned about the Arcelor-Mittal steel project when she visited the block development office regarding another protest where villagers demanded work under the hundred-day rural employment project (Barla 2016). In the Kathikund village, when the surveyors started surveying the demarcated lands, the villagers came to know about the thermal power project (Hansda 2015).

Thus, to the adivasi villagers, development has become the metaphor for violence and violation. Mainstreaming adivasis bears the imagination that adivasi people are to accept the state-imposed decisions uncritically. The presence of the armed state force in the adivasi villages to facilitate the establishment of the proposed development projects indicates why the adivasi villagers need to invoke the spirit of

the adivasi leaders who fought to retain the adivasi rights over the ancestral landscapes still finds its relevance within the adivasi societies of Jharkhand.

State sovereignty refers to a system of rules. The general rules aim to protect the interests of the citizen and the State. The rulers conceptualise and process the well-being of the subjects/ citizens with the help of justifiable rules. The 'well-being' of the nation-state is the gestalt of the 'well-being' of its citizens. The dominant notion of development carries a sense of 'well-being' for all. As the term 'well-being' is qualitative, the perspective of the interpreter- plays a significant role in shaping the meaning of the word. Beneath the surface of interpretation lies the influence of a system of which the interpreter is a part. Thus within the lexicon of development, the impact of the neoliberal economic order in shaping the dominant meaning of well-being is undeniable.

'Development in the post-second world war era bears the idea that with the implementation of a perfect economic growth system, the poor can 'catch up with the standard of living of the rich. The idea of 'well-being' is intrinsically related to the concept of 'catching up with the economic status-quo of the rich men of the economically developed world through the implementation of a system of governance that would maintain a favourable climate for economic growth. Thus economic development requires a system of governance that would act as its accomplice. In the development discourse, setting up a favourable 'system of governance' is imperative to establish the economic and anthropocentric meaning of progress (Saxena 2012, Sachs 2010). According to Foucault, the production of a biopolitical body is the unique activity of sovereign power (Foucault 1990, 2003). In particular, the development and triumph of capitalism would not have been possible without the

disciplinary control achieved by the new bio-power, which, through a series of appropriate technologies, created the “docile bodies” it needed.

As the concept of growth fails to recognise the importance of ecology other than economic utilisations, the values of community and local ecology cease to exist within the general interpretations of anthropocentric (which is also individualistic) economic development. In other words, the collaborators belong to a particular linguistic system where the relationship between signifier and signified remains unchanged. Hence, to the development executors, economic development and the well-being of the people appear synonymous without the need for further introspection.

The concept of State emerged as the protectors of the “modern institutions associated with the industrial capitalism” and instruments that would proliferate the progress of scientific rationalism (Nandy 2010). Therefore, the concept of the nation-state became the symbol that upheld the culture of scientific reasoning, industrial capitalism, and anthropocentrism. According to Nandy,

These newly assumed functions naturally made the modern nation-state suspicious of all cultural differences, not on the grounds of racial or ethnic prejudice, but on the ground that such differences intervened between the ‘liberated’ individual and the republican State and interfered with the more professional aspects of statecraft (Nandy 2010, 297).

The minds of the political elites working behind the state regimes used various state-supported institutions to establish the hegemony of the state culture. The Sovereign power of the State acted as the instrument to impose the authority of the state culture. The language of the State has incorporated meanings of state sovereignty. Sovereignty gets translated into the code of state laws. These laws aim to orient the minds of the citizen as per the maxim of the state culture. The complete

alignment of the citizens to the state culture would ensure the emergence of the new 'nation.' The paradox lies in the concept of binding the citizens with laws of modernity and, at the same time, visualising the freedom of rational minds from their reality. In the modern state structure, every free man does not have the freedom to exercise her agency in the decision-making process that, in the long run, affects her lived reality.

The main reason behind the endeavours of colonialism and present-day economic globalisation was and still is the intention of creating a 'free market' that runs along with a stringent value system²³ that recognises and promotes (under the banner of 'culture' or 'High Culture') unchecked and care-free model of human consumption. The central trope of such rationality is to obfuscate the real intention behind the 'free-market' and sovereignty (both are complementary to each other). According to Plumwood, such obfuscation is only possible when the idea of the free market becomes a thing in itself, free from "historical-social relations that have selected its rules"(Plumwood 2002).

Nandy has argued that the social elites of the colonised third world went through the process of "internalization and enculturation of the idea of the modern state through the state institutions that established knowledge of the white colonisers as the absolute truth. The social and political elites of the decolonised countries uncritically accepted the "idea of the native nation-state, modern science and development as the panacea for all problems (Nandy 2010).

Even modern science and development became, for Third World elites, the responsibility precisely of the nation-state and two new rationalizations for its predominant role (Nandy 2010, 297-298).

²³ Hannah Arendt in her book *The Human Condition* marks the way of emergence of a laboring society. The economy related to this society, according to her, is 'waste economy'. In this structure "things must be almost as quickly devoured and discarded as they have appeared in the world, if the process itself does not come to a catastrophic end (Arendt 1958,134)

The word development, according to Esteva, has turned into a “ powerful semantic constellation” backgrounding the local understandings of progress and formulating the industrial growth as the “logical evolution” of every society irrespective of their cultural moorings. Thus, the interpretation of growth in the newly decolonised nation-states has followed “the western form” of history by negating the historiography of development. Economic development has passed on as an “abstract concept”. The “decolonisation of imagination” gets stalled in the symbolic representation of growth (Sachs, Esteva 2010).

On the other hand, the communities like the *Jharkhandi* adivasi villagers who live in close connections with community members and local ecology interpret growth as the endeavours that aim to safeguard and sustain their “symbiotic” relationships with nature and repertoire of knowledge. According to Dayamani Barla, the adivasi communities’ general idea of governing their landscapes includes maintaining the traditional land management structure and respecting the cultural codes of coexistence with nature. The traditional adivasi culture is distinct from the culture of the outsiders (*non-Adivasi*) (Barla 2016).

Prakritimulak samuday ka riti-riwaj yahan ke barhon mausam mein jara, garmi,barsat,dhoop, chaon hi mein racha-basa hai.Yehi karan hai ke jab-jab chahe maati ke saath, chahe manushya ke ya jangal-parbat ke saath cherchar hua ha, tab-tab yahan bidroh ka bigul phunaka gaya. (Barla 2016, 3)

[The traditions of these nature-oriented communities have been created and sustained in tandem with the twelve seasons of summer, rain, sun, and shades. Adivasi communities blew their resistance beagles when the outsiders disrespected adivasi soil, people, forests and hills.]

According to Barla, the Adivasi men and women stood up against any incidence of improper behaviour towards the people, lands, forests, and hills. What does she mean by “*cherchar*”?

The adivasi communities interpret the acts of not abiding by the adivasi cultural codes regarding governing their lands as disrespectful because the cultural codes reflect the desire and teaching of the Great Spirit. In the traditional Jharkhandi society, Ram Dayal Munda claims that the social hierarchy is almost absent. To justify his claim, Munda has given examples from behavioural codes of the traditional social structure (referred to as *akhet* by Munda) of Jharkhandi adivasis. In the traditional adivasi social structure, if a dog plays a decisive role in any hunting expedition, it gains the acknowledgement of an equal shareholder of that hunting expedition. One ordinary Adivasi villager mixes with the head of the village in similar terms. In the traditional adivasi political structure, every village member has the right to give opinions in the decision-making process. Until the villagers reach a consensus, the decision-making process continues. (Munda 2002, 34,35,113).

In Munni Hansda's narrative, one can notice how the adivasi villagers of the Kathihund resistance movements followed the traditional social customs of the adivasi societies to decide whether concede to or resist the thermal power project. Hansda gives the example of Aamgachia village to prove that the Kathikund movement was a people's movement. According to Hansda, in the adivasi village, every villager participates in the decision-making process. Hence a villager is aware of every step taken to understand the advantages or disadvantages of the final decision. During the Kathikund movement, the Adivasis followed the same procedures before conceding to participate in the resistance movement. Hansda proudly says that when the villagers participated in demonstrations against the thermal power project, the journalists asked the villagers about the pros and cons of the project. However, the journalists were curious whether some external agencies had misguided the villagers and manipulated their opinions. The answers of the

villagers made them the journalists) realise that the resistance struggle was people's struggle.

RPG (Rama Prasad Goenka) company that supplies electricity to the Kolkata metropolitan, intended to build a thermal power project in Kathikund block. The project planned to open a coal mining sector, a dam, and a power plant sector. The RPG company required 1000 acres of land to produce 1000 megawatt thermal electricity. The movement began on June 30th, 2008. (Dungdung 2013, 79)

Munni Hansda and Charan Kumar Singh – two front-line leaders of the Kathikund Movement, were the N.G.O (Non-Government Organisation) workers. As they worked within the Kathikund block, the villagers of the block area knew them well.

Moreover, Hansda belongs to the Santhal community, and she was attached to the various awareness-building programmes among the villagers, including letting them know how under PESA [The Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, the village council has given the constitutional power to decide over the utilisation of the village landscape. Hence when the villagers came to know about the upcoming thermal power project, they came to Hansda to understand the project and how it would affect their living conditions. The local administration and the company officers did not disclose any information regarding the project to the villagers. The villagers were more confused because they had known about the rights of the village council *gram sabha* under PESA [The Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 to decide on any proposed development projects. Without the consent of the *gram sabhas*, the company cannot proceed with its project.

RPG company ke taraf se thermal power plant banana ka project chal raha tha. Amgachia -Pokharaiya

gaaon oos project ke anda aa raha tha. To gaaonwale ne kaha ke humlog jameen nahi denge. 2005 se survey ke liye wo log koshish kar rahe the. Par gaaonwale ne survey ka kaam nahi karne diya tha, To oosi daruan sab meeting baithak kiye. Humlogon ko jab bulaya gaya to hum log barbar ye puchte the ke aaplogon ko jameen dena hai ke nahi? Agar dena hai to kyun dena hai, agar nahi dena hai to kyun nahi dena hai?(Hansda 2016)

[RPG group was planning to build a thermal power project. Amgachia and Pokhoria villages were under the project map. The villagers said we would not give our lands. They (the company employees) tried to survey from 2005. However, the villagers did not allow them to inspect the area. Then we held multiple meetings. When villagers called us, we asked them repeatedly, “Do you want to give your land or not? If yes, then why do you want to accord? If no, then why don’t you want to hand out your lands?]

The villagers opposed the survey because the development planners and executors did not take the permission of the village councils. To the villagers, the company's attitude seemed disrespectful to their traditional and constitutional rights. The villagers wanted to know in detail about the project planning. That is why at the same time, the villagers held meetings to discuss whether they would or would not give up their lands for the project²⁴.

Moreover, one must notice how she emphasized (time and again) the fact that until and unless she was sure of the spontaneous participation of the villagers, she did not come forward in support of the movement (Hansda2016). She, along with the villagers, tried to ensure that the decision to resist the development project should not be impulsive.

At first, the village head of Amgachia tried to secure the interest of those who did not have leaseholder’s documents. That is why in Hansda’s narrative, we can find

²⁴ In *Jharkhand Mein Asmita Sangharsh*, Minz and DungDung write that the Jharkhand government signed an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with the R.P.G group on 15th September 2005. In 2007 the Coal Mining department permitted the company to start mining at Mahuyagiri coal block. (Dungdung & Minz 2013,79)

how the village head sanctioned leasehold of the *khas* plots²⁵ to those cultivated on those lands. The village head of Amgachia also sent lease holding applications to the Sub-Divisional Officer on behalf of those who practised agriculture in the forest areas²⁶.

In the traditional adivasi society, if someone has a smaller plot and the production from the field is not enough for her family's sustenance, the village council lets her cultivate in some of the community lands. The big landholders sometimes allow the small landholder to farm a portion of her total land. In these ways, the smallholding adivasi farmers get the chance to meet their needs (Barla 2016). In the case of Aamgachia, the imperative of giving leasehold rights to the farmers cultivating in the *khas* plot or forest area was to include them in the compensation package meant for the leaseholders. Villagers without the lease holding papers get compensation for their houses, but with the lease holding papers, the compensation amount increases.

When asked in detail about the rehabilitation programme and the compensation package for the displaced villagers, the company sent leaflets to the Munni Hansda's narration of the Kathikund movement is full of details. Hansda tells,

Kuch din baad pradhaan ke paas company se ek leaflet aaya, oos mein likha tha ke har raiyaton ko ghar banana ke liye sha barg feet jameen mein makaan banwaya diya jaayega. Business ke liye pachash hajar rupay diya jaayega. (Raiyaton) ke jameen mein jitna bhi per hai oos ke liye panch hajar rupay ka muaabja diya jayega. Gaaye bailon ke liye panteesh barg feet jagah dene ki baat thi. Iss ke ilawa prati teen acre jameen ke liye ek Naukri diya jaayega jogyata anuser. (Hansda 2016)

²⁵ In an adivasi village, the villagers with less amount of land are allowed to cultivate on Khas plot. The plot is under the jurisdiction of village head. It is clear from the above narrative villagers used those plots under mutual agreement. They did not feel to get hold of the leasehold as the arrangement was done according the traditional adivasi laws. (Hansda 2016)

²⁶ This was done under The Provisions of Forest Act 2006.

[After some days a leaflet from company reached to village heads. It was written on the leaflet that for every displaced leaseholding family, company would build a house on hundred square feet plot. Each leaseholder would receive a sum of fifty thousand rupees for starting a business. For each tree standing on the holding the leaseholder would get five thousand rupees. The company also promised to give an additional thirty five square feet plot for building cow shed. Besides that, the company assured one employment per three acres land. The job would be given according to qualification.]

The village representatives, along with Munni ji, went to Pachora to see the outcome of the rehabilitation project. They observed that each house had three rooms and a verandah. There was no provision for drinking water. There were neither water resources nor forests nearby the rehabilitation centre (Hansda 2016).

For an adivasi villager, the house built on a hundred square feet plot is tiny for the adivasi families. I witnessed how each household in the Aamgachia village has more than one room. In the houses of the village head of Amgachia village, even the cows have a separate room of their own. The courtyard is more than a hundred square feet, polished with mud. A kitchen is a large unit. Hundred square feet for a family means offering a tiny amount of bread instead of a large plate of warm rice.

The villagers also rear various livestock. Adivasis are very careful about the accommodation of their livestock. It is impossible to accommodate all of them in just thirty-five square feet of land. The families with less than three acres of land were out of the employment provision. A farmer, equipped only with the knowledge of farming, could hardly procure a proper business plan with that fifty thousand rupees. Without lands, forests and water resources, the adivasi villagers could not re-establish their food security. When the villagers understood that there was no planning for the proper rehabilitation of the displaced adivasi villagers and with the displacements, they were to lose every security (like community support, knowledge of local

ecology, free forest products, productions from the lands), they enjoy in the existing village system, they decided to stand against the thermal power plant project.

Gram sabha mein pura mahila purush baith ke us par charcha kiya tha. Pura charcha hua. To burha, burhi log bhi the, muslim bhi the. To bola ki itna mein..humlogon ko kya hoga..Humlogon ko naukri bhi nahi milega aur kuch bhi nahi milega. To nahi denge...Badd mein company ke log aake bolte the ke du talla ghar bana denge, latrin-bathroom bhi us mein hoga, chapa kal bhi hoga..aur gaon ke log kah te thein ke kya ghar ko chatenge...khane ka hi kuch nahi rahega to ghar ko kaya chatenge. (Hansda 2017)

[In that village council, all the men and women came and discussed the matter. The old men and women of the village, even the Muslims were also present over there. They finally said: “with this (*little compensation*) what would become of us? We would not get jobs, and we would get nothing. So we won’t give our lands. Later on, the company staff came and started promising: “ we would provide you with two-storied buildings. There will be provision for a lavatory and bathroom in each of the buildings. There will be tube wells. And the villagers used to reply: “ Are we going to lick the house? When there will be nothing to eat, are we to lick the house?]

Hansda has brought up this incident in her narrative to show that the adivasi resistance movement of Kathikund was the outcome of a consensus of the villagers. The public disagreement with the thermal power project was that the company did not give them proper rehabilitation opportunities. The cowsheds provided in the rehabilitation centre were too small to rehabilitate the adivasi families’ farm animals properly.

The failure of the development executors to come up with a rehabilitation project suitable for the displaced adivasis because the way an adivasi villager value her relationship with the land, home, community, cattle, and local ecological elements is absent in the ‘modernity’ – the cornerstone of the economy-centric development models. Within the capital-controlled, technology-centric culture (referred to as ‘modern’ culture), the money market determines the value of an object. If a resource

is utilisable to make a profitable product, the resource material becomes a valuable object in the market economy. In the words of Freya Mathews,

To adopt an instrumental stance is to value things only as means to our ends rather than as ends in themselves. Instrumental reason is the form of rationality that seeks to know the world only in order to utilize it for human purposes. This form of reason is usually equated with scientific method and is described as scientific reason. The world it discloses is a world of mere objects, devoid of intrinsic normative significance. (Mathews 2006)

The intrinsic values embedded in the adivasi communities' sense of self-reliance and freedom of choice do not add profit to the market economy. Therefore, the state-culture structured around the metaphysical premise of modernity trades industrial growth over the ecological relationship of human societies. The development policymakers denigrate other issues like agency, sense of security, and providing absolute justice to the overall ecosystem.

Therefore, the culture of modernity looks at nature and natural elements as the required resources to alleviate the capacity of human consumption through unbridled industrialisation. Development executors propagate that industrialisation is the panacea to cure the disease of poverty and underdevelopment. Hence, they utilise the State's sovereign power as an instrument to encroach on natural resources. Sachs argues:

Capital, bureaucracy and science – the venerable trinity of Western modernization – declare themselves indispensable in the new crisis and promise to prevent the worst through better engineering, integrated planning and more sophisticated models. However, fuel-efficient machines, environmental risk assessment analyses, the close monitoring of natural processes and the like, well-intended as they may be, have two assumptions in common: first, that society will always be driven to test nature to her limits, and second, that the exploitation of nature should be neither maximized nor minimized, but ought to be optimized. (Sachs 2010, 34-35)

Sachs has pointed out that the issue of the environment taken within the dominant discourse of development hardly leaves the interpretational premise of materialism. For the developers, nature is not the place of existing knowledge but a passive resource zone. There is a limit to protecting the environment. Political and economic elites of the State are keen to save that much of the natural world, which would meet the demand for industrial production., The people and the other species depending on the local ecology, are baggage that must go through the process of a normative process of rehabilitation.

Development project propagators and executors interpret the plight of the development project-affected adivasi villagers and the destruction of the local ecological balance as the “collateral economic damage” (Plumwood 2002) – that should be accepted by the villagers for the greater good. Dayamani Barla points out how the “development” projects cause the gradual annihilation of the adivasi culture from the face of the Jharkhand state. In her words,

Visthapan ka sawal sirf ghar se ujar ne ka mamla nahi hai. Ye aap logon ka janna jaroori hai ke aashi lakh log visthapit huye hai. Oos se dugna log chale gaye hai kaam ke khonj mein bahar. Aur oos se dugna log bahar se aa rahe hai yahan baith ne ke liye. Adivasiyon ka pratisha dino din ghatti jaa rahi hai.
(Barla 2016)

[The issue of displacement is not limited to the problem of dislocating the adivasi houses. You must understand that eighty lakhs of adivasis are already displaced. The number of people who migrated outside in search of work is double of the displaced people. The number of (non-adivasi) outsiders who have settled in the Jharkhand is twice the number migrated. Adivasi existence is diminishing day by day]

Barla concludes that, Without the adivasi majority, the constituencies reserved for the adivasis would turn into general constituencies. The ecological destructions would cause disintegration of the adivasi societies. The deterioration of the adivasi

village communities' would facilitate further destruction of Jharkhand's ecological resources as the adivasi resistant voices would cease to exist.

For Dayamani Barla, “*abua raj*” means having the freedom to maintain the “*adivasi jivan-shaili*” or Adivasi way of living. Her understanding of the adivasi way of governing the land in her interview points out that the adivasi way of managing village lands and the surrounding landscapes signifies maintaining physical, psychological, and spiritual relationships with the various elements of the village society forest and water bodies. Each piece of Creation bears a unique value in the adivasi way of living.

The development executors come with compensation packages based on the exchange values of certain things like the material used in the house, the amount of production a farmer from his land or fruit-bearing tree. The trees or creepers or bushes or barren lands or grazing lands, sacred groves— all these hold no value for the development executors as all these have no exchange values. In other words, the compensation structure did not have any tools to read the signs that fall under the complex of intrinsic value. The complexities arise because these signs are embedded in the memories, histories, lived experiences of connection, sense of identity, and Knowledge system that is again related to the land—the ‘perceived space’. Dayamani Barla’s words point out the existing incommensurability between the understanding of the space from the two contesting sections. On being asked about the reason behind the dissents of the villagers against the Koel-Karo hydro-electric power project, she remembers,

Gaonwalon ne kaha ke do gaon ka adarsh punarsthan karke dikhaiye. four saal ke baad bhi vo log kuch nahi kar paye. To gaonwalon ne zameen dene se inqar kar diya. (Barla 2015, 2016)

[The villagers asked (*the authority*) for the ideal rehabilitation of two villages. After four years, they

were incapable of doing so. Then the villagers denied giving the lands.]

According to Barla, for the Adivasis, the ideal rehabilitation means resettling the displaced villagers in a landscape where they can rebuild their 'sarna' and 'sasandiri, the place of *haatu bonga* (village protector spirits) along with the cultivable lands, grazing lands, forest, river.

The meaning of *sasandiri* to a Munda village does not mean just a burial ground. It means the inheritance of the land. It is also a space of continuity and a symbol of the adivasi identity because the stone slab means how the first adivasi settlers cleared the forest and settled the village after finding the place suitable for continuing the Munda way of living. Dayamani Barla concludes that *sasandiri* is one of the significant symbols of the Munda identity. The area is the abode of ancestors. It also carries the truth that the living souls would meet the deceased, and it is also a place of direct connection with the ancestors who live in the shadow and memory. 'Everything would wither' she repeated the sentence twice while describing the importance of *sasandiri* in the Munda community.

sasandiri hamare purvojon ne banaya. Wahan hum khana khane ke liye baithte hain, to pahle anaj ko niche rakhte hain. Ke hamare jo upaj hai, ye dharti ka upaj, is mein hamare purvojon ka bhi ek hissa hai. Usko hum uahan pe dete hai...vo kahte hai ke usko hum resettlement karenge, to kayse karenge. (Barla 2015)

[Our ancestors made the *sasandiri*. When we sit there to take our food, we first put our food on the ground. Whatever we produce is the contribution of this earth. Our ancestors have their share in this. We offer it there. They (development executors) say that they would resettle *sasandiri*. How could they possibly do it?

Sasandiri is an actual place that holds memories of elders and histories of the Munda elders' transition from one place to another. Here members of Khuntkattidars

reunite once a year and perform the cultural practice. The place also symbolises Munda tradition. The image of sharing the production of land with the ancestors situates the very spot as one of the repositories of connection. The village landscape is vital to the villagers because every place in it symbolises their *adivasiyat* or indigeneity. To an adivasi individual, alienation from the ancestral lands means estrangement from all the connections that determine her adivasi identity. Dayamani Barla argues:

Bhoomi jaane par bhu-malik ka sirf apni jameen se palayan nahi hota, rishte-naate, samaj-sanskriti paribesh se bhi be-dakhal hota hai (Barla 2015, 9)
[After losing the land, the (adivasi) land owner not only moves away from his land, he gets evicted from his social, cultural and ecological relationships.]

If we read Dayamani Barla's explanation regarding the cause of adivasi communities' resistance/struggles against the government policies in juxtaposition with the sentence evinces the fact that the movements revolve around a demand for the acknowledgement of the adivasi consciousness. It is not just the land for which the Jharkhandis express their dissent against development. Instead, they want the freedom that would allow them to reflect on their given situations consciously. They want the right to choose the most suitable way of living related to a particular 'place'. Hence, one can see that the conflict between the development and Adivasi communities of Jharkhand is between two systems of building relationships with place and the bodies living on it. The political and economic elites have secured the apex position in the pyramidal power stratum of the society by manipulating the sovereign state power in their favour. The power asymmetry can only be possible when there will be a complete absence of other forms/ sense of 'development'. Hence, we can say the dream of adivasi *raij* on Adivasi *dishum*, even after the formation of Jharkhand, still depends on the 'Will' and 'Intention' of the representatives vis-vis decision-makers of

sovereign Indian Nation-State (Prozorov 2007);(Padel 2015);(Kela 2012);(Nathan&Xaxa 2012); (Plumwood2001); (Agamben 1998); (Kosseleck 1988).

Dayamani Barla's voice reverberates with confidence that Birsa Munda's spirit will continue to encourage the Adivasis to continue their struggle until they regain their traditional right to govern their landscape²⁷.

Adivasi samaj ka sanskriti hai ke vo dukh aur sukh jivan ke dono bhagon mein hi naachte gaate hain, jabtak Adivasi samaj nachte aur gaate rahenge to ye sangharsh kabhi bujhega nahi. Vo sangharsh jaari rahega. Aur ye jo hai ki jameen hamaari bachne ka baat hai, jameen hamari bachegi hi. Ye hamara viswash hai ...kyunki..Birsa munda ko hum dekhe nahi the, par unke atma humlogon ko aaj bhi bolta haike humlog ne jo kaam chor ke gaye the, vo kaam tum ko karna hai. To hum kar rahe hai, aanevala piri bhi karegi. (Barla 2015)

[The culture of the Adivasi societies is that the people dance and sing in joy and grief. It is the culture of the adivasi societies. Adivasis will continue their resistance as long as they continue their culture of singing and dancing. Regarding saving our land, our land will be safe for sure. I believe that (though I have not seen Birsa Munda)-Birsa Munda's soul continuously tells us, "you will have to finish what we started". I am doing (Birsa's unfinished work). Our next generation will bear the legacy of Birsa.]

In her statement, by bringing the adivasi culture of singing and dancing and the influence of Birsa Munda on the collective memories of adivasi societies together, Barla relates adivasi culture with the resistance movements. Singing and dancing together is the metaphor for the idea of kinship in the adivasi culture. Every gathering on the *akhara* ground (community ground) strengthens the integrity of the adivasi villagers. An adivasi individual shares her sorrow and joy with her community members. For an adivasi individual, it is a way of connecting to the community. Within the adivasi culture, the anxiety and desperation of being lonely are absent.

²⁷ Adivasis believe that the departed soul returns to her own house and continues to live with her family members. The eyes of the ancestors are always on their descendants. Hence, they cannot ignore the ethos of coexistence.

Adivasi culture is also about maintaining integrity within the community. In other words, the integrated community culture provides physical, psychological, and economic security to every member. At the same time, to practice the culture of integrity, Adivasis require specific social and ecological structures. The adivasi villagers stand together as a collective body against the development-induced displacements from their ancestral landscapes.

In the context of economic development, the adivasi societies revoke the spirit of Bisa Munda because he tried to protect and conserve the adivasi values. Birsa's dream of reestablishing adivasi *raij* (rule) over adivasi *dishum* (land) appears relevant to the adivasi villagers struggling to save adivasi rights over the adivasi landscape from the hands of the landscape encroachers.

“ *Gaon Chorob Nahi/ Jangal Chorob Nahi*” (We will Leave neither Village nor Forest): Adivasi Sovereignty and *Jal-Jangal-Jameen*

In this section, I show how *jal-jangal-jameen* as a whole appears as the symbol of adivasi sovereignty. *Gaon chorob nahi/jangal chorob nahi* is a song that has become almost the anthem of the adivasi people resisting development-induced displacements in various parts of India. The rough translation of the first stanza is like this: “ We will leave neither our village nor forest/ We will leave neither mother-our soil nor stop from resisting”.

The words of the song reflect the choices of adivasi villagers regarding life. Village (gaon) and jangal (forest) are symbols of adivasi existence. The pledge of not leaving the places signifies adivasi sovereignty. I claim that the *jal-jangal-jameen* is the cornerstone of the adivasi way of determining self because place-based knowledge imparts a sense of capability to them.

Adivasi ways of managing community life and the local ecology are the foundation of adivasi sovereignty. However, the development projects have not so far brought justice to the adivasi sense of capability that arises from the adivasi way of living. When Dayamani Barla argues that ideal rehabilitation of the adivasi villagers is not possible and the value of *sarna-sasandiri* in adivasi is impossible to calculate (Barla 2015, 9-10), she indirectly points out that adivasi ancestors followed certain principles before the settlement of the village. After settling the village and clearing a particular portion of the forest lands, the first settlers built specific rules to maintain the balance within the village ecology that includes agricultural fields, arid or semi-arid lands, forest area, water bodies, and hills.

A delicate and complex ²⁸web relationship between adivasi villagers and the local ecology and adivasi understanding of *raij* or ruling the land has emerged from the relationships. According to Ram Dayal Munda 'association' to the landscape, the forest is the cornerstone of Adivasi self-reliance and self-esteem. The 'extinction' of Adivasi is inevitable if they are taken out of their *jal-jangal-jameen* because adivasi sense of freedom and identity depends on the communities' harmonious and mutual relationships with local surroundings (Munda2014, 9).

Succeeding generations of the adivasi communities have followed their 'ancestors' teachings and extended the boundary of the knowledge with the time. The village landscapes are the living repertoire of collective expertise. Without the landscape, many words of the adivasi vocabularies would lose their connections to everyday living. The community members will thus lose the power to reinterpret the

²⁸ Maintaining mutual and harmonious relationships with local surroundings is delicate and complex because to maintain such kind of relationship, one must have a proper understanding of ecological balance. The availability of the ecological elements changes with the change in an environment like flood or drought. Hence, an eco-centric community must introspect and redefine the limit of optimum human intervention for each ecological element with every change.

meanings of those words from their experiential realm. Hence, the words will become extinct from the next generation's memories. The adivasi knowledge will lose its richness and the power to reconstruct new meanings to challenge the encroacher's interpretations.

Moreover, Disruption of the local ecology would alienate the adivasis from the knowledge. The absence of the local environment leads to the suspension of the memories. The loss of memories would lead to the disintegration of the codes of communication between the older generation and the younger generation. The younger generation would lose their inheritance over the adivasi knowledge system, hence the adivasi identity. They will not be able to extend the boundary of the adivasi knowledge system and the ethos of the *adi-dharam*.

Following the ethos of the *adi-dharam*, the adivasi cultures have understood a system of governance that would place collectivity over individuality, caring for the earth and others over the exploitation of natural resources, safeguarding multi-dimensional connectivities with the local ecology over only economic growth. The stories, the repository of adivasi knowledge, establish connectivity between the source elements of creation (earth, water, air and heat) and the resultant vegetation and the animal world. Adivasi way of living reflects the ethos of connectivity (Munda & Manki 2015, xxi-xxii).

Sovereignty, as argued in the previous section of this chapter, is not a natural phenomenon. It is part of the collective imagination and depends on the cultural perspectives of the societies. Adivasi sense of sovereignty, which is intrinsically related to the adivasi culture, chose to determine the adivasi self as an integral part of nature. Hence, the adivasi understanding of sovereignty argues for having the ability/freedom to maintain the connections with various subjects of society in a way

that is compatible with the adivasi way of looking at life. The bonds are both material and spiritual.

According to Taiaiake Alfred, the sense of “sovereignty” of a nation indicates the people’s choices in conducting socio-political-economic and ecological functions based on the place-based knowledge and cultural ethos of the nation. He argues :

It is not an objective or natural phenomenon but the result of choices made by men and women, indicative of a mindset located in, rather than a natural force creative of, a social and political order. The reification of sovereignty in politics today is the result of a triumph of a particular set of ideas over others-no more natural to the world than any other man-made object. (Alfred 2005, 46)

In his other book, *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous manifesto* Taiaiake Alfred has argued that indigenous sovereignty respects an individual’s autonomy over choosing the way of living. Here Alfred writes:

A crucial feature of the indigenous concept of governance is its respect for individual autonomy. This respect precludes the notion of ‘sovereignty’...The indigenous tradition sees government as the collective power of the individual members of the nation; there is no separation between society and state. (Alfred 1999, 25)

Therefore indigenous sovereignty respects an individual’s sense of agency. Without a sense of agency, an individual cannot attain her sense of autonomy. Alfred’s argument on respecting an individual’s autonomy as one of the characteristics of indigenous sovereignty finds resonance in Dayamani Barla’s narrative.

There was a *Nachni* family in Dayamani Barla’s village. The Nachni family was a social outcast. Even the adivasi families that do not believe in the Hindu caste system avoided the touch of the family. Dayamani Barla remembers how the adivasi

families made it a norm to fetch water from the village well when any one of the Nachni family used the well. Dayamani says,

Mein akeli beti thi. Parti thi. Ma bhi nahi rahti thi. To mujhko ghar ka kaam bhi karna parta tha. Apna roji-roti ka bhi chinta karna bhi parta tha. Khet mein bhi jana parta tha. To sara cheej time se maintain karna parta tha. Mein aati thi ghara pakar ke, dharam dharam jaati thi aur apna balti rashhi nikal ke kuan mein daal deti thi kuan se paani nikalne ke liye chahe koi ghasi bhar raha ho kuan se ya nachni paribar ho. Fir un se kahti thi ke mujhe ghara dhula do. (Barla 2015)

[I was the only girl child. I had to attend the school. My mother did not live with me. I had to do the chores. I had to work on other's field for living. hence, I had to do everything on time. Hence, I used to the village wall and cared less about who was fetching water at the time. I did not care whether the members of ghasi family or Nachni family were present on the platform of the well. After fill my pitcher I asked any of them to place the heavy pitcher on my waist.]

Adivasi elders used to rebuke her and ask her to throw the water. Dayamani argued that she could not afford to throw that water. She concludes her anecdote with this line:

Baad mein dekhi ke wo bhi aur chutachut nahi manta nahi mante the. Phir chutachut maanna khatam ho gaya. (Barla 2015)

[After some time, I noticed that they (adivasi women) stopped caring about the practice of untouchability. Gradually the practice of untouchability stopped existing.]

The above story shows how the adivasi social system secures an individual's autonomy. The narrative also points out that within the adivasi culture, the behavioural norms can change if that norm hinders an individual's freedom of survival. Following Alfred's arguments, one can interpret indigenous sovereignty as the people's autonomy in choosing general codes of conduct in the socio-political and

economic spheres. The regulations reflect the collective consensus about a particular way of living.

The people belonging to the *Jharkhandi* Culture, according to Munda, follow the principle of unanimity in the context of governance. When all the village community members arrive at a common consensus regarding an issue, the village councils make the final decision. Munda has pointed out that the adivasi village council, in ancient times, was self-sufficient and autonomous in its territory. There were multiple layers of administration to solve the inter-village matters and issues that demanded more extensive views but that in no way affected the autonomy of the village republic or its freedom of determining a solution to a problem located at that place. The traditional Adivasi way of ruling the land follows the structure of ideal democracy. (Munda 2002, 29-34)

Adivasi sovereignty, therefore, is about securing and respecting the sense of freedom for every member of a community. The community members, irrespective of their gender and economic status have the freedom to participate in the decision-making process. The issue of participation in the decision-making process is essential cause it insinuates within a participant's mind both the sense of agency and a sense of connectedness to the cause.

The idea of space builds around the way human cognition interprets place and local ecology. Culture plays a pivotal role in the process of interpretation. The members of modern culture depend mainly on empirical data, and unilinear causality conceptualises a place through signs that gather the knowledge about “what is lived and what is perceived”(Lefebvre1991, 40). According to Lefebvre, “lived space” also includes the images and symbols that signify how the members bear the place in their cultural consciousness (Lefebvre 1991, 40-41). The lived space as it

encompasses an awareness generated through experience (both subjective and collective, traditional and cultural) then becomes a particular space of connection of several signs and images. The symbols that signify the nature of the relationship between the inhabitants and inhabitants become part of self-determination. Leanne Betasamoske Simpson-an indigenous activist, performer, and academician of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabe society -has argued that land is an essential part of her community's knowledge system. The active engagement of the members with the landscape is the primary demand of her culture. The cultures include “singing, dancing, fasting, dreaming, visioning, participating in the ceremony, apprenticing with Elders, practising lifeways and living knowledge, by watching, listening, and reflecting in a good way” (Simpson 2012, 36). She has interpreted the importance of land from the perspective of Michi Saagiig Nishanaabe in her article Land as Pedagogy. There she writes:

To me, this is what coming into wisdom within a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabe epistemology looks like – it takes place in the context of family, community and relations. The land, aki, is both context and process. The process of coming to know is learner-led and profoundly spiritual. Coming to know is the pursuit of whole body intelligence practised in the context of freedom, and when realized collectively it generates generations of loving, creative, innovative, self-determining, inter-dependent and self-regulating community-minded individuals. It creates communities of individuals with the capacity to uphold and move forward our political traditions and systems of governance. Theory isn't just an intellectual pursuit – it is woven within kinetics, spiritual presence and emotion, it is contextual and relational. It is intimate and personal, with individuals themselves holding the responsibilities for finding and generating meaning within their own lives. Most importantly, “theory” isn't just for academics; it's for everyone.... Theory within this context is generated from the ground up, and its power stems from its living resonance within individuals and collectives. (Simpson 2014,36)

The place is an essential part of the indigenous epistemology, specifically for those who depend on the local ecosystem for sustenance. The connection between the knower and the land demands constant interactions. The cultural and ethical values that thrive within the adivasi culture evolve from the process of cognition that understands the existence of human beings in relation to the local ecology. Humans, as agents of knowledge, learn about the ‘world’ outside them through productive relationships. If the knower, through her historical, biological, geographical, and ecological situations, understands the importance of the surrounding elements in structuring her sense of self, the connections between the agent of knowledge and the local environment include the psychological profundity with physical embeddedness (Preston 2003). The memories and the preservation of the memories depend on the landscape. *jal-jangal-jameen*, from the adivasi perspective, indicates adivasi communities’ collective physical, psychological, historical, social, and ecological connections. The variegated meanings that evolve from the multidimensional and pluralistic interpretations of *jal-jangal-jameen* make the very term environmental heritage of the adivasi societies.

Heritage refers to the repository of “values, practices” of a community represented through “symbols”. The distinctiveness of environmental heritage is it cognises the active presence of landscape in constructing the ethical, social, and cultural values of a society.

Environmental heritage is not merely the recounting of bare historical data but involves some sense of meaning in relation to place for the people who possess the particular heritage. Moreover, if environmental heritage is environmental identity narratively configured over time, it also brings to the fore (as does narrative) the notion of memory” (Utsler 2014, 127).

The arrays of experiences accumulated in a community's collective memories over time construct the layers of interpretations within the adivasi knowledge system. The members gain authority over the symbols by reflecting on the dominant meanings, resurging the dormant meanings, and creating new meanings through reinterpretation.

According to Dayamani Barla and Nandi Kachhap, displacement from the village community and alienation from the local ecology deteriorate the general condition of an adivasi woman. From the status quo of independent farmers, they become subjugated manual labourers. As manual labourers, they become more vulnerable to sexual, physical, and psychological exploitations in the non-*adivasi* world²⁹.

Nandi Kachhap points out that within traditional village society, the community bonds existing between the village women help a mother to give proper care to her children. According to her, as the agricultural fields are within the village space, the mothers can take care of their children. The farmer-mother can also provide financial support for the education of their children. While working in the agricultural field, an *adivasi* woman always counts on getting the help of other community members in her time of need. According to her, the displaced women lose their traditional rights over lands and the knowledge system. As the women need to move to the city space to earn a livelihood, the children are left alone because most of the adults would run an errand in search of money every day. In the village structure, the mothers could fall back on the other women for help.

Besides that, the children also get the opportunity to learn from their parents the traditional and accumulated knowledge. The women living with the cultures of the

²⁹ Barla experienced all kinds of exploitations when she worked as the maid -servant and labour in Ranchi. The sense of security and autonomy that as an *adivasi* girl she enjoyed in her village space was absent in the non-*adivasi* dominated city space. (Barla 2015)

adivasi village community enjoy their agencies and rights to interpret the direction of production and consumption. *Jal-jangal-jameen* act as the active mediator in orienting women's sense of authority.

The sense of capability of an adivasi woman exists in relation to her *saathis* (friends) and local landscape within the safety net of the traditional adivasi village governance system.

Within the adivasi village societies of Jharkhand, the culture of *madait* is one such governance policy. Sonika Tuti and Praveen Kumar edited *Munda Jan-Itihaas: Sanskritik Itihas Khuntkatti gaon Ka*; the authors have documented how the adivasi villagers manage their social and environmental responsibilities with the help of the traditional system of *madait*. In the *Madait* system, the villagers help each other in various agricultural and village works. There is no fixed time for employment because it is a voluntary service. The village council take care of the nearby forests too. The villagers must seek permission from the village council before cutting woods from the forest³⁰. (Tuti & Kumar 2013, 1-25).

Parveen Toppo of Nagri Village admits that without the support of *madait*, a widow like her couldn't manage the farm work and raise her children. As the system follows the ethos of mutual relationship, she also helped other members with their needs. That is how adivasi self-determination clings to the perspective of self-respect. The support of the village community is a great wealth for the women (Toppo 2016). Munni Hansda remembers how women members of her village taught her how to choose and collect forest products. They shared stories of the forest, village, spirits,

³⁰ In one of my field studies in Santhal Pargana I visited a village of Paharia community with Munni Hansda. The village headman said that they chose to prepare their agricultural lands at some distance (nearly two hours walk) to keep the forest nearby. Because it is more hospitable option in the hilly area. This shows the forest management is also part of self-determination.

and daily chores. The togetherness also gave her the confidence and joy of being independent within a group of friends (Hansda 2017)

During the resistance movement, Nagri village women applied the rule of *Madait* and continued their sit-in demonstration for a hundred fifty days. The women of Nagri proudly said how they managed to look after their children and do everyday household chores without losing the ground of the sit-in demonstration on the agricultural land that was to be encroached on by the government. The villagers started satyagraha on the 3rd of March, 2012. Nagri women began to live in the temporary shelter erected on the agricultural lands

Anyone residing in India can understand the heat of summer in a place like Jharkhand. The scorching heat and the heat wave make life unbearable during March, April, and May.

*Hum log to wahin pe baithe rahte the. Wahin pe sote bhi the. Subah mein aake khana paka kar chale jaate the. Bachhe log bhi wahin se school jaate the aur school se wapas bhi aate the. Agar humlog ye nahi karte to Sarkar hamari jameen chin leti.*³¹ (Kachhap 2016)

[We used to sleep over there too. In the early morning, we used to come to our house, cook food and then return to that place of (picketing). Our children went to school from there and after school came back to that place. If we had not done that, the government would have taken our land.]

The women could not leave the demonstration site for a second. They feared the police would encroach on the lands if the demonstration site remained empty. Hence, they made the demonstration site an extension of their homes. Women took a turn to visit their homes. They cooked food for the family members and brought some portions to the demonstration site. The children were in the care of mothers of the Nagri village. The women ensured to send their children to schools and colleges even

³¹ Nandi Kachhap 02/2017.

at the movement's peak. When I asked the women who gathered in the courtyard of Nandi Kachhap to be part of our (Nandi Kachhap and mine) conversation, they said that living and sleeping in a temporary shelter could not dampen their spirit because they struggled to secure the future of their children. Here the meaning of *Madait* had extended the premise of community custom and reached the sphere of political consciousness. To ensure their children's future, Nagri women helped each other out so that every demonstrator could maintain a balance between *andolon* (resistance movement) and everyday living. The women of Nagri could implement the *madait* system in their time of struggle because the system was within the cultural practices of the village community. On 14th December 2012, the land revenue minister and the president of the Steering committee that looked after the case of Nagri decided to stall the plan of establishing IIM and triple IIT in the lands of Nagri.

Nagri women's presence at the frontline of the Nagri resistance movement and their ways of working together to save their lands indicate they were part of the collective choice of the village community. The women's sense of agency as autonomous farmers aware of their traditional rights over the lands has led them to become the forerunners of the Nagri movement. In the context of the Nagri movement, Nandi Kachhap has pointed out that a woman farmer of the Nagri can manage her children's overall well-being without compromising her economic freedom. As the lands are beside the village, during the time of sowing, plantation and harvest, the mother can keep a watch over their children. As mentioned earlier, after school, the children can visit their mothers. If a woman needs to nurse her child, others will help her in her work.

Nandi Kachhap argues that if the government encroaches on all the farming lands of Nagri, the women of the families that solely depend on agriculture have to

travel to Ranchi in search of a job. She can not exercise her freedom to return to her house in the middle of her work to look after their children. Without the supervision of the mother, the children would go astray. Moreover, the menial jobs would hardly fetch enough money to meet the basic needs of a family. Then the education of children would appear as a luxury, and that was the first thing which would be affected as a consequence (Kachhap 2016).

In an adivasi village society, the children who could not manage to fit in the school education system could learn agricultural skills. In Munni ji's narration, there is a reference to some Santhali village women who preferred teaching their children agricultural skills over sending them to school.

*Hum kahte the bachhaon ko kyun school nahi bhejte?
To wo log bolte the ke school mein parane se kaya
hoga. Naukri to nahi milega humlogon ko, upar se
bachha kheti baari ka kaam nahi sikhega, to khayega
kaya?* (Hansda 2015)

[I asked them, “why don't you send your children to school? Send them to school”. Then they usually said, “what is there in educating them. We won't get a job. If the children will not learn the agricultural work, how will they survive?]

The women in Munni ji's narrative show concern for their children's future. They are unsure whether their children would get a chance to get employment based on their school education. Hence, the mothers want to make their children learn agricultural skills as a fall-back option. Within the traditional adivasi village system, teaching cultivation skills means learning the skill in relation to the local ecology.

Moreover, even if the children aim for higher education, without the support of farm production, forest and water – the three elements that help the adivasi families to keep their market expense in check and enjoy the benefit of surplus income, can not support the cost of their children's higher education. Like Nandi ji says,

*Agar jameen nahi bachega to hum log law
university tak duriyan kaise tair karenge?*
(Kachhap 2016)
[If the land is lost, how can we traverse the
distance of the law university?]

The distance she has pointed out in her narrative is not the physical distance between the village and the University. She refers to the social and financial distance between the system of power and the victims of the administration. Once out of their lands, the children will not get a chance to learn the knowledge of the land and the community and, at the same time, would hardly be able to locate themselves in the highly competitive and result-oriented mainstream higher education. The adivasi farmers will lose their freedom to engage with their vast adivasi knowledge of ecology-centric agriculture without the lands, forests, and water bodies. As a result, children like their parents have to survive on state welfare schemes. In other words, they will lose the independence of choice, the basis of Adivasi subjectivity.

Hence, when the Santhal women, mentioned by Munni Hansda, show their concern by saying, “How do they (the children) eat?” they do not merely talk about eating or getting food. They are concerned about the loss of freedom and dignity of an adivasi farmer in her village ecology. Honour and liberty are intrinsic to the sense of agency in accessing, utilizing, and contributing to the existing knowledge system.

Lyla Mehta describes how the women of *Gadher* village of Gujrat lost their agencies after displacement from their traditional village space due to the Narmada River project. The women who went to the rehabilitation centre at Malu struggled with their changed status as passive agents. The compensation package interpreted women as the dependent members of the families. The women’s freedom of choice was absent in the life of Malu. She writes:

The contrast between Gadher and Malu is striking. Gadher was a sprawling village spread out over the river valley with fields, homesteads, and houses scattered over the hills and forest. By contrast, Malu, even after ten years, is still a resettlement site (vasahat) with little or no tree cover and half-complete houses situated close to each other in grim unaesthetic lines". In this unaesthetic landscape, the women were the ones who lost their authority over the lands. They lost their access to "lands with titles (*Khata ni jamin*), wasteland (*kharaba jamin*), forest land". The forest land served as the "fallback" options for the villagers. The "livestock" served as another medium of food production. Hence, the range of livelihoods and income was diverse, and not all were within the market realm. This diversity has been significantly reduced in Malu. (Mehta 2009, 42-56)

Mehta's arguments identify that adivasi women's sense of autonomy depends on the adivasi village space because they act as independent and knowledgeable agents in food production.

After displacement, the state of unemployment becomes an acute problem for the women members of the village. With the reduced income, the rest of the family members disintegrate in search of employment in the labour market. They become unskilled labourers in the market economy. As the dominant market economy functions according to the patriarchal norms, the women get lower wages. With the absence of bio-diversity and kincentric community relationships, the displaced adivasi women lose their compensatory means to meet the income gap. Displaced women lose their autonomy over time. They do not exercise their authority to choose the rest and work time. They lose their empowerment over their agencies as they can not decide whether they would prefer to participate in the work. The state of inequality fails to provide 'absolute justice' to the members of the adivasi families.

The idea of absolute justice looks at the availability of fundamental capabilities and freedoms without which an unblemished life would be impossible. It is non-comparative in nature, focuses on basic living

conditions, and points to the norm of human dignity (Sachs 2010, xx).

On the other hand, the integrated relationships with the village community and the *jal-jangal-jameen* build the members' sense of capability as the reflexive agent of knowledge. That is why they value their bonds over industrialised capitalism because the industries' intervention deprives them of their culture and capability. The sense of growth for the adivasi populace gives priority to holding mutual and harmonious relationships with the surroundings.

In his book *Development as Freedom*, Amartya Sen has argued that 'freedom' of making choices expands the periphery of a person's capability. An individual's sense of freedom depends on how her socio-cultural locations structures her interpretation of self-reliance (Sen 1999, 18-21). According to Sen, an individual's freedom of making a choice depends on her agency to decide on her well-being. He explains :

To see individuals as entities that experience and have well-being is an important recognition, but to stop there would amount to a very restricted view of the personhood of women. Understanding the agency role is thus central to recognizing people as responsible persons: not only we well or ill, but we also act or refuse to act and can choose to work one way rather than another. And thus we -women *and* men- must take responsibility for doing things or not doing them. (Sen 1999, 190)

From the perspective of the capability approach, the women members of the rural adivasi communities' intention of protecting the adivasi way of living indicate how they interpret their potentiality as functioning agents. They understand their relationships with *jal-jangal-jameen* secure their freedom of making choices regarding their time, applications of knowledge, work patterns, production, consumption and growth according to the adivasi value system.

The sense of agency of an individual depends on her sense of empowerment. An individual's sense of 'capability' only arises when the society where she belongs acknowledges her agency and values her opinion. "All capabilities correspond to the overall freedom to lead the life that a person has reason to value". (Robeyns 2003)

Therefore, the desire for adivasi sovereignty rooted in the slogan of *abua dishum, abua raij* (our land, our rule) means a willingness to protect the relational balance that has been existing between the adivasi villagers and the local environment as they value their status of self-reliant in the context of sustenance more than exploiting the ecological wealth for economic growth. Sachs argues that the process of "delinking the desire for equity from economic growth and relinking it to the community- and culture-based notions of well-being will be the cornerstone of the post-development age" (Sachs 2010). Adivasi sovereignty is the subjective will of the adivasi people to protect the traditional and cultural interpretation of well-being, which depends on the ethos of the symmetrical distribution of justice and equality. The adivasi rural communities have learned through their experiences that the economic development projects make them entirely dependent on the market economy. After displacement, the villagers do not have options of creating a comfortable balance between the market economy and the village ecology.

Conclusion

Participation, taking responsibility and exercising the agency are the key features of adivasi sovereignty. State-sponsored development projects and the displacements related to the projects, in reality, negate all these aspects of adivasi sovereignty by pointing them out as underdeveloped or primitive.

Adivasi sovereignty is a complex maze of tradition, culture, memory, and landscape. The critical feature of adivasi sovereignty is its close connection to the community members' experiences, reflections and understandings of freedom. Hence, it is open to interpretations. Therefore, adivasi sovereignty is essentially about maintaining the adivasi people's autonomy of interpretations from the adivasi value system. Adivasi way of understanding sovereignty incorporates the ideas and ethics of managing commonwealth, community integrity, and maintaining mutual and harmonious coexistence with local ecology. As adivasi understanding of growth is relational, adivasi sovereignty means freedom of the adivasi communities to envisage the process and pattern of such relational growth.

CHAPTER- 3

Jharkhandi Adivasi and Hawai'ian Kānaka Māoli Perspectives and the “Aesthetics of Connection”

The chapter focuses on how the aesthetics of connections and the values related to that category of aesthetics structure the ground of the indigenous resistance movements against the encroachments of the indigenous lands, livelihood, and ecology for the development projects. The arguments in the following sections attempt to understand the cognitive relationship between the indigenous communities' multidimensional connections to the landscape and how the engaged associations with the land help the indigenous people reinterpret and enact their agency.

Therefore, I intend to engage with the comparative analysis of the two indigenous movements that took place in two different time frames on two continents by two indigenous communities belonging to two distinct cultures and landscapes. The analysis primarily focuses on the Nagri movement (2012) of Jharkhand. (India) and the Mākua movement (1996) of Hawai'i (USA).

The primary reason for reading these movements together is to see how the Adivasi way of living and Kānaka Māoli way of living encouraged the two communities to re-connect "re-cognise" the value of place in relation to their general well-being. I have emphasised the indigenous ways of living to show the transcendental powers indigenous ways of living hold to challenge the established social codes of prosperity. Another reason for focussing on indigenous ways of living is to free the definition of indigeneity from the control of the state lexicon³².

³² The term adivasi does not exist in the Indian State's constitutional language. In the case of Hawai'i, Hawai'ian State Government looks at blood count to consider the indigeneity. I have used the terms - Adivasi and Kānaka Māoli- to refer to the people who follow the ethos of indigenous ways of living.

The objective is to find out how the community activists underwent the experiences of transitions from ordinary residents to conscious indigenous activists through the resistance movements. As the evolution of the indigenous individual from an inconspicuous villager to an expressive activist standing up for the community members' common interests is the centre of the argument, the chapter is an attempt to understand how the activists of the indigenous resistance movements sensibly cognised their agency by rediscovering the meanings of the indigenous way of living and thereby recognised their agency in transforming the interpretations attached to development/well-being/ better life in relation to her multidimensional and multiple connections to community and the local surrounding. Therefore, in the context of the indigenous resistance movement against development-induced displacements, aesthetics is referred to as the sensible cognition of the self in relation to the connections that are part of an indigenous individual's everyday life.

The connections that an individual chooses to value develop from the person's experiences during her struggle for survival with dignity. Hence, aesthetics discussed here focuses on the relationship between sensible cognition of agency and sensuous cognition of personal encounters. I claim that the re-emergence of the terms like indigeneity, oppression, justice, and care results from a transitional process. The process of evolution incorporates an indigenous village activist's subjective internalisation of experiences during the resistance struggle, value judgement, and choices about her role/s in the future after the movements. The multiple and multifaceted connections that the indigenous village activist makes before and during the resistance movement act as the cornerstone of the course of transformation.

Hence Adivasis refer to the villagers who follow the worldview of adi-dharam of Jharkhand are Adivasis. By Kānaka Māoli, I mean the followers of traditional Kānaka Māoli ethos. (Munda 2002; Dyke 2008)

While the Adivasis consider the freedom of maintaining mutual and harmonious relationships with the *jal-jangal-jameen* as the basis of adivasi identity and adivasi sovereignty, the right to practice kin-centric relationships with the *āina* is the rudiment of Hawai'ian indigenous sovereignty movements.

In this chapter, I focus on how the indigenous community members' multidimensional mutual, respectful and harmonious relationships with the local ecology structure the villagers' aesthetic sense of agency and capability. The chapter thus tries to engage with the following questions :

- a) How did the connections to the lands play a crucial role in structuring the villagers' sense of agency and capability?
- b) Why did the interpretations that emerged from the experiences of the village communities living in two separate historical, cultural, and ecological contexts lead the Nagri villagers and the Mākua Beach villagers to differ from the mainstream interpretations of aesthetics cocooned in the mainstream cultures of the development of the two nation-states?

Bringing the perspective of aesthetics to analyse the indigenous interpretations of displacement and the State-advocated logic on displacements of the indigenous villagers, I attempt to show the imperative of focussing on the sensible cognition of place. I point out that an indigenous village activist's sensible understanding of place depends on the functioning of the individual's multiple and intersecting epistemic locations. The epistemic locations include indigenous villagers' sense of history, memories, agency, freedom, colonisation, and relationships with the landscapes.

Indigenous Resistance Movements from the Perspectives of Aesthetics

I argue that aesthetics plays a pivotal role in shaping an individual's choices because an individual's decision depends on how she internalises her multidimensional experiential world. The resistance movements, I claim, are the results of those psychological understandings of the valued things which are essential for the realisation of community members' ability to interpret the meanings of the good life and act accordingly. Hence, this chapter focuses on the transcendental power of "sensuous cognition" of the lived experiences, which is the intrinsic part of aesthetics.

In her essay Aesthetics in the "Making of History: The Tebhaga Women's Movement in Bengal", Kavita Panjabi argues that an individual is both "subject to history" and "an active subject that mobilises future history". Therefore, the individual carries a sense of cognition regarding her agency in reinterpreting her lived space. Thus, at one end of the transformative powers embedded in the process of reinterpretation exists a sensuous understanding of the material world and sensible cognition. At the other end of the transformation remains sensitive cognition of the experience. Moreover, there is a strong presence of arrays of emotions within the transformative process. I argue that these emotions are the spirit of transformations. The imperatives of aesthetics in studying the oral narratives of the indigenous activists thus become valid. According to Panjabi,

Aesthetics is pervasively central to everyday living, so why is it limited to the arts? Historical events, political upheavals and human actions impact individuals and societies with affective force; we respond with joy, exhilaration, determination, anxiety or fear. Further, such impact is not limited merely to our affective responses; it inspires resistance or transformative action, motivates competition or revenge, results in

mass dislocations, or causes withdrawal or resigned submission. (Panjabi 2016, 76)

Based on Panjabi's arguments, I say that the narratives of indigenous resistant movements register historical, political, social, ecological, cultural and spiritual influences on the narrators in shaping their sense of agency and, with their awareness, reinterpreting their indigenous identity. Therefore, aesthetics is a collective field where subjective experiences, the objective world, and the spirit of the transformative powers building dialogic and dynamic bonds between subject and object merge.

As an individual's personal experiences maintain a close affiliation with her society's cultural ethos, the influence of the community's metaphysical moorings in the aesthetics domain is undeniable. Personal experiences depend on the connections that a person learns, builds, and discovers through her physical activities needed for survival. The continuous interactions with the local surroundings also generate her emotional relationships with various elements. Moreover, metaphysical moorings of the community also structure her interpretations regarding existence and identity in relation to the local ecology. Thus, a community's cultural evolution involves a transformation of the sensual cognition required for survival into the community's way of living that includes cultural codes. Cultural codes of a community are the symbolic representations of the community members' sensible cognition of the community members. The continuous interactions among metaphysical, experiential, and reflective realms shape the sense of agency. From the perspective of aesthetics, an individual's sense of agency stands on her sensible cognition of connections to the outside world. This sensible understanding evolves from the individual's sensuous cognition of the material world.

If Aesthetics is the sensible cognition of the experiences, then it is a space where the sensory system, reflective mind and perception fuse together. From the perspective of the ecological self that identifies self in relation to the local ecology, one can claim that a cognitive being's world depends on how the being enacts the relationships within the environment. The sensual cognition that evolves from the relational existence of the individual's body is intrinsically related to the mode of enactment with the surrounding environment. The mind is grounded in the context, the place, and the "environment". Hence, the mind, which is the basis of sensible cognition is not autonomous, instead, it is embodied in the multiple and multidimensional and multiple relationships that the 'body' shares with the world outside (Varela et al. 1991, 2016, 37). The embodied mind's impression is intrinsically related to how the body interacts with the world. The body and mind, the primary vessels of sensuous cognition and sensible cognition, structure the sense of cognition of the human being.

The living body is not merely a vessel that registers experiences and surrenders those to the mind's disposal for reflection in the long run. Instead, the body is a "sense-making system" highly adaptive to continuous structural and functional changes. It maintains the coherence and meaningful patterns of activity through its adaptability. In other words, the process of reflection is ubiquitously present in experiential activities.

That is why I propose aesthetics of connection as a theoretical approach to understand how oral narratives of resistance movements reflect the transformative powers of physical, emotional, and spiritual connections that the community members individually and collectively share with the landscape. An individual's diverse relationships with the local ecology build the cornerstone of the aesthetics of

connection. The sense of self-reliance entangled with the notion of well-being that a person ascertains in relation to her association with the surrounding (in the case of the adivasi populace, precisely for the women, it is their relationships with jal-jangal-jameen) forms the structure of the category. The fabric of aesthetics of connection follows the organic design of the earth system. It acknowledges the interconnection of humans with the other species and non-living elements of the local ecology. Aesthetics of connection, in my opinion, points out that aesthetic response is not absolute and static. The theoretical approach explores how the shifts in relationships and the effects of those shifts on survival alter the aesthetic response of an individual vis-a-vis a community. The realm of sensible cognition of a person is likely to shift with every minor or significant change that affects her existence.

The value-oriented cultural consciousness and comparative analyses of personal experiences act as contributory factors to orient the understanding of an agent's time, place, and situational change. As the engagement of sensory organs and emotions with the surroundings plays a pivotal role in the discourse of aesthetics of connection, the body and mind share a reciprocal relationship in this domain of aesthetics. Thus, aesthetics of connection challenges the patriarchal binary cognitive structure that tends to negate the importance of the human body as a secondary category. In this aesthetic domain, both body and mind, physical engagement and psychological reflection are essential as the communion of both open the third sphere of connection, that is, spiritual. Spirituality exists within the celebration of the interconnectedness of the earth-life. Reflecting on her participation in the social-cultural-economic domains helps an individual recognise her agency in life. The realisation that others are equally responsible and connected to her life develops her sense of care for others. The happiness and pleasure existing within the shared space

of self and the other constitute the sense of spirituality which is also part of the aesthetics of connection. In the context of the resistance movements, aesthetics of connection focuses on an activist's ability to sensibly cognise her existence as the result of varied links to the landscape. Therefore, aesthetics of connection as a trajectory attempts to see how the cognition of self in relation to the landscape helps an individual reinvolve the traditional meanings and reconstruct the new meanings of landscape in relation to her existence.

Aesthetics of connection as a theory is an attempt to break free from the idea that there exists an absolute and ultimate sensible cognition in the human world, and the only task is to train the human minds to reach that perfect (hence static) sensible cognition. In the domain of dominant development discourse, development planners and executors use aesthetics as the tool to establish the idea that economic growth is the ultimate end in all recipes of human progress. In the realm of dominant development plannings, technology-centric (therefore ecologically fragile) economic growth refers to the sensible cognition of human progress. The pervasiveness of such sensible cognition negates the dynamism of change.

The idea of the modern nation-state and technocentric economic growth are the socio-political and economic manifestations of the same white man's culture. From the perspective of art and aesthetics, the dominant model of development propagated by the economically and politically influential people is all about establishing the idea of economic growth through rampant industrialisation at the cost of ecological degradation. Like any perfect Art form, this dominant model of development carries the sense that it is the absolute sensible cognition of progress within significant urbanised or semi-urbanised human populations. The development executors thus focus on pushing the populace opposing the accepted model of

development to cognise the model of economic growth as the ultimate rational way of human progress. The people's freedom of sensibly choosing the model of progress that passes the test of community members' sensuous cognition remains shrouded as the hegemony of the perfect model of growth remains unchallenged.

Freya Mathews has argued that the dominant development culture stands on the metaphysical rudiments of a 'materialist' outlook toward the world (Mathews 2006). The modality generated from the esoteric understanding of the world is "instrumentalism". The instrumentalist outlook perceives the other as utilisable goods destined to serve the individualistic self. The self does not find its existence depending on the continuation of the other. As changing worldly matters into utilitarian goods, consumable by self, is the cornerstone of the culture, the focus related to development situates on perfecting the end products which do not hold any trace of the natural products.

For example, the electricity consumed in urban life remains distant from the origin of the raw material, coal. Hence, when urban consumers of thermal power demand more supply of thermal energy in their everyday living, they focus on perfecting the supply mediums of electricity without paying any heed to the fact that coal mines replace forest ecology for good.

In the context of development culture, the science and technology of transforming coal into electricity symbolise the rational mind. Thermal power stations are the manifestations of that sensible mind. The power stations convert coal into electric energy. Coal is just the utilisable material that, if needed, will be replaced by some other raw materials. The structure of production and the limit of consumption remain distant from the impacts of coal mines on local ecological networks. The connections among forest ecology, villagers living in the mining areas, displacement,

thermal power stations, and urban consumers remain unaddressed. The extreme environmental degradation generated due to the disappearance of forest ecology may change the sensible cognition of the forest-dependent communities, farmers, village people, urban poor, and even urban populace remain neglected in the dominant discourse of development. That is why when a group of people do not accept economic growth as the ultimate mean of progress, the development idealists see them as the chaotic body that needs to be tamed by hook or crook.

In the above case, the cognition related to the economic-growth-centric development model functions in two different ways. On the one hand, the urban consumers remain enthralled with the potentiality of technological progress and stay oblivious to the fact that the resource of that electricity is limited and unmindful consumption of the coal-energy has its hazardous side effects³³. But, on the other hand, in the coal mining zones, the different functioning bodies of the nation-state try to attune the chaotic ‘body’ to the hegemony of the technologically evolved logical mind.

Eagleton argues that aesthetics played an instrumental role in encouraging the cultural hegemony of the “white bourgeois men” who were up in front to establish their structural supremacy in the socio-political arena of the eighteenth century.

The aesthetic offers the middle class a superbly versatile model of their political aspirations,

³³ a) In his documentary namely *Buddha Weeps in Jadugoda* 1999; Jharkhand’s documentary film maker Shri Prakash has registered the plight of the Santhali villagers due to mining. The introduction of the film states, -

“Almost 30 years of (uranium)mining have resulted in excessive radiation and contamination of water, land and air. The film is an attempt to record how the lives of the people of Jadugoda have been affected due to indiscriminate mining without following basic safety rules.”

b) Ajitha S George’s book *Mining in Jharkhand : An Adivasi Homeland* 2014 shows the plight of mining on the lives of Jharkhandi Adivasis.

c) There are hundred and eighty one coal mines out of three hundred thirty five mines in Jharkhand. (George 2014,27)

d) The Scheduled Tribe (ST) population of Jharkhand State is as per 2001 census **7,087,068** constituting 26.3 per cent of the total population (26,945,829) of the State. The Scheduled Tribes are primarily rural as 91.7per cent of them reside in villages. (<https://www.jhpolice.gov.in>)

exemplifying new forms of autonomy and self-determination, transforming the relations between law and desire, morality and knowledge, recasting the links between individual and totality, and revising social relations based on custom, affection, and sympathy. On the other hand, the aesthetic signifies what Max Horkheimer has called a kind of 'internalised repression', inserting social power more deeply into the very bodies of those it subjugates, and so operating as a supremely effective. (Eagleton 1994,103)

Eagleton has pointed out that to strengthen the hegemony of bourgeois social order, the state institutions, through various means, tried to subjugate other forms of reasoning by posing the bourgeois social order as the perfect model of modern civilisation. The only task that remained after that was structuring the aesthetic taste of the ordinary people via educational institutions, popular mediums, administrative programmes and many more. In the development model, unlimited energy consumption has become the symbol of progress. Aesthetic sense related to economic growth negates an ordinary individual's sensuous cognition of her multidimensional connections to the experiential world.

In the Indian context, development executors have posited displacements of the adivasis from their landscapes and the disintegration of adivasi communities as an inevitable process of reintegrating the economically and technologically backward adivasis into the mainstream society.

Every developmental project bears the promise of inclusion of the Adivasi villagers into the mainstream of national progress. However, the reality and trauma behind the displacements remain unaddressed in the structure of unity and integration- which I identify as the aesthetics of hegemony. Adivasi people's conflict with the national interest and their suspicion about the grand system of national unity and

integrity intrigues one to enquire about the loopholes within the idea of unity and integrity.

The appearance of aesthetics as an abstract idea of the supreme form of integrated beauty embedded in the cognitive power of the rational mind is so dominant that the connection between the individual's sense of understanding and her lived experiences remains outside the academic discussion. The contingency attached to the understanding something as valuable lies in the spatial conditionality of the individual. Thus, depending on people's diverse understandings on what is valuable for them, there exist diverse interpretations of well-being as well as growth. The fluidity and diversity of experiences also make the aesthetics essentially dynamic.

In the context of the indigenous resistance movements, one way to read the narratives of the adivasi activists is to look at the adivasi narrators' effort to transcend the dominant understanding of progress to reclaim the freedom of cognising the meanings of development from their lived realities. An indigenous village activist's transcendence from subjugated citizen to conscious decision-maker requires foregrounding of the sensual experiences. As transcendence or the process of transcendence plays a pivotal role in the indigenous movements discussed here, it is imperative to bring the lens of aesthetics while reading the indigenous resistance movements from indigenous perspectives.

Significations of *Jal-Jangal-Jameen* and *Pu'uhonau*

In this section, I foreground the connections the resisting villagers share with their family, lands, and culture to show how these connections nurture the harmonious coexistence between the individual and community, community and sustenance, survival and local ecology. These connections overlap, and the possibilities of

emerging the new meanings remain in those intersections. Therefore, this section focuses on the imperative of *jal-jangal-jameen* (Jharkhand) and *pu'ohonau* (Hawai'i) in structuring the connections between place and the indigenous sense of agency. It also tries to understand why respective indigenous communities interpret these places as valuable parts of their existence.

After narrating their memories of the Nagri movement, the women of Nagri declared that they would unite again (if needed) to protect their *jal-jangal-jameen*. The villagers who participated in the Koel-Karo, Arcelor-Mittal, Nagri and Kathikund protests experienced the extreme face of violence like police firing, beating, intimidation, and crumbling of institutions that promised to provide social security. However, the experiences of state-sponsored violence did not persuade them to interpret *jal-jangal-jameen* as the primary cause of their misery. On the contrary, Dayamani Barla states that when she passes through the Khunti area and finds that the villages, rivers, and farmlands have not ceased to exist, she realises the lives around these places are still thriving. She feels blissful (*shakun*) when she realises that the adivasi villagers have been able to protect the bustling of life so far. It is that sense of bliss that encourages her to stand with the adivasi villagers ignoring the physical and psychological stress that she has to endure during the periods of struggle.

In other words, Dayamani's sense of relief is related to the adivasi spirit of protecting the elements of creation. According to the adivasi worldview, the existence of adivasis can only be possible if they can maintain "symbiotic relationships" with other elements of Creation following the principles of "equality and mutuality". (Munda 2014, 46)

From the metaphysical ethos of the Adivasis of Jharkhand, maintaining symbiotic connections to the *jal-jangal-jameen* is the way of cognising the adivasi

self (*adivasiyat*/indigeneity). Forest and water are the symbols of the continuance of life on the Earth created by the Great Spirit. Village and agricultural lands symbolise the agency and capabilities of the adivasi communities to develop additional sources of food production besides forest produce.

Therefore, when Ram Dayal Munda writes, “ If the forest is mental peace for the Adivasis, agriculture is his life breath” (Munda 2014, 8), he refers to the forest as the place of taking refuge for an adivasi individual. When an Adivasi needs to quieten her mind and bring back her lost sense of harmony, she gets around the peace of her mind by re-establishing connections with the spirit of the forest in solitude. Adivasi farmers’ relationships with the farmlands and the farming practices and the farmlands constructs their self-esteem. Adivasi farmers' knowledge of indigenous seeds and vegetations and local ecological structures have made them understand *jameen* or land as the symbol of security over generations. That is why it is the breath of her life. For Adivasis, the existence of *jal-Jangal-Jameen* (water-forest-land) is essential because there three elements of nature safeguard the psychological, spiritual, and physical integrity and vitality of the adivasi communities.

Mākua villagers found their *pu’uhonau*- their place of physical, psychological, and spiritual healing on the ‘trashed ground’ of Mākua beach. Located on the western tip of the Hawai’ian island of O’ahu, Mākua valley and beach have long been a contested zone between the US Military and the Native Hawai’ians. In her dissertation Watson describes the history of Native Hawaiian’s forced displacements from the Mākua valley like this:

On the Leeward Coast lies Mākua Valley. According to Earthjustice, a leading environmental advocacy group: “Mākua Valley on O’ahu has been described by biologists as probably the greatest biological treasure in Hawai’i. The valley is home to 45 federally listed plant and animal species, as well as hundreds of acres

of designated critical habitat. However, a decades-long history of live-fire training and fires has left the endangered species barely clinging to survival.”¹⁶ Despite years of struggle to protect Mākua, the military presence continues. The entire western end of Wai‘anae, where Mākua valley lies, bears tremendous cultural and historical significance to the Kānaka ‘Ōiwi. For example, Wai‘anae ends at Ka‘ena Point. Ka‘ena Point is described as “the place from which souls departed from this earth.” Yet, the cultural significance of these areas was completely ignored during the military buildup that occurred in the early 20th century. After the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893, the American military wasted no time using the provisions of the Organic Act discussed in the previous chapter to seize large areas of lands. The seizure of Mākua began in the 1920s. (Watson 2008, 131)

Despite repeated displacements, the Mākua beach remained a place of refuge for Kānaka Māoli (native Hawaiians) pushed out of modern society till 1995. The absence of the tourism industry in the Mākua seaside because of the presence of the U.S Army at the Mākua valley at least has left the sea beach within the access of local Hawai’ians. They could continue the traditional fishing practice – a symbol of Kānaka Māoli culture³⁴. After the eviction of 1983, gradually the local Hawai’ians returned to Mākua beach and resettled Mākua village. The village became symbol of home for the houseless, the unemployed, the working poor, the drug addicts, the victims of spouse abuse, the sick and those that want to live the Hawaiian lifestyle (Rodrigues 2017).

In Mākua we had people like who were mentally crazy and they would yell at the middle of night. There were few drug addicts. There were families who have no place to go. There were traditional fishermen (Rodrigues 2017).

³⁴ Fishing has always been a critical component of the lives for the families of Wai‘anae. For those who may worry regularly about where their next meal will come from, fishing and the sea provides some comfort in that it ensures that the family will eat. It is one of the benefits of living on the beach. Families can fish for their meals. In this regard, fishing rights are extremely important. This need to fish applies even more in Wai‘anae than other places, because residents traditionally relied on for fishing to feed their families.

The people who had wanted to “survive on the land” and to live less hectic life came to Mākua because it was a “safe place” (Rodrigues 2017)

However, with the U.S. military's upper valley used as a gunnery range, beach residents struggle to survive in the “blistering sun, relentless wind, salt spray and pounding waves”. Despite the obstacles, Mākua’s residents prove that they can solve their problems, build their own living spaces, grow their food, share their labour, clear industrial waste and trash, and even police themselves-all without extensive government programs and money (Mālama Mākua, 2011).

Hence, it is imperative to understand why and how the place became the symbol of “safe place” for the Mākua villagers.

To understand the meaning of “safe place” one needs to engage with the meaning of *pu’uhonau* from the native Hawaiian cultural perspective.

In his book *Who Owns The Crown Land?* Dyke has shown how the ethos of care- the essential part of the traditional Kānaka Māoli way of living finds its connection to the Creation Story of the indigenous Hawai’ians. The traditional belief system of Kānaka Māoli also interprets *Āina* as the possessor of *Akua* (supernatural power). Before the U.S occupation of the Hawaiian archipelago, the natives imagined their *Ali’i* (the chiefs and chiefesses) as the human embodiment of *Akua*. They guided and assisted the *ka po ‘e Hawai’i* (the people of Hawai’i) in the proper management of the Aina. According to the Kānaka Māoli Creation Story, islands are the offsprings of *Papa* (the Earth Mother) and *Wakea* (the Sky Father). The *Kalo* (Taro), the staple food of the Hawai’ian way of living, came from the buried dead body of the first offspring of *Wakea* and *Ho’ohokukalani*, named *Haaloa-Naka* (long trembling stalk). The second child, *Haloa*, is the progenitor of all the peoples of the Earth. So *Kalo*, for Kānaka Māolis, is the older brother of the human being. As the shoots of the taro

plants extend from a single root, the Kānaka Māolis expand from the *Haloa*. The indigenous Hawai'ians find their genealogical connections to the *Āina* through their primary element of sustenance - taro. Thus, according to Kānaka Māoli's belief system, the land, everything existing on the landscape, and human beings are part of the *'ohana* (extended family). From the traditional Kānaka Māolis perspective, *āina* (land) is the nurturer of the '*Ea*'- the life-breath of human beings. Hence, the members of the communitiy function as the carers of their *Āina* in reciprocation. (Dyke 2008, 10-15) (Ka'ōpua et.al 2014, 3-7)

For Kānaka Māoli, *āina* (land)'s relationship with human is sacred. Mākua is specially sacred because according to Hawaiian Creation Myth it is the place where Papa (the earth-mother) and Wākea (the sky-father) meet. Mākua in Kānaka Māoli language means parents. It is also the place where Kānaka Māoli were formed from the *āina* (land). In traditional Hawaiian belief system Mākua is the place where “the spirits of the Kānaka Māoli return to Pō (the spirit realm) at Leina a Ka'uhane (soul's leap)”. Hence, as mentioned by Watson, Mākua as the place of rich spirituality. She has pointed out that the locals of Waianae area (within which the Mākua is located) in the pre-contact period were proud people “who protected their community, usually against external political forces”. Watson has argued,

In this regard, it has maintained its status as a wahi pana, or sacred place, and to its residents, who remain predominately Hawaiian; it is a place of refuge: ke kulanakauhale pu'uhonua o Wai`anae. Historically, Wai`anae served as a refuge for Hawaiians, feeding the reverence for Wai`anae as a pu`uhonua. (Watson 2008, 69)

Pu'uhonau was a sanctuary in the pre-contact period where anybody whose life was in jeopardy could have taken shelter. During the wars, the women, children, old men, and defeated warriors had a chance to save their lives by taking refuge in

that place. Even the fugitives or the person bearing the threat of capital punishment could get shelter in this sanctuary. In the context of the Mākua movement, the term *pu'uhonau* appears as a sacred place where people regain their lost sense of agency and capability. The place restores their hope for the future. If a person could flee the impending danger, s/he had a chance to regain her/ his life in a new way. It was a place of restoration where physical, psychological, and spiritual healing was possible. So *Pu'uhonau* was considered in traditional Hawaiian ideology ‘‘a place of mercy’’.

The place was also a symbol of rebirth. Rebirth also means to begin with no psychological or social impediments. Such impediments do not help people heal their injured relationships with the community outside the sanctuary. If a person did something wrong, the ‘*Hala*’ or the wrong was the chord that bound the wrongdoer with the society following ‘‘The Polynesian family system’’. The chord, without a doubt, engendered unhappiness. In the socially sanctioned place of sanctuary, there was a hope to receive ‘*Kala*’ or forgiveness. (Pukui 1993, 184)

In the context of the Mākua movement, *pu'uohanou* stands for a place where one could restore her psychological and spiritual harmony like the native Hawai’ian ancestors. *Pu'uohanou* also symbolises the area of transition for a person who has suffered physical, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually disintegration from a state of insecurity to a sense of security. It holds the ancestral memories of restoring the hope for self-determination against decimation. Therefore, *pu'uhonau* is the place where Kānaka Māoli gets the freedom to reconnect with the ethos of *āina* and *'ohana*.

The sense of agency of both indigenous communities evolves from people’s close connections to the places. A repertoire of collective understanding and subjective interpretation is attached to each location, *jal-jangal-jameen* and *pu'uhonau*. In the time of resistance movements, the resurgence of the

terms like *jal-jangal-jameen* and *pu'uhonau* points out how the resisting villagers foregrounded their connections to the landscapes in relation to their sense of freedom.

Cognising Connections with Landscapes

From the perspective of aesthetics of connection, subjective interpretations of the objective world depend on the characteristics of an individual's relationships with her surroundings. As the perceiver's horizon of experience expands with her age, she builds diverse types of links with the outer world. The human understanding of self in relation to her lived space with time. As she connects with new people, situations, and ideas, her boundaries of aesthetic reception extend with new experiences. She perceives those new experiences from her metaphysical ethos. According to Berleant, in this way, a person acquires her "aesthetic sense of environment".

Social experience and cultural factors also influence experience through the perceptual habits, belief systems, styles of living, and traditions of behaviour and judgement that we acquire. (Berleant 1992, 18)

Following Berleant's argument, one can say that in the realm of aesthetic connection, the mind and body, rationality and imagination share equal space. It is related to the sensory organs' immediate experiences and an individual's socio-cultural legacies. Thus, unlike the traditional sense of aesthetics, the aesthetics of connection acknowledges the presence of emotion, interest, and participation within its realm. In other words, it is related to the individual's perception of her environment. The perceived world is both subjective and objective. Human experience plays the role of a bridge between the two realms. According to Arnold Berleant, "the active presence

of experience,” rooted in a person's social, cultural, occupational, and geographical positionality, broadens the zone of the perceived world. In Berleant’s words,

The perceptual world in which we move is wide and rich. Thoroughly and inseparably sensory and cultural, it is a complex experiential environment.” (Berleant 1992, 20)

Therefore, it is imperative to understand how the protesting villagers cognise home and progress in the wake of development-induced displacements from the lens of their “perceptual world”.

The case of Nagri

Nagri is essentially an adivasi village. The history of this village in official records goes back to 1832. The ancestors of the Nagri village participated in the Kol uprising of 1831 to 1832 (Dalton 1872) (Dungdung 2013) (Jha vol -42, 1981).

In the memories of the Nagri villagers, the beginning of the village dates back to the time when the kingdom of Oraon in the Rohtasgarh fell in the hand of invaders, and one fraction of them settled in the Chota Nagpur plateau. One of the fractions of displaced Oraons came to the landscape of Nagri, which used to be under the governance (*raij*) of Mundas. With permission from the Mundas, the Nagri village's ancestors settled in the Nagri landscape. Therefore, the Nagri villagers consider their village settlement as the place where their ancestors re-rooted the cultural tradition of Oraons re-established their connections with the local landscape(Kachhap 2016).

For Nagri villagers every single place of village which includes the river, nearby forest, fertile agricultural lands, ponds, the village god and goddess, *akhara* (community congregation ground), *sarna* (sacred grove), local vegetations is valuable. The villagers share physical, psychological, spiritual connections to those places. These connections are foundation of the adivasi culture. Hence to the Nagri

villagers, village is living embodiment of adivasi's cultural knowledge and practices. It is the place that provides sense of security and freedom of choosing the course of their well-being.

In 2012, Nagri villagers came to know suddenly that the Jharkhand government was to acquire 227 acres of fertile agricultural lands to build the country's four most prominent educational institutions. Indian Institute of Technology, Indian Institute of Management and the Law university- the three representative figures that teach technology, management, and legal complexities to the aspiring young generations of developing India became a conglomerate symbol of injustice to the villagers. The institutions were to take away the very basis of the villagers' main livelihood. Without the farm productions, the parents of Nagri could not provide proper education to their children. Without the capability of appropriate education, the children could not pass the highly competitive eligibility tests required to take entry into those institutions.

According to Nandi Kachhap, the physical proximity of the institutions would have made the possibility of getting entry into those institutions impossible for the village children. With the loss of the land, the parents can not save enough money to support their children with books and private tutors because they have to buy food grains from the market. As the parents of a landless adivasi family have to go to the city in search of menial jobs, mothers could not look after their children as they used to do while working in the farmlands near their homes.

To support her argument, Nandi Kachhap gave the example of her in-laws. *Hamare saas -sasur unpad the* (My in-laws were illiterate) (Kachhap 2016) – she said. Her in-laws met the expenditures of their children's education by selling crops. According to Nandi Kachhap, her in-laws could afford to send their children to

schools and colleges because they did not need to spend money to buy vegetables and grains. That she did not exaggerate was evident from the reality that her husband and brother-in-law are college-educated government employees. As Nandi Kachhap has managed to cultivate lands with her skill and knowledge, her family's capability to spend money has increased. Nandi Kachhap lives with her husband, son, daughter-in-law and granddaughter in a well-decorated two-storied house which she and her husband built separately to accommodate the need of their sons and daughter. The Kachhap family was not an exceptional case. There were many teachers and government employees in the village of Nagri.

During one of my visits to Nagri village, one of the young fellows claimed that most of the village youths were college graduates. Nandi Kachhap's son and daughter-in-law were in the banking sector. When I visited Nagri, I found that both boys and girls were aiming for higher education.

Nandi Kachhap also claimed that her role as a farmer was essential for her children's education as the farm produce helped the family to be independent (to some extent) of the cash economy. Moreover, because of her economic stronghold, she could think of introducing new farming methods and cultivating new varieties of vegetables along with the traditional farming practices. Therefore, she is keen on extending her knowledge about farming. Without the farmland, Nandi Kachhap's capability as a farmer would wither with time.

What is more interesting in her narration is how she refers to farmlands as an active agent. Time and again, she mentions *-jameen jo upaj deti hai* (the lands that give harvest). It shows her awareness regarding her agency as a farmer. At the same time, she claims that the agricultural lands have their agency. Until the adivasi farmer builds connections with the farmlands, she cannot receive the boons of harvest. Thus,

Nandi Kachhap recognises her farmlands as benevolent and long-standing friends who share the farmers' hardships and support them through good yields across generations.

In one part of those fertile lands beside the rivers now stand Law University and Ring-road, ensuring a better connection with overcrowded Ranchi city. To the city people and government servants, the road and the university are the symbols of economic progress and a step forward to the culture of development. But, on the other hand, to the people of Nagri, the university and the ring road stands as the symbol of an oppressive non-*adivasi* system that fails to understand the deep historical, traditional, cultural, economic and social connections that the agrarian *adivasi* village community of Nagri share with the farmlands. For farmers like Nandi Kachhap, farmlands are the basis of their sense of home. The villagers cognise lands as the provider of secured and safe living for the community members for generations.

In the case of Mākua, the Mākua beach community members tried to safeguard the sense of agency that they had developed by embracing the Kānaka Māoli outlook toward the landscape and community culture. Mākua beach communities' understanding of home incorporated landscape depended on community culture that followed the traditional Hawai'ian view of sharing the lands and oceans with other community members and rendering care towards the landscape's health. Like the villagers of Nagri, the Mākua Beach residents cognised the landscape as an active agent in shaping the residents' sense of self and the meaning of home.

The case of Mākua

The history of displacement or the unjust land acquisition by the '*haole*' or white men from the Hawai'ian indigenous communities or Kānaka Māoli in the Mākua dates

back to the nineteenth century. Mākua, situated on the northwestern coast of O‘ahu, Hawai‘i, belongs to the Waianae district. It was fertile land, and fishing activities were part of the people’s lives. The people used to grow in the lower valley of Mākua varieties of crops like cucumbers, watermelon, and sweet potatoes. Cotton, tobacco, and corn. The pili grass grown in the area used to thatch the roofs of the houses, and the oceans were full of different kinds of fish. There were at least four springs, and every household possessed wells. Marion Kelly and Nancy Aleck, in their cultural history report of Mākua, pointed out the fact that the distribution of Kuleana lands to the native Hawai’ians in 1850 was made on the conditions that the lands were under cultivation and the claimants used the production to sustain the family members (Kelly & Aleck 1997). The testimonies of the Kuleana land claimants also showed that the families inherited their lands from their ancestors. It is evident from the cultural report Kelly that the oral histories of Mākua valley held the memories of self-reliant villagers who were prosperous regarding food security and healthy living.

In 1893 when white sugar planters, with the help of U.S. Marines, overthrew Queen Lili‘uokalani and the Hawai’ian Kingdom, the Kānaka Māoli population of the Mākua valley, like the other parts of the O‘ahu, started experiencing the events of dispossession. The ceded lands went to the ranchers who tried to drive away from the Kuleana landholders by setting off the cattle in their agricultural lands and thus decimating the crops of the Kānaka Māoli households. Later in 1959, when Hawaii became the fiftieth state of the United States of America, the federal-state government of Hawaii gave the Upper Mākua valley became Mākua Military Impact reservation and the Mākua beach belonged to the State of Hawaii. The state of Hawaii reserved the coastal area for building a state park. In 1964 the federal state government leased a portion of the coastal area to the U.S. Army for 65 years (ending in 2029).

The land of Mākuā was the land of self-sufficient and proud Kānaka Māolis. However, with the loss of their traditional land rights and alienation from the local ecology, the Kānaka Māolis have turned into “crazy and lazy people” who were incapable of adopting the economic development process designed and propagated by the white man’s world.

The native people experienced the fetishising of the Hawai’ian culture to generate profit in the tourism industry of Hawaii, and the industry has been profiting based on that romantic ‘concept’ of Hawaii. Hawaiian native scholar and proponent of Hawaiian sovereignty Haunani K. Trask has termed “corporate tourism” as an “insidious form of cultural prostitution” (Trask 1999, 17). Houston Wood, in her book *Displacing Natives*, have argued that,

Kānaka Māoli then and now have vigorously resisted this fetishising of physical objects and their use by others to generate profit. Some Kānaka Māoli insists that Hawaiian cultural productions acquire their importance only if they participate in a network of reciprocal relationships among people, particular places, and specified behaviors. Every cultural production has its own meaning in tradition. (Wood 1999, 45)

The process of corporatising Hawaiian culture brought two significant changes in the lives of the native Hawaiian people. The rapid increase in the price of the lands with the steady rise of housing projects. The displacement of the farmers and fishers from their means of livelihood. The rising cost of living and continuous displacement of farming and fishing communities from the farmlands and sea beaches are the causes of an increasing number of impoverished, homeless people in O’ahu. Kānaka Māoli dominant Waianae area has also become the refuge to those houseless people.

Mākua beach story in 1996 was part of the complex, multidimensional and interrelated histories.

Before 1996, Mākua villagers faced eviction in 1941- right after Pearl harbour's incident with martial law onset, in 1964, 1977 and 1983. It is evident from the history of displacement of the local people and the return of the villagers to the Mākua that the villagers never ceased to claim their indigenous rights over the land. When the villagers returned to Mākua after the 1983 eviction, they declared the land “the modern *pu‘uhonua*” for the people who had faced the humiliation of poverty in the mainstream society (Kalamaoka'aina 2014).

When the Mākua beach villagers claimed the place as a new *pu‘uhonau*, they pointed out how it healed the community members' physical, psychological, and spiritual traumas. The pressure of fitting into the dominant socioeconomic structure of O‘ahu, where “the economic and housing crisis” (Kalamaoka'aina 2014) is high. The crisis is so acute that the lower-income people have to face the cut-throat pressure of surviving from “one paycheque to another” (Rodrigues 2017). If a family cannot secure enough income to meet the soaring housing rents on the island, they become homeless. In search of the shelters, the family disintegrates. As the homeless people lose hope of getting justice from the established system, they lose their vital spirit and succumb to a state of hopelessness. While the mainstream culture identified them as criminals and squatters, on Mākua beach, the residents built alternative meanings of dignified sovereign existence through the Kānaka Māoli way of living.

In the case of Nagri, the villagers resisted the disintegration of the village community to safeguard the existing and time-trusted freedom of choices regarding life and livelihood. On the other hand, the Mākua beach community villagers demanded their indigenous rights of living on the land following the social, cultural,

and spiritual codes of righteous and balanced living (*pono*). They interpreted the place as the agent in finding their lost sense of agency and capability to make decisions.

What connects the two distinct histories of indigenous resistance movements against government decisions is how the community members cognised their agency and interpreted well living in relation to their experiences, memories, and landscapes.

In the case of the Nagri, the people re-discovered their meanings of being adivasi. In the case of the Mākua village, the people associated the indigenous way of living with the process of healing their deprived sense of agency. Both of these communities, in their respective socio-historical, political, and cultural contexts, pointed out that their sense of justice lies in the participation of the community members in taking decisions regarding the choice of sustenance. The experiences of living and the meanings that evolved from the experiences played critical roles in structuring their choices. Hence, the transitional values of aesthetics related to the interpretations of freedom of choice regarding a secure, just, and meaningful life were evident in the above two cases of resistance movements.

Moreover, based on the reflections on the experiences, the community members decided to safeguard their place of living. They discussed, shared their opinions, and then chose how to mobilise the resistance movement against displacement. The decisions to participate in the resistance movements thus carry a sense of justice that includes the participants' experiences, reflections and interpretations.

Amartya Sen, while interpreting development in relation to freedom, has argued that just development programmes enhance the capability of an individual. In his words,

A person's "capability" refers to the alternative combinations of functionings that are feasible for her to achieve. Capability is thus a kind of freedom; the substantive freedom to achieve alternative functioning combinations (or, less formally put, the freedom to perform various lifestyles). (Sen 2000, 75)

An individual's freedom of choosing the desired lifestyle is intrinsically related to the experiences she accumulates through everyday living. Her sensible cognition of the desired lifestyle emerges from her sensuous understanding of reality.

In the next section, I have tried to show how the connections with the local ecology bring in the traits of transcendence in the sense of agency and meanings of freedom within the resisting voices. In other words, how the relationships with the local ecology shaped the intrinsic values of the village activists and how the value systems affected the resistance movements.

The realisation of self in relation to the village

The outlook of this materialist civilisation is to interpret every non-human element as a resource material that can be transformed into consumable goods by men with the help of complex machines. Hence, in this culture, the meaning attached to the word transcendence refers to the power of transforming the non-human ecological elements into consumable products available in the markets, which the capital-rich industrialists again control. The symbol of a developed society is the abundant availability of various consumable goods in the markets designed by the market controllers to denigrate the deep connections among consumers, consumable goods and ecosystems. That is why in the dominant discourse of development, nature and human culture are seen as separate entities by the development planners and

executors. To the propagators of the economy-centric development model, the growth of a community means lifestyle changes. Transforming an indigenous community's ecocentric lifestyle to a technocentric lifestyle is development's ultimate goal. Hence, sensible cognising of resource-oriented complex technology as the panacea of human progress is the mainstay of development culture.

The modern state culture dominated by the shareholders of the capitalist market aesthetics is used by the state elites to subjugate the interpretations that challenge or question the outlook of the materialist culture (Nandy 2010, 296).

According to Eagleton, aesthetics in the state culture acts as the instrument of, 'internalised repression'. The 'political hegemony' of the nation-state exists if and only if the individual body of citizens accepts the state-promoted interpretation of well-being. The notion of well-being carries within itself a sense of transition from one socio-economic state to another more just form of living. (Eagleton 1994 reprint, 28)

On the other hand, as the realm of aesthetics cannot entirely negate the individual's capacity of interpreting experiences according to her cultural moorings, aesthetics carries within it the capability of challenging the absoluteness of the political hegemony. Eagleton argues,

The aesthetic as custom, sentiment, spontaneous sentiment, the spontaneous impulse may consort well enough with political domination; but these phenomena border embarrassingly on passion, imagination, sensuality, which are not always so easily incorporable." (Eagleton 1994 reprint, 28)

Aesthetics in the state culture is an instrument to establish the hegemony of the political and economic elites. In the context of economic development, sector aesthetics is limited to establishing development projects as the ultimate the grand-

design of progress. Therefore, it becomes crucial to negate the complexities of emotion, imagination, and impulse, which is the intrinsic part of self and may appear incongruent with the political hegemony of the state culture. The aim, in a way, was also to protect the socio-political and cultural domination of a particular class, race, and caste.

In the case of Nagri, the then Jharkhand government wanted to impose its interpretation of development by negating the people's experiences and understandings of growth.

Nandi Kachhap, in her narrative, identifies herself as a farmer. She says, "*hum to kheti-bari karte hai*" (farming is my occupation). Born and brought up in Ranchi, when Nandi Kachhap came to Nagri as a newly-wed bride, she did not know about farming.

Saas-sasur ne hum ko kheti kaam sikhaye. Unke saath rahte rahte dhire dhire hum kheti ka kaam sikhe. (Kachhap 2016)

[My in-laws taught me the pros and cons of farming. While working with them, I gradually learned agriculture-related works.]

She does not narrate what she learned, but her silence is not a vacuum. For example, when she abruptly starts talking about what kind of crops she grows while tending her cattle, points out the medicinal plants available in the village space, and shares her plan to plant more trees in the *sarna sthal* (sacred grove area) and restore the old water canal for better irrigation she indirectly points out (through her actions) how her constant interactions with the village ecology have shaped and expanded her knowledge. Likewise, when she shows concern for the families who have lost their fertile lands due to the law university or narrates about the rituals of *sarhul*, *karma*, and festivals, she gathers the women of the Nagri movement and how the women led the movement after managing the daily chores, -she unfolds her sense of authority and

agency within the village space. As her story unfolds, it becomes apparent that myriads of connections and experiences related to those associations have structured her realisation of self as a farmer who can maintain her family's food security.

According to Mathews, self-realisation is a constitutive part of identity. An individual's realisation of self depends on her understanding of the agency-power she requires for her "self-maintenance". The aim of maintaining self includes properly utilising resources available in the local surroundings. That also includes cognising the optimum level of utilisation of the resources so that the future generation can retain the power of self-maintenance. Hence self-maintenance requires knowledge about the surroundings. In other words, the process of self-maintenance involves assessing and adapting to the surroundings. Assessment and adaptation both require active engagement with the surroundings. The local ecology matters most to the adivasi farmers as they depend minimum on the corporate-controlled agricultural market. Mathew argues,

A unicellular organism cannot take precautions against or exploit any interferences or disturbances in its environment. It may be capable of withstanding extremes of, say, temperature, but it will be entirely causally subject to more complex forms of variety. Such autonomy as is possessed by more highly organised beings is, as we have seen, a definitive component of self-realisation. The greater the complexity of a living system, then, the greater its autonomy; the more significant its autonomy, the greater its power of self-realisation, and the greater its power of self-realisation, the greater the intrinsic value, or interest-in-existence, it may be said to embody. (Mathews 2006, 82)

From the perspective of self-realisation, Nandi Kachhap's thrust on her peasant identity points out that she perceives farming as the basis of her self-maintenance. While narrating her psychological association with the Nagri village and the resistance movement, she has mentioned how she lost her mother in her childhood

and could not continue her study after standard eight and left her dream of becoming a nurse behind in Ranchi. After getting married, she came to stay in Nagri and learned from her in-laws the intricacies of agriculture and village tradition. She is proud that, like her in-laws and other village elders, her contribution to the production of food has helped secure the family's well-being. As a result, her husband, who holds a guaranteed job in the banking sector, did not have to bear the whole burden of food security for the family. After the death of her youngest son, Nandi Kachhap decided to be a part of the *Mahila Samiti* (village women council). The connections she had shared with the other village women through the traditional adivasi madait (helping out each other) culture then translated into the work of Mahila Samiti. As the head of the Samiti, she, along with other members, focuses on generating awareness and creating more job opportunities (like making sauces, and ornaments, learning different agricultural skills, government child and maternal health programmes etc.) for the village women. In her words, through the works of Mahila Samiti, she channelised her childhood dream of being a nurse and serving the people. Likewise, she transferred her grief of losing a child into taking an active interest in the overall well-being of the children.

In her narrative, the children's well-being and future appear as the dominant concern. Her reason for leading the Nagri resistance movement rests on her motherly concern about the well-being of the children. The act of extending the horizon of maternal care and cognition is also evident in the words of Dayamani Barla. In one section of her narration, she interpreted her struggle of protecting *jal-jangal-jameen* as the struggle of a mother who wanted to protect the self-maintenance system of the adivasi children. Knowledge of cultivation thus appears to be cognised as an option in the self-maintenance programme in the adivasi culture.

The words of the displaced adivasi women further substantiate the claim that the disintegration of the village and the loss of natural resources deprive the adivasi women of their self-esteem and sense of agency. Dukhni Diggi – a displaced adivasi women of Nandup village talked about the living condition in the rehabilitation centre like this:

Company ne naukri bhi nahin di. Humlogon ko to apne ghar se khader diya aur vo log (sarkari) to pakka makaan mein rahte hain. Humlogon ko to apne khet-taand, jamee ke saath apna moorgi,-chengna, gaaru-chagli se alag kar diya, Isliye ek ho kar raho, sarkaar ko jameen-jaydar dene ke baare mein kabhi maat socho. Sarkar to ek admi ko naukri degi. Bachhon ko kuch nahi degi. Sarkaar parane-likhane ke bare mein boli thi. Khet-taand rahega to baal bachhe kheti kar khayenge. Garmi ke din pe aap ayenge to ek gilaa paani bhi nahi de paayenge. Ration-pani bhi nahi deta hai. Purush kooli -majdoori ka kaam karte hain. Maahilaayein door jangal se lakri-kaath la kar bech kar zindagi bit rahi hai”.
(Barla 2007, 8-9)

[The Company did not employ everybody. It displaced us from our homes. Government employees live in concrete houses. We got separated from our agricultural and collective lands, from our hens-chicks, from our cows and goats. That is why you must maintain the unity of the village community. Don't ever think about giving your land to the government. The government would provide a job to one member of the family. They would not provide anything for the children. The government promised schools for our children. If the lands exist, the children could thrive in agriculture. If you come here at the time of summer, we can not provide you with a glass of water. The government promised to provide us with the facilities of electricity, ration, and water. But we have got nothing. The men work as manual labourers. The women must go far away to collect firewoods from the jungle].

Dukhni Digi has interpreted her condition of living as a sense of loss. She has lost the multidimensional connection that she enjoyed in her village space. Her self-realisation rests on the relational existence that she had in the village before displacement. She was an active stakeholder in the knowledge-building process

related to self-reliance and sustainability. Her sense of exclusion shows that the connections with the land, forest, water, livestock, and community members bear values in her self-realisation.

The rehabilitation policies conceive the compensation policies individually, and the procedures are gender-biased. As a result, the community rights that the Adivasi women enjoy in their village culture remain unaddressed in the rehabilitation policies. The childhood memories of Dayamani Barla show how she managed to sustain herself and continue her education in the village by using the resources available in the surroundings. The relative lack of dependency on the market economy gave her freedom of choices (however minimum it seems).

Adivasi communities' food procurement systems exist at the intersection of agriculture, hunting, gathering, and fishing. The forest is a significant resource for food and firewood. The water bodies provide food and a regular water supply in the households. The common land) is another source for procuring food security for the family. Women specifically lose the traditional knowledge and skill of food and medicinal plants. The experience-based traditional knowledge system requires a close connection of the knower with the knowable objects. The absence of direct contact would make them lose their hold on knowledge. Hence the displacement is not only external but also internal.

The erstwhile freedom of maintaining an independent socio-economic situation in the household was absent in the resettlement areas. The critical loss for the displaced women is the loss of multidimensional connections they had nurtured in the village. Moreover, the displacement events jeopardise the knowledge-building capabilities of these women as maintaining close and engaged contact with the diverse

elements (both human and non-human, living and non-living) of the ecology is imperative for the epistemic process.

Dayamani Barla cites her childhood experiences that the local ecology is vital for adivasi women as these are the sources of free food and means of earning money in the market. While her parents lost their farmlands in the mortgage and went to different places for livelihood, Dayamani Barla used to collect fruits from the trees and sell those in the nearby market in her spare time to buy kerosine oil and other household requirements (Barla 2015).

In Indian agriculture, women use one hundred fifty different species of plants for vegetables, fodder, and healthcare. (Shiva 2006) As such kind of ecological knowledge requires a close connection with the species – the source of knowledge, the basis of sustenance, the means of enjoying the camaraderie, the women assert her self-identity in relation to the local landscape. The transcendence of the landscape in the cognitive system of the perceiver/cogniser, from a food source to an active living entity that provides physical, psychological, and emotional nurturance to human beings, happens through the active engagement of the farmer-producer with the various elements of the local ecology.

In the light of the above discussion, the identity claim of Nandi Kachhap as a farmer incorporates the sense of self that carries an understanding and knowledge of self-maintenance through diverse relations with the jal-jangal-jameen and community members living on it. Hence, Nandi Kachhap's interpretation of peasant identity is not ego-centric. Instead, her attitude of care towards those connections constitutes her relational self. Without the existence of these connections, her self-identity would lose its meaningful existence. In other words, there exist intrinsic values in those

connections. Freya Mathews describes the inherent value of the relational existence in this way:

When we consider the extreme complexity of the relations of ecological interdependence in Nature, we see that the pathways of this flow may be intricate indeed. The intrinsic value of a given self may ultimately be a function not only of its own power of self-maintenance, but also of the intrinsic value of the many other species of organism on which that power depends. In this way the original hierarchy of selves, in respect of intrinsic value, is broken down. (Mathews 2006, 88)

The cognition of intrinsic values of the others in relation to the self-maintenance system has played a pivotal role in shaping the ethos of the adi-dharam, which again thrives within the adivasi societies of Jharkhand through cultural practices. As the adivasi cultural traditions revolve around the production and procurement of food- the mainstays of the adivasi self-maintenance system, the cultural practices incorporate engaged communications between village members and the diverse elements of the local ecological components. As the members of each generation accumulate new experiences with time, the understanding of the relational self passes through the process of recognition of the intrinsic values of others. Every conatus of recognition involves incorporating new layers of meanings into the connections. Thus, the dynamism present within the process of cognition and recognition extends the horizon of aesthetics of reception of the adivasi members.

Nandi Kachhap's self-realisation as a farmer is part of the same process of cognition and recognition. The reasons she cited to establish her identity as the female peasant activist of the Nagri village are the reflections of the meanings she built up to that point when I visited her to listen to the stories of the Nagri resistance. The connotations embedded within her claimed identity involves cognition and recognition of her connections with the village space as an active practitioner of

adivasi food and farm-based culture that follows the ethos of the *adi-dharam* which is the basis of adivasi cultural practices.

Ram Dayal Munda, a Munda adivasi academician and activist in the introduction pages of *Sosobonga* (Creation Myth of Mundas), has described the ethos of *adi-dharam* in this way:

An individual himself is incomplete without collectivity; his work is significant only through collectivity. Singbonga, in the beginning, is disturbed by his early loneliness. Extending fellow feelings around himself is the main cause of creation. Establishing connectivity between source elements of creation (earth, water, air and heat) and the resultant vegetation and the animal world seems to be the purpose of the joint stories. This can be seen in our ritual form of the observance as well.” (Manki & Munda 2015, xix-xxi)

In the preface of *Adi-dharam; Religious belief of the Adivasis of India*, Samar Basu Mallick points out that “the adivasi belief system” is a way of life based on “egalitarian principles, a continuum of nature, ancestors and humans, and a symbiosis between human and animal kingdom”. (Munda 2014, xx)

That means the people following the belief system of *adi-dharam* interpret their experiences of the environment according to the values of *adi-dharam*. The realisation of the relational self thus quickly finds its integration with such culture. As the realisation of self requires the involvement of both body and mind, the sense of connection “deepens” as the renewed meanings of the “aesthetic dimension”. Berleant writes:

Our sense of environment begins to deepen as its aesthetic dimension emerges. Not surface, no longer surroundings, environment takes on the character of an integral whole. It becomes both the condition and content of experience in which the participant is so absorbed into a situation as to become inseparable from and continuous with it. This is no mystical state but a specific, concrete occasion to which one’s knowledge, understanding, and perceptual keenness

contribute in moulding its character, perhaps through acute observation, through identifying birds, flowers, or trees, through drawing connections with other times and places in personal memory and collective history, perhaps through understanding meanings and relationships. Relevant skills and previous experience are clearly important here. (Berleant 1992, 35)

Berleant's arguments show the connection between the aesthetic dimension and self-realisation depends on the condition of engaged association of self with the other. The awareness regarding the practical and intrinsic values of the local ecology in structuring the agency of the self unites and integrates the self, culture, and nature within an integrated whole spiritually.

Hence within Nandi Kachhap's sense of freedom and the choices that emerge from that sense exists the aesthetics of her complex and layered connections to the village space. Aesthetics sense that emerges from the bonds shared between the subjective self and objective other cognises the interdependency between the sensual world and sensible cognition.

Thus aesthetics of connection that recognise ecological diversity is essential for the ecological self and environmental culture. From the perspective of Kachhap, her cognition of self has structured her political agency.

The realisation of self in relation to "Sanctuary"

While I had got the chance to visit Hawai'i under the Sylff Research Abroad programme and asked Dayamani Barla what should be my focus of enquiry over there, she told me to search for the reasons behind the indigenous resistance movements happening in the First World. Then she added that to understand the ubiquitous presence of injustice embedded in the corporate-centric development

culture one should try to find out why the “adivasis” (first settler/indigenous) of that part of “*Amrika*” (USA) stood for their *jal-jangal-jameen*.

From the perspective of Comparative Literature, Dayamani’s words seemed to me as an encouragement to engage how the members of an indigenous community living within the world ‘developed economy’ interpret their connections to the landscape (Zepetnek 1998, 13). Here I have tried to understand how the Kānaka Maoli’s collective interpretation of land differs from that of the dominant mode of interpreting the land of Hawai’i. That is why, I try to comprehend how the Kānaka Maoli understandings of the landscape influenced the interpretations of Mākua villagers to reclaim their indigenous rights and redefine well-being. As the landscape appears as both motive and context in the narratives of the indigenous resistance movements against forced displacements, it is imperative to connect with epistemological standpoints of the indigenous people to understand why the villagers of Mākua valued their connections to *Āina* (described as *Jal-Jangal-Jameen* by Dayamani Barla) more than their connections to the First World’s economy-centric growth.

To the world living outside Hawai’i, the place is the perfect example of amalgamation between economic growth and Hawai’ian indigenous culture. In reality, the indigenous people of the land are the victims of tourism-centric economic growth. The history of the Kānaka Maoli after the dissolution of the Hawai’ian kingdom is overburdened with the stories of displacement of the Native Hawai’ians from their ancestral lands, agricultural practices, water resources, sea beaches, ocean, traditional livelihoods, way of living. In other words, the pandemonium of economic growth has long been used as the excuse to dispossess the Kānaka Maoli from their

authorities over sustaining traditional knowledge as well as extending the boundaries of it by the white settlers. (Trask 1999, Wood 1999, Dyke 2008)

James Cook and the early white missionaries following the schema of the white colonisers identified the Hawai'ian people as primitive. (Wood 1999, 24-82). After the annexation of Hawai'i, when native Hawai'ians came under the complete control of the American administrative, legislative, economic and administrative institutions, Kānaka Māoli or the Hawai'ian indigenous people have been struggling with economic insolvency, bad health, disproportionate imprisonment, low rates of educational attainment, and struggling high rates of homelessness and poverty (Wood 1999, 93). Though Wood has closed the argument by saying that all the social problems faced by Kānaka Maoli are related to their forced displacement from their landscape, in the dominant rhetoric they are denominated as the crazy and lazy people” who lack the desire to grow (Trask 1999).

Hence, in the dystopian world of Kānaka Maoli, the Native Hawaiian people are squeezed between two myths- myth related to the land and myth related to the people-. In the first myth, the land of Hawai'i is signified as the symbol of paradise. In the second myth, the Native Hawai'ians symbolise regressed psychological traits of the primitive groups of people. Both of these myths are created by those white elites who reap the most economic profit from the land.

Sen has argued that the schema of branding a culture as primitive and regressive finds its link to the history of colonisation. In his words,

Western scientists, medical practitioners, anthropologists, and linguists work in tandem to formulate and systematize essentials of primitivism and tribalism to map the anthropomorphic progress from primitivism western modernity.” (Sen 2018, 20)

The process of essentialising and identifying the indigenous cultures of the white men's colonies was a scheme to establish the hegemony of colonial culture and negate the dissents of the colonised. Colonised people's lifestyle becomes the primary denominator of their regressive intellectual state in the eyes of the colonisers.

The covert agenda of ethnically determining the native community as primitive is to usurp the lands and natural resources from the native people. The overt plan is to entrench the white man's supremacy in (along with many other things) the idea of progress and the ethos of materialism.

In the Mākua Beach village, the identification of the villagers as the “ crazy and lazy people” by the state authorities bear the same structure of myth that carry “monorhetoric” ways of interpreting Kānaka Māoli and the ways of living (Wood 1999).

Myth is aesthetically inactive as the unilateral meaning within the structure carries interpretation of the dominant. It shrouds other voices/logos/ memories. The poly rhetoric characteristic of history gets reduced to monorhetoric utterance and the culture becomes an immutable artefact. The culture gets alienated from the complexities of the histories of the land. The signifier used in the myth, according to Barthes, is a ‘form’ which has its ‘own value’ and ‘it belongs to a history’ (Barthes 1991, 116).

In his book, Wood has described how the process of othering Kānaka maoli as incapable and savage have helped the sugar planters, hoteliers, real estate developers to grow rich on the backs of kānaka maoli's continuous degradation of well-being. As Barthes pointed out, “When it (myth) becomes form, the meaning leaves its contingency behind; it empties itself, history evaporates, only the letter

remains'.³⁵ ; the meaning generated from the myth of Hawai'ian culture which is structured by the corporate-controlled tourism industry structure is alienated from the Native Hawai'ians realities, experiences, desires, and hope. The Kānaka Maoli sovereignty movement can be read as the Kānaka Maoli struggle of rejuvenating Hawai'ian culture by reconnecting the meanings of land with the Native Hawai'ians people. By reconnecting Hawai'ian culture with Kānaka Māoli ways of living, the indigenous activists of Hawaii have pointed out how the Kānaka Māoli 's close connections with the *āina* (land) and *wai* (water) structure the foundation of Hawaiian culture.

Āina plays important role in the Kānaka Maoli way of knowing. *Āina* is not alienated from the Kānaka Maoli existence. Like humans, *āina* is capable of transforming itself and thus affecting the lives of the people living on it. Hence, for Kānaka Maoli knowing is a continuous process that requires people's close connection with the place. To know for Kānaka Maoli is also about finding, innovating, improvising new ways to connect with the land. Knowing, therefore, becomes a continuous process of rediscovering meanings of the place in the changing contexts and thus extending the " horizon of expectation" of the aesthetics (sensible cognition) of the place.

From a Hawaiian perspective, place refers to a connection to the 'aina (land). In ancient times, Kānaka Māoli lived in harmony with their environment. Their great respect for the land and sea was an extension of their general belief that the 'aina was their kaikua'ana (elder sibling). Therefore, Kānaka Māoli had an obligation to love and respect the 'aina, who in turn provided for the every need of its younger sibling. The Hawaiian language does not have a word meaning, "to own land". Rather, Kānaka Māoli, like other Indigenous peoples generally believe that the 'aina is embodied with a spiritual essence; it is alive and they are related. Because every life form and

³⁵ Ibid.

finally Kānaka Māoli are genealogically related via cosmogonic accounts, everything has mana (spiritual power). (Oliveira 2006, 8-9)

The arguments of Oliveria find resonance in the voice of a Native Hawaiian fisherman Shane Kamana. In the documentary *West Beach Story* (1987)³⁶ Na Maka O Ka Aina video production group registered Kamana's reflection on 'being Hawaiian'. In the interview Kamana has specified the importance of maintaining continuous relationships with *āina* for the Native Hawai'ian people. To him, preserving the connection with *āina* means reconnecting with the knowledge of the ancestors who lived "from Makai to Mauka". According to him, "being Hawaiian does not come from reading books". To be Hawaiian for him is "walking in the land, feeling in the land, diving in the water, feeling the water, and I say you can feel the land".

In this documentary, the interviewees showed their anxieties about the future of the next generation of Kānaka Māoli. Once displaced from their land and water, the Native Hawaiians would lose their authority over the knowledge because without being in direct contact with the place their "horizon of experience" would cease to extend. Without the place, the indigenous people cannot rediscover and reinvent their knowledge according to the need of time. In other words, dislocated from the Kānaka Māoli knowledge, the children would fail to structure the sense of agency as there would be no sense of place. Seen from the perspective of epistemology, Kānaka Māoli way of knowing is intrinsically related to the process of rediscovering self in relation to the local ecology, cosmology, and genealogy. Like Adivasis of Jharkhand,

³⁶ In the documentary *West Beach Story* (1987) Na Maka O Ka Aina registered the reactions of the farmers and fishers living on the Waianae coast about the proposed Ko'Olina beach resort which now stands on the land as a symbol of exclusivity. The project has excluded the ecocentric Kānaka Maoli from its area and reserved the area for those with sufficient economic solvency to get entry into the property.

Kānaka Māolis cannot rediscover herself in a given context without direct interactions or communications with the place.

The 'lived body' incorporates and meshes itself with 'place' thus, becoming one with its environment. In this way, the body is capable of perceiving the world by 'being in place'. That is to say, Polynesians heavily rely on sensual information to understand their world. By seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling, Native peoples make sense of their world, drawing insight from their environment. It is important for people in Polynesia to be in touch with the world by watching, listening, and remaining quiet. When a person is centered in this way and is in place, the domains of nature and culture are indivisible. (Oliveira 2006, 38-39)

Hence, for indigenous communities, connections to the landscape are valued as sacred. Development from the indigenous perspective is not restricted to only economic growth. On the contrary, human development means evolving with family, community, ecology, economy, and ancestral knowledge. The spiritual realm of indigenous knowledge thrives on the sense of continuity and the sense of agency of both human and non-human beings. Therefore, the sensible cognition includes both sensuous cognition of the world and spiritual cognition of the world which is hidden within the multiple interconnected and interdependent networks of earth-elements. The aesthetics of indigenous resistance movements can, therefore, be read as the aesthetics of several valued connections that structure, safeguard, and sustain the indigenous identity.

From the perspective of aesthetics of connection, the Hawaiian indigenous movements can be read as the struggle to reclaim their multiple and multidimensional connections to the landscape from the political and corporate elites of Hawaiian state. The idea of growth in the modern economy does not match with the cognition of

growth in the worlds of indigenous communities.³⁷ Therefore, there exists a linguistic perplexity in the semiotics of development. For the indigenous communities, eco-centric groups of people, people living at the margin of the neoliberal economy, growth as a signifier does not find its connection with industrialisation. The anomaly between the signifier and signified in the semiotics of development is referred to as semantic confusion by Sachs. The “semantic confusion” that exists within the interpretation of economic development is more the issue of aesthetics. In the discourse of economic development, what is understood as the sensible cognition of development is far from the individual’s sensuous cognition of her experiential world. In her everyday living, an individual accumulates multiple experiences through various connections with the outside world. These experiences are informative as well as emotive in nature. A person cognises certain connections as valuable depending on how the information and emotion generated from the connections help her to continue her existence with dignity and with hope for a better future. For an individual, the process of sensible cognition of valued connection involves reflection, understanding and interpretation of the connection-generated experiences in terms of compatibility. Hence, if an individual is to cognise economic growth as capital-dominated industrialisation, her experiential world must not differ from the coded structure of signifier and signified.

³⁷ In the development discourse, the idea of economic growth related to the word ‘development’ is posited as universal truth by the modern economists and also by the development executors. Therefore the idea of growth in the economy oriented development is essentially singular, unidimensional and unilinear. Therefore, the idea of world, in the development-discourse is immutable World with capital W.

Whereas every indigenous community resisting development-induced displacement and destruction of local environment has its own idea of growth which is related to the community’s cultural ethos, tradition, and members’ (ever evolving) experiences in relation to the ecology which also evolves following the principle of evolution. Therefore, the world of each indigenous community is different. Hence every indigenous community’s perceived world is local. The indigenous communities sense of world is, therefore, multiple, multidimensional and multilinear.

In the market-centric economy, the determinant factor of the development rate is the individual's capacity of consumption of the products available in the capitalist market. The idea of the autonomous buyer who possesses the unlimited power of consumption has given rise to a vision of economic justice. In this hierarchical structure, powerful persons are those who can control the processing system and the evaluation structure of the products available in the market (Berry 2012, Sachs 2010). As the concept of unlimited consumption requires unrestricted plundering of natural resources and exploitations of human labours, the idea of free-market, as well as the trickle-down economy, fails to secure absolute justice for all. According to Sachs, absolute justice "looks at the availability of fundamental capabilities and freedoms" without and "focuses on basic living conditions, and points to the norm of human dignity". (Sachs 2010, xx). Therefore, for the members of the indigenous communities who live at the margin of the neo-liberal economy, experiences generated through their connections to the institutions of the modern market economy do not match with the dominant interpretation of growth.

For the ecocentric indigenous communities, absolute justice means securing their relationships with the environment so that they have the freedom to interpret a situation from their epistemic standpoints and value systems and make their choice in a given time. To deprive them of the ecological connections, according to Trisha Kehaulani Watson, means "colonisation of indigenous society"(Watson 2008, 19-27).

Once an indigenous community lose its freedom and autonomy over local ecology, the community is forced to disintegrate in search of livelihood. The ecological degradation caused by the development projects nearly makes it impossible for the communities to stick to the traditional livelihood practices. Thus the indigenous people are forced to be part of the market economy. They are reduced to

unskilled labourers with little pay and without community support or ecological footing. In the market economy, the displaced indigenous individual exists as a completely devalued person. She has to part away with her valued connections and she is forced to maintain the connection with a linguistic system that interprets her as valueless.

Disvalue transmogrifies skills into lacks, commons into resources, men and women into commodified labour, tradition into burden, wisdom into ignorance, autonomy into dependency. It transmogrifies people's autonomous activities embodying wants, skills, hopes and interactions with one another, and with the environment, into needs whose satisfaction requires the mediation of the market. (Esteva 2010,15)

In the words of Sparky Rodrigues, the situation of the people living in the economic margin as “has to do” life. Most of the Kānaka Māoli population as well as the working-class people who struggle to survive “from one paycheque to another paycheque” have to work without any hope for a better future. (Rodrigues 2017)

Mākua village was the refuge of the “helpless people” (Esteva 2010, 15) who were created by the history of ecolonisation and displacement. Sparky Rodrigues, who was a member of the Mākua Beach Council, and played a major role in organising the Mākua resistance against eviction along with his wife Leandra Wai, remembers how “the people from different quarters of society came to live on the Mākua beach”. The community consisted of people who were traditional fishermen, homeless people with no other means to live on but government subsidies, veterans, drug addicts, mad people, families and individuals. In his narrative comes the story of Henry David Rosa. In the documentary *Mākua: To Heal The Nation* (1995) Henry plays the role of narrator of the Mākua village. Henry was a veteran and “had a job”. After he met with an accident at his workplace, he became a “disvalued” person in the market economy. As he failed to join the “have to do” work culture due to injury and

had to face a huge “medical bill”, he along with his big family became homeless. He and his family came to live on the Mākua beach (Rodrigues 2017). In the same documentary, Leandra Wai while explaining the importance of the village to the villagers has said, “for everyone who came over here, life is shattered for one way or another” (Leandra Wai, 1995).

The narrative of Rodrigues points out how the lack of alternative interpretations of the terms like development, growth, good-life in the semantic structure of economic development ‘shatters’ the lives of the people. The moment they fail to fit into the codes of the employment market, they become devalued individuals without any worth. The state of hopelessness attached to the phrase “shattered lives” arise within the people living at the margin of the modern market economy from the awareness that they do not have any means to deconstruct or challenge their branding as the disvalued persons. The lack of alternative interpretations in the realm of the modern market economy could not dissociate the meaning of “disvalued individual” from the signifier (worthless) - signified (people living at the economic margin) structure.

Moreover, the complete loss of their participation in the process of inscribing values to something insinuates the general degradation of the psychological health conditions of the members. The sense of vulnerability existing within the individualistic and materialist mainstream lifestyle finally push these disintegrated people to substance abuse. The “crazy and lazy people” of Hawai’i state are those who have lost freedom of choosing how they want to live.

The perspective of the capability approach connects the sense of well-being with the feeling of freedom in determining the course of life. Ingrid Rubeyns has surmised capability approach in the following way:

According to the capability approach, the ends of well-being, justice and development should be conceptualized in terms of people's capabilities to function; that is, their effective opportunities to undertake the actions and activities that they want to engage in, and be whom they want to be. These beings and doings, which Sen calls functionings, together constitute what makes a life valuable. Functionings include working, resting, being literate, being healthy, being part of a community, being respected, and so forth. What is ultimately important is that people have the freedoms or valuable opportunities (capabilities) to lead the kind of lives they want to lead, to do what they want to do and be the person they want to be. Once they effectively have these substantive opportunities, they can choose those options that they value most. (Robeyns Published online: 22 Jan 2007, 95)

If, within a certain relationship, an individual cannot have the freedom to choose her “being and doing”, that is, “what kind of action and activities” she wants to “engage in” and who she wants to be”, she lives in a state of incapability. In her lived reality, she is bound to follow the codes of a system that she does not choose. If she fails to follow the codes, she loses her worth in that socio-political-economic system. Hence, she lives with the fear and anxiety of being humiliated as a worthless person in that system. Moreover, in this connection, the sense of being used is also dominant. These feelings of fear, anxiety, humiliation, and despair generated from the connection drive her to look for an alternative place of refuge which would help her to refuse that dystopian connection. From the perspective of aesthetics of connection an individual's act of refusing a relationship can be read as the individual's sensible cognition of the connection's futility in relation to her existence.

Kalamaoka'aina Niheu's describes the demography of the Mākua village in her essay “*Pu'uhonua: Sanctuary and Struggle at Mākua*” she mentions that:

By February 1996, the community had grown to a population of 282 people. Kānaka Māoli represents

approximately 20 per cent of the total population of Hawai'i. In contrast, Mākua village was overwhelmingly Indigenous, as they were 83 per cent of the community. The remainder was a local mix: thirteen residents were Pacific Islander, eleven Caucasian, nine Filipino, three Puerto Rican, and one Japanese. (Niheu 2014, 167)

All of them, in one way or other, took 'refuge' in Mākua from "high rents, housing projects, and an educational system that does not educate" (Niheu 2014, 167).

Virginia Bernard, another member of the Mākua Beach Community, recalled how her family experienced the loss of home due to a sudden hike of rent from four hundred dollars to thousand dollars. She, with her little son, lived in different beach parks of 'Oahu. They got evicted from one beach parks to another as the State Park authority cleared the beach parks for the tourists. To make the beach aesthetically qualified as per the tourism industries' Hawaiian Myth, people like Bernard got 'kicked off' from the views of the tourists. Finally, she arrived at Mākua village and settled over there. (Virginia Bernard, *Mākua: To Heal The Nation*, 1995)

While explaining the presence of 'druggies' in the Mākua village, Rodrigues has associated the addiction with the feeling of hopelessness that arises within a person from the constant struggle of survival with dignity. The social and economic pressure of getting befitted within the dominant socioeconomic structure, Rodrigues has argued, drive the people living at the margins of 'Oahu towards addiction. These people have no say in determining rent or taxation structures. In the government-run shelters for the homeless, the people do not have the freedom to choose with whom they want to stay.³⁸ The person with food stamps, Rodrigues says, is looked down

³⁸ In the essay "Poverty, Homelessness and Family Break-Up", the writers have shown how the shelters are inhospitable for the children. The families undergo through the experiences of disintegration due to lack of availability of accommodation in the shelter. "The shelter could not accommodate all minor children. Nor would shelters typically take extended families". (Shinn M et al 2018 January 09)

upon as s/he is seen/interpreted as the social and economic burden by the mainstream society. To the taxpayers, these people appear as the lazy lot who like parasites live on the government welfare schemes that run on the back of public tax. The sensuous cognition of self as devalued/ “disvalued” (Esteva 2010) passive-spectator within the neoliberal economy thus structure an individual’s sensible cognition of incapability. In the light of the arguments, the phrase “shattered life” used by Leandra Wai in the documentary *Mākua: To Heal The Nation* can be seen as the linguistic representation of the aesthetic value attached to the sense of incapability.

Leandra Wai left her husband and two daughters “ to get away from the dramas of being a wife, as well as dramas of being a mother”. As it appeared from the words of her husband Sparky Rodrigues that “the pressure” of acting as per the codes of mainstream society (as a worker, mother, wife) engendered her sense of shattered life. Hence she left her house in search of ‘home’. In Mākua village, she built her home and healed her “shattered life”.

The residents came to the beach with a general sense of incapability. In one way or other, they could not meet the demands of the dominant socioeconomic structures of Honolulu. In the search for a safe place, these impoverished and/or homeless people came to Mākua beach to take refuge from the culture of exclusion. Mākua beach becomes a place of shelter for the beach residents as the engaged living on the beach rejuvenated their sense of agency in interpreting the standard of living. Thus, through the realisation of self, the residents found their capability by reconnecting with Kānaka Māoli ways of living. The Mākua villagers reinterpreted the indigenous word *Pu’uhonau* (sanctuary) from the perspective of an alternative

Rodrigues has argued that the homeless people do not prefer shelters because along with other conditions, the shelters do not allow pets. Therefore people prefer to live in the street because in that case s/he can continue to live with her/his pet.

way of living. The ethos, culture, and ethics of Kānaka Māoli society structured the interpretations of the alternative mode of living.

From the perspective of Mākua villagers, *pu'uhonau* is the place that gave them the ability to subvert the meaning of “disvalued” living. What is signified as devalued living in the lexicon of economy, Mākua villagers claimed that as valuable because that way of living help to rejuvenate the sense of freedom within the villagers. Mākua village was the sanctuary for the Kānaka Māoli who refused to adopt the codes of economic growth.

In ancient times Mākua was the sanctuary for those who wanted to avert the ferocities and violence of wars and punishments. In the context of modern time, by positing Mākua village as the *pu'uhonau*, the villagers interpreted them as the people who wanted to flee from the violent world of market economy that violates the rights of equality and dignity to the people living at the economic margin of society. By reconnecting with the land and Kānaka Māoli way of living, the villagers disconnected their '*hala*' (wrong or harmful bond) and were reborn as critically conscious persons who turned trashed land into a self-reliant village where villagers set their own social codes following the Kānaka Māoli ethos of sharing with the community, caring for the landscape, and living a simple but righteous life.

From Esteva's perspective, Mākua village can also be read as an example of “new commons”. It is a place that embodied the survival struggle of the displaced Kānaka Māoli living at the economic margin. The place also became the symbol of Kānaka Māoli's creative ability to restructure their life by reconnecting with the traditional Kānaka Māoli worldview from their experiences.

Struggling to limit the economic sphere is not, for the common man at the margins or the majority of people on earth, a mechanical reaction to the economic invasion of their lives. Rather they see their resistance

as a creative reconstitution of the basic forms of social interaction, in order to liberate themselves from their economic chains. They have thus created, in their neighbourhoods, villages and barrios, new commons which allow them to live on their own terms. For people on the margins, disengaging from the economic logic of the market or the plan has become the very condition for survival. They are forced to confine their economic interaction – for some, very frequent and intense – to realms outside the spaces where they organize their own modes of living. Those spaces were their last refuge during the development era. After experiencing what survival means in economic society, they are now counting the blessings they find in such refuges, while working actively to regenerate them. (Esteva 2010, 17)

In the *pu'uhonau* Mākua the villagers were active participants in recreating the meanings of *Āina* (land) and *Ohana* (family).

If getting away from the pressure of the dominant neoliberal economic culture led the villagers to take shelter in the Mākua village, for a researcher working on indigenous perspectives, it is equally important to focus on how each of the Mākua residents with different experiential backgrounds reconnected with the land and Kānaka Maoli way of living. The aesthetics embedded in the process of reconnection with a dignified survival is, I argue, the vital force of any indigenous resistance movement against displacement from the land.

Unlike the Nagri villagers of Jharkhand, many residents of the Mākua village had to go through a process of knowing the land. The history of the land holds forced disintegration of the Kānaka Māoli from the land and gradual returning of the people to the land. Hence, according to my reading, the people who came to live here between 1983 to 1995/96, had to deal with some kind of experiential gap. For people like Leandra Wai, who was according to Rodrigues born and brought up in the urban part of 'Oahu island, the process of connecting with the land began from scratch.

In the documentary *Mākua: To Heal A Nation* the residents like Virginia and Leandra admits the fact that they found at first the landscape inhospitable. They struggled with the strong wind, blazing sun rays, scarcity of water and “ground full of trash” and lack of modern amenities. Leandra Wai who built the most beautiful and creative *hale* (house) of her known stated how she wanted to run away from the place at first. (Virginia and Leandra, 1995)

These responses show how each of the villagers went through a process of reconnecting with the sense of *pu'uhonau*- what Esteva has described as “the new common”. In my reading, the people who came to live in Mākua also empathetically felt connected with the land. The land which is far from the tourists and tourism economy was seen by the state administrators as a devalued piece of land where trashes could be dumped without considering the effects of the garbage on the local ecosystem (Rodrigues, *Mākua: To Heal The Nation* 1996). The individuals and the families who came to live in Mākua, on the other hand, had their personal experiences of ‘being shattered’ as disvalued persons. In the context of Mākua village, individuals like Leandra would have perceived an empathetical connection to the land which was treated as wasted land by the same mainstream socio-political-economic institutions by relating personal sense of incapability and being shattered by the codes of the mainstream society.

Learning to live with the land and sea is another process of establishing the connection to the landscape. When people worked on the land by clearing the garbage from the beach to build their own ‘hale’ or ‘home’, they might have developed connections among themselves by sharing the experiences of rebuilding “homes” where they could live according to their choice. The big family could stay without the fear of disintegration connection .

Rosa narrates how the villagers were skilled in turning the trashed materials into useful 'treasured' housing materials. The way he transformed the meaning of trash to treasure the meanings of trash and treasure, signifies he along with other community members not only rejected the value system of the economy-centric society but also acquired the power of subverting the meaning from their standpoints. Throughout the documentary, Rosa keeps on subverting the signifier-signified structure. Rosa points out what is trash from the perspective of mainstream society, Mākua villagers perceive those as treasures because the villagers learned to establish valued connections with that trash.

In the words of Rosa, the riches of Mākua village were those who had turned the wasted ground into vegetable gardens by working hard on the land. In the documentary *Mano* – a Filipino man and *Sia* – a Samoan lady *Sia* – mother of six children are signified as prosperous by Rosa. Their cultivation skills and vegetable patches become the symbols of their prosperity. *Sia*'s vegetable garden, the documentary shows, is booming with varieties of indigenous vegetables like sweet potatoes, beans, pumpkins, green onions, watermelons, squash, tapioca. Henry refers to her as the “master farmer”. *Rodrigues* narrative further informs that before coming to Mākua *Sia* and her family lived on welfare. In the mainstream social culture, a person living on family welfare carries the stigma of being economically unproductive and dependent. In *Makaua*, she got the opportunity to apply her farming skill. Her transition from unskilled, unproductive, dependent person to skilled, productive, independent individual can be read as her way of establishing a meaningful connection with the land. *Sia*'s identity as the “master farmer” existed in relation to Mākua.

Thus, Rosa, Rodrigues, Leandra, Virginia, Sia and other villagers shown in the documentary are “historically and socially constituted subjects” who are not only “constituted by the forces of history , but also one capable of agency” (Panjabi 2016, 78). In the documentary *Mākua: To Heal The Nation* the narrators represent the subjective understanding of their lived realities. Hence, in the context of Mākua resistance movement against eviction /displacement, comprehending the subjectivity of the narrators is imperative to realise how the villagers played the critically conscious active participants in structuring the course of future of history. That means the Mākua villagers resisted eviction not for resistance’s sake, rather they were critically conscious persons who were aware of their value in relation to the world outside, and their value in relation to the Mākua.

The community of Mākua village chose to structure the community life according to the Kānaka Māoli cultural ethos of sharing, caring and supporting each other in time of need, because they from their experiences of everyday life cognised/recognised the transformative power embed in leading simple and righteous life in relation local ecology.

The sense of capability of leading a dignified life in relation to Kānaka Māoli identity includes subjective understanding of bodily experiences in a given context. It is this sense of identity that has led the representative voices of Mākua refer the place as “home” in the documentary. The ‘home’ can be read as a sense of freedom from the codes of the mainstream society and also as the freedom of subverting/restructuring the meanings of the codes from the perspectives of experience-based knowledge. This sense of freedom has led the villagers to realise the value (not only material or psychological value but also spiritual value) of the place in structuring their existence as “self-reliant, self-determined” community.

By rediscovering the spiritual connection with the place, an individual establishes spiritual bond with the place. It is the transitional threshold that helps an individual to perceive /envision higher reality of her relational existence. The cognitive aspect of spiritual connection is arriving at the realisation that human existence exists in the middle of seen and unseen relational networks. This realisation arouses a sense of humility towards nature within the cogniser. For an individual, understanding the place as sacred is also a cognitive process of realising the agency of the place in sustaining the existence of self.

Watson has argued that in Hawaiian culture knowing the landscape includes establishing spiritual connection with the place. Like Adivasis of Jharkhand, Kānaka Māoli s of Hawaii also think man holds supreme position in the the world of Creation. Hence to know something agency of the knower must find a respectful and harmonious connection with the agency of the element that is to be known.

Unlike the western world that believes anything can be learned, Hawaiians understood that knowledge was a gift, for with knowledge came great responsibility. . . One element critical to this knowledge is localized experience. Our land speaks to us, through its health and through its wounds. Our experiences are our most important forms of education. Through experiences we learn. Once we experience, we must communicate in native ways. We must speak through traditional mediums so we may engender the experiences of others. (Watson 2008. 121)

Here Watson has pointed out that to be part of the spiritual knowledge a Kānaka Māoli knower must experiences her connections to the lands. Then she has to explore ‘native ways’to connect because knowing from the Kānaka Māoli perspective is to be careful and responsible knower. That means in order to know she cannot endanger the existence or well-being of the unknown. That is why she needs to explore the right medium to communicate harmoniously with the unknown other.

The spiritual connection to the land becomes more predominant in Leandra Wai's words. To her the life on Mākua like is : “ You have to enjoy the life, to love the life, to live the life at Mākua”. Her emphasis on life in Mākua relation the deep feelings (enjoy,love, live) in my reading indicates her dicovered spiritual connection with the landscape. The word life appears as the cognition of self in relation to Mākua which is alive and possess material dimension (power/agency/ *mānā*) of its own.

In the words of Rodrigues, Mākua helped Leandra Wai not only to heal her emotional, psychological wounds, but also made her ‘wise’ person who “did a lot of listening”. As a person who had no prior-experiences of leading a life in relation to the other elements of nature, she developed a taste that began to appreciate sharing connections with non-human creatures. She developed, in her own words, a sense of appreciation for the ocean. She started loving swimming. Sparky mentioned how she used to swim along with the pod of dolphins. The sea that was once a scary entity to her became “awesome”. Mākua helped both Leandra and Sparky to “ heal their relationships”. In the Mākua beach movement, their healed relationship appeared more productive and continued to be productive because they worked together to save the life of and life in Mākua. (Leandra Wai, 1995) (Rodrigues 2017)

Freya Mathew has indicated the importance of exploring the spirituality of a place in envisioning (and thus structuring) a post-materialist world. According to Mathew, the metaphysical basis of the post-materialist world is “cosmological”. Seen from the perspective of the creation, the lived reality would be perceived by an individual as the gestalt effect of the multidimesional and multiple functionings of various agencies (“inner dimension of material reality”) present in the “living world” . Hence the social and moral responsibilities of human who is also part of the cosmology is to think, judge and act in such a way that the network of cosmological

relationships must remain “intact”. Spirituality in the post-materialist world is dependent on the individuals active participation in discovering their connection to the living world through “communicative channels” . The members of would “devise” their communicative ways by applying their creative imagination.

Individuals and local groups in such a society (*post-materialist society*) are loath to delegate their spirituality; they prefer instead to discover their relationship with reality through communicative channels of their own devising, using the aesthetic and poetic resources of their culture. The way this inner dimension of reality is expressed in the world will be consistent with the findings of science but will not be exhausted by them. (Mathew, 2006, 10)

In the documentary, when the villagers claim themselves as the protectors of the sacredness of Mākua, the sacredness can be read as verbal representation of the spiritual connections of the villagers to the landscape of Mākua.

In the documentary Henry Rosa claims that judging him as “ poor little Hawaiians living on the beach” would be inappropriate because “we are the richest as you can see I have the richest food bank in the land.” He then added “ the most important thing” about the life on Mākua was the “ quality of life” which is rich with the “ spirituality”.

In his argument on “the aesthetics of environment” Berleant has established the engaged connections between the human perception and human environment. In his words,

Perception is not passive, but an active, reciprocal engagement with environment. Moreover, not only is there a physiological contribution in perception but an individual’s previous history exercises a powerful influence in the various forms of stimulus-response and operant conditioning. Social experience and cultural factors also influence experience through the perceptual habits, belief systems, styles of living, and traditions of behavior and judgement that we acquire. (Berleant 1992, 18)

Leandra Wai's active participation in Mākua Beach Movement, and later in Malama Mākua group can be seen as her "active reciprocal engagement" with the cause of saving the "life" of Mākuai. The way she perceived and cognised her spiritual connection to the landscape acted as the primary force behind her active engagement. Leandra Wai used her creative imagination to develop the greater understanding of sacredness of 'life' in Mākua and translated the cognition into activism is the aesthetic dimension of spiritual connection. In the documentary, the glimpses of Leandra Wai *hale* shows how she has translated her connection to life in the personal space. In her background, one can see she has placed a living sweet potato plant in a glass jar as home decoration. This decoration element, in my reading, appears as the artistic representation of Mākua's rhythm of life. If the glass jar represents human agency in the living world, the sweet potato plant growing into it symbolises the agency of non-human life. By combining this two, Leandra has created a third plane of harmonious existence of human and non human agencies in the "living world".

The sensible cognition of self as oppressed devalued entity structured the solidarity of Mākua villagers against appropriation of their way of living by the development authorities. At the same time, the cognition of self in relation to the multidimensional connections to the place Mākua encouraged them to reconnect with the Kānaka Māoli Cosmology as well as with the political and cultural identities of the Native Hawai'ians. The process of reconnection and rediscovery led the villagers to find their place in the larger history of Kānaka Māoli's continuing struggle for sovereignty.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to establish how the aesthetics of connection play a pivotal role in structuring the indigenous communities' distinct "sense of place" which stands at the intersection of physical experience and creative imagination of life. Ecocentric imagination of self is the primary condition of this aesthetics of connection. As ecological self recognises the mutual, reciprocal, and harmonious relationships with the local surroundings as the essential means of agency and capability, there exists a value-added understanding of the surroundings which incorporate community, local ecology, local histories, traditional myths, and also day to day sensual reception of varied experiences. Therefore caring for the environment becomes an essential factor in the ecological self as the primary condition of self-maintenance depends on preserving the non-hierarchical relationships between self (an aggregation of body and mind) and other (community, ecology, economy). With the presence of care, an individual's sense of freedom attached to the power of exercising choice, creating meanings, and reinterpreting cultural symbols and identities as per the need of time gets infused with the responsibility of social and environmental ethics. The aesthetics or sense of cognition thus related to non-hierarchical connections, therefore, incorporates physical experiences generated from close interactions with the surroundings, understandings in relation to the social, historical, and cultural contexts, the immediate need of time and continuous process of reflections, individual standpoint, community worldview, and ethos. Aesthetics of connection acknowledges that sensible cognition, as part of the organic world, may evolve into diversified directions of interpretations along the axis of ecological pragmatism.

The indigenous communities' struggles against displacements or evictions can be read as the choice made by the people to safeguard the connections that help the people to realise the freedom of implementing their agencies in choosing the courses of the future. That means the sense of cognition does not aim to visualise a perfect form. On the contrary, it discovers new interpretations of development that do not deny the importance of sensuous cognition of the world. The prospects of integrated evolvement with time without surrendering the distinct identity as individual, community, group, nation is the political aspect of the aesthetics related to the ecocentric connection.

CHAPTER - 4

Going Beyond Borders : Building Harmonious and Mutual Relationships Across Cultures

In this last chapter, my purpose is to show how the aesthetics of connections present in the narratives of indigenous resistance movements indicate the possibility of building universal leverages among various indigenous and non-indigenous communities working to find alternative interpretations of progress and well-being. The communities working on deconstructing the meanings of human development and progress from the corporate-controlled economic profit-centric linguistic system and reconstructing the values of ecological sustainability, dialogic relationships, and community participation within the understanding of development.

Here, I have tried to show how the resisting indigenous villagers found the efficacy of building dialogic relationships in the resistance movements and how the experiences of interactions with the outside world encouraged them to stand in solidarity with the oppressed across cultures.

In the economic growth-centric development model, a small group of people holding the centre of political and economic power interpret every other creature's well-being, justice, and growth from their perspectives and interest. That is how they ignore the pluralistic structure of ecology by implementing a unidimensional model of the imagination of human progress. The presence of unidimensional interpretation of human progress encourages the policymakers to structure a straight-jacketed model for every situation. The model, from its conception, promises to become coercive as it tries to cut down the local diversities as per the model's suitability.

The first section of this chapter explains why the culture of non-dialogue is the norm of the established development models. The culture of non-dialogue has led the development planners to take refuge in violence to establish their idea of development on the indigenous mass whose plight after development-induced displacements is too conspicuous to ignore. On the other hand, indigenous communities follow dialogue principles to sustain their material, physical, emotional, and spiritual connections with their landscapes. That is why the absence of dialogues in the economic development strategies appears as the oppressive and violent tools of the rich non-indigenous people who want to acquire the indigenous lands for the financial benefits.

The rest of the chapter focuses on the transitional powers embedded in the dialogic relationships. I try to indicate how the experiences of dialogic relationships have changed the village activists and narrators from individuals trying to protect their homes to critically conscious individuals also standing for absolute justice for human and non-human beings experiencing oppression.

Each narration accounts for the narrator's transition from the practitioner of the community's culture to the critically conscious interpreter of indigenous culture. The evolution of the indigenous activists stands on the process of rediscovering the knowledge and power within the indigenous culture to maintain mutual and harmonious relationships with the surroundings. As a result, the narrators have never ceased to explore the ways to build functional networks of dialogue with people across cultures to rediscover more creative and ingenious solutions to a problem in a given situation through exchanging experiences and ideas.

Each of the narratives bears a story of transition. In this story, the narrator has undergone a process of building complex functional networks between people with different experiential backgrounds through dialogic relationships. However, as the

idea of transition embedded in the aesthetics of connection does not claim a teleological end, the people's transition continues to exist so far as the primary condition. That means active engagement of an individual in building harmonious and mutual connections with people from other experiential, epistemological realms is the only constant factor. Based on this aspect, the community changes its course of action depending on the demand of time.

In this chapter, I try to point out that envisioning an environmental culture (Plumwood) in the post-materialist world (Mathews) needs a more in-depth focus on the fabric and character of connections that would hold ecologically conscious reflective dialogues between different cultural groups. The proposition of initiating conversations not only among the environmental and indigenous activists but also among the people who have a somewhat vague understanding of ecological relationships stands on the outlook of "Freirean methods dialogic action and conscientization". The aim of a post-development era must be not only about liberating the oppressed but eventually also the intervenor from his conditioning as a 'bourgeois' thinker (Rahnema 2010, 127-145).

Hence, it is imperative to foreground interpretations of development in dialogues. Without building networks of harmonious and reciprocal relationships among various cultural groups, it will be impossible to envision a future where the two groups-namely ecocentric and anthropocentric- would develop the state of "conscientization"³⁹ through dialogues.

³⁹ A key concept in Freire's approach is *conscientization*, meaning how individuals and communities develop a critical understanding of their social reality through reflection and action. The course involves examining *and* acting on the root causes of oppression as experienced in the here and now. Thus, *conscientization* goes beyond simply acquiring technical reading and writing skills. It is a cornerstone to ending the culture of silence, in which oppression is not mentioned and thereby maintained. (Steyaert 2010)

Hum Nahi Kah Rahe The, Phir Bhi Tumne Usko Liya (We Refused You, Still You Encroached Upon Our Land) : The Absence of Dialogue

This section focuses on the reductionist characteristic of the economic growth-centric development model to point out its connection to the absence of dialogue in the mainstream development models is intrinsically related to the reductionist nature of the growth model.

The state cultures of the third world nation-states have unquestionably accepted the USA President Truman's interpretation of development and underdevelopment after the second World War. The technology-driven industrialisation that would secure the capitalistic market's vibrancy is the signifier of the nation-state's position in the social evolutionary scale (Sachs 2010). The policymakers and the political elites of the third world nation-states have been frantically trying to impose white men's idea of growth signifies the unsustainable consumption of natural resources for heavy industries, utilisation of industrially produced chemicals in the environment, and 'hyper separation' (Plumwood 1996), that is, complete alienation of the modern men from ecology. The political and economic elites of every nation-state following the economic development model have posed the economic growth-centric development projects are the panacea of all socio-economic problems. Hence, the local ecology's degradation has become a ubiquitous reality in both developed and developing nation-states. The more is the degree of environmental degradation, the more acute becomes the chasm between the economically vulnerable crowd and economically solvent groups. The communities that live in close connection with the ecology are the first to bear the brunt of ecological degradation.

With every inception of a development project like mining, dam, thermal electric power plants, hydro-electric power plants, infrastructural development, the local indigenous communities lose their rights over the local ecology. Without their consent or opinions, the policy makers demarcate agricultural lands, waterways, forests for development projects. All these ecological elements are the cornerstone of the local people's livelihood and way of living. When suddenly they find themselves on the verge of losing the very basis of their cultural and epistemological existences (agricultural and non-agricultural lands, forest areas, waterways, village communities, local markets), the development projects appear as a threat to the villagers. Dayamani Barla has described the imminent dangers to Adivasis from her experiences and understandings like this,

Aaj ki tarikh mein desh ki raajni corporate gharane ke isare mein chalti hai. Poore desh mein, (main sirf Jharkhand ki baat nahi kar rahi hoon) jitne bhi khandija sampada hai, jameen hai, jitna bhi paani hai, jitna bhi prakritik sangsadhan hai, oos tamam cheson par karporete gharna apna malikana haq sthapit karna chahti hai. Aur oos ke tahat policiyan banti hai.
(Barla 2016)

[As of this day the corporate houses control the directions of the politics and the politicians. The corporate houses want to establish their ownerships over all the mineral resources, lands, water, natural belongings of this country (I am not only talking about Jharkhand). The policies are made by the state legislators and the administrators to fulfil the desire of the corporate owners.]

Hence, for Dayamani Barla the real threat to Adivasis (and to every people who have structured their ways of living in relation to local natural elements) is the development policies that tend to cater for the interests of the corporate tycoons. According to her, the development policymakers hardly take into concern the

viewpoints of the villagers on the development project.⁴⁰ Therefore, the development projects are essentially anti-dialogic and cannot ensure freedom to the people who are forced to accept development-induced social, ecological, economic catastrophe silently.

Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* has pointed out dialogues that help to develop critical consciousness among the participants who would apply creativity in transforming the present into a more just and righteous future. According to him, “dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, to name the world”. Thus within a dialogic space, it is imperative to include “men”, their understandings of their worlds and a sense of mutual respect. The act of mindfully listening to others, trying to understand the meanings of their words, the values embedded in those meanings form the basis of dialogic relationships. Dialogue according to Freire is the “existential necessity of the human beings” because

(The) dialogue is the encounter in which the united reflection and action of the dialoguers are addressed to the world which is to be transformed and humanized, this dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person "depositing" ideas in another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be "consumed" by the discussants. Nor yet is it a hostile, polemical argument between those who are committed neither to the naming of the world, nor to the search for truth, but rather to the imposition of their own truth. Because dialogue is an encounter among women and men who name the world, it must not be a situation where some name on behalf of others. It is an act of creation; it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one person by another. The domination implicit in dialogue is that of the world by the dialogues; it is the conquest of the world for the liberation of humankind. (Freire 2005, 88-89)

⁴⁰ According to Panchayat Law, Forest Act 2006, fifth schedule, the gram sabha or village council would decide on whether to accept or reject the development project proposal. In reality, the opinions of the village council are not taken. The villagers are kept in dark until the very end. In most of the cases, the villagers come to know about the development projects when the land agents start survey works.

From the perspective of Freire's arguments on dialogue, the economic development models and the ways the economically and politically powerful elites implement those models in the indigenous people's lands appear anti dialogic.

The economic development model, I argue, has failed to include dialogue in its structure because its fundamental values follow the value systems of white elites. The value system reflects the ethos of white colonials who saw everything existing outside their known world as the objective other that should be subjugated to fulfil the need of the white masters.

Moreover, the subjugation of the other was justified by the white colonial masters as the rule of the rational (hence progressive minds) minds over the irrational colonised (primitives). From the perspective of the white elites, technological progress is the triumphant logo of scientific rationality and its capability to tame the chaotic nature. The enlightenment era's goal was to unite and integrate every citizen under the canopy of scientific reasonings- the symbol of civilisational progress. Nation-state emerged as the symbol of abstract political power. Since then state power has been utilised by the economic elites to aestheticise the pro-capitalist model of scientific reasoning as the universal and absolute knowledge system. The authority of the state has been used by the men sitting at the power centre to integrate the citizens into the value systems of scientific culture through various institutions since the onset of colonial history.

As the white men continued to conquer the other world to extend the economic profit of the European industries, the colonial institutions took every measure to exterminate the knowledge systems of the colonised. Without the choice of selecting any native knowledge system (because the state-authority led by the colonial masters disregarded the validity and the value of the native knowledge as an

alternative knowledge system) the black men educated in the educational institutions made, validated and valued by the colonial masters learned to interpret their experiential world from the perspective of white men.

As a result, even after achieving political independence from the colonisers, the political, social, and economic elites could not free themselves from the unshakable conviction of transforming the experiential chaotic world into an immaculate and decipherable system of order with the help of a technological superpower. The belief system is based on the Eurocentric model and denied the relational existence of the human species. Therefore, establishing careful dialogic relationships to understand epistemic standpoints of ‘inferior others and reaching a stage of mutual and harmonious agreement regarding solving the local issues have never got their place in the dominant knowledge system. In the white men’s culture, acquiring knowledge about others takes a reductionist approach by shifting its emphasis on gathering empirical information. The methods applied to analyse the verifiable data analysis hardly look into the socio-cultural and experiential locations of the analysers. The acts of denying the plurality of the cultures, knowledge systems, and their interrelations with the local ecological histories have escaped the moral tests of ethics and justice as the white men’s culture has developed a telos of human progress which is unilinear and exclusionary. The belief that technology can solve any unseen problem that may arise in the human biosphere is the myth of the modern industrialist human society.

The history of development – proposed by Truman in 1940 is a continuation of the nineteenth-century ideologies of social order and universalism. From the perspective of universalism, the local knowledge systems representing place-based cognitive and value systems have become the symbol of regressed, primitive, chaotic

elements that stand as the irrational impediments standing on the way of progress. The denial of diversities is the required first step in structuring the market-centric social order. The hubris of technology-centric science that has secured the market controlled consumption-based production's continuous growth act as the instrument to interpret qualitative terms like poverty, the standard of living and progress. As the perception of unilinear economic growth has made its way to the centre of interpretation, the need for establishing homogeneous market-space throughout the world has become an inevitable means to reach the end. The “Universally applicable programmes and technologies” – detached from the local culture, knowledge systems, interpretations of wellbeing and progress To organise local cultures according to the order of market economy, the “developmentalists” have posited the combination of “universally applicable programmes and technologies” as the only viable solution. The Western model of society like the western civilization still exhibit its cultural hegemony within the semantics of development (Sachs ed, 2010). According to Sachs,

Science, state and market are based on a system of knowledge about man, society and nature that claims validity everywhere and for everybody. As a knowledge which has successfully shed all vestiges of its particular origin, place and context, it belongs nowhere and can therefore penetrate everywhere. In a certain sense, mechanistic causality, bureaucratic rationality and the law of supply and demand are rules which are cleansed of any commitment to a particular society or culture. It is because they are disembedded from broader contexts of order and meaning that they are so powerful in remodelling any social reality according to their limited but specific logic. As a consequence, they are capable of unsettling all kinds of different cultures, each one locked in its own imagination. (Sachs 2010, xxi)

As the idea of economic development and the culture of it follow the dualistic model of white colonial masters, the existence of dialogic impasse becomes inevitable. In the absence of dialogue, crude violence towards other human and planet

species has become the thematic part of indigenous experiences encountering the state-sponsored economic development projects.

Every developmental project bears the promise of inclusion of the ecocentric communities into the mainstream of national progress. The idea of mainstreaming the indigenous communities carries the dualistic concept of identifying indigenous communities' knowledge systems as inferior. Therefore the primary endeavour of the development model relies on the means (however violent they are) that would deconstruct the environment of cultural connections and forcefully restructure the lives of the communities according to the reason, values and tastes of the materialistic culture of economic development. The development planners and executors braced with the hegemonic cultural lense of 'mainstream' dominated by the ecologically unsustainable and disassociated Euro-Atlantic model of production, progress, and standard of living fails to understand that the culture of every indigenous community depends on and evolves from the day to day close interactions with the local ecology. Thus to the development policymakers and executors, the indigenous communities living in close connections with their regional ecological niches fall into the broad category of the primitive, underdeveloped standard of living. The erasure of the cultural and epistemological multiplicities existing within the layers of the term like Adivasis, indigenous or ecocentric communities from the development semantics causes oversimplification of the actual situations. Such underestimation induces a non-dialogic relationship between the development planners and project-affected indigenous communities. The ecologically insensitive development projects and rehabilitation programmes thus erect their mausoleum of inequality and violence on the bedrock that violates the truth of heterogeneous cultural and ecological existences.

The Munda, Santhali, Oraon communities though fall into the broad category of adivasi culture, every village society depending on their local ecological habitat and histories of contacts have developed distinct epistemic locations. What bind them together is the ethos of understanding human existence as part of nature. Maintaining mutual and harmonious relationships with the surrounding natural elements form one of the primary cornerstones of the communities' nuanced value systems. Homogenisation of the indigenous communities is the first pitfall of dominant development discourse. Therefore, within the rehabilitation programmes, the development executors hardly take into account setting up a proper ecological niche that would help the displaced communities to carry on their aesthetics of experiences - the critical element for the evolutionary growth- for the displaced community.

Experiential voidness is the second pitfall that causes trauma, impoverishment and stunted evolutionary growth of the displaced villagers. The displaced village community without the support of their known ecological surroundings or degraded environmental conditions neither can use the knowledge repertoire nor get the opportunity to restructure the changes ushered in the locality through the developmental projects. The transformation of the capable farmers into maidservants, wage labourers, illegal, underpaid miners working under the coal mafias and unemployed lots digs deep entrenchment of social and economic inequalities between the development beneficiaries and displaced villagers. The aim of national unity and integrity gets compromised in this process. On the other hand, because of the non-dialogic relationships that exist at the centre of the economic development projects promoted and protected by the various institutions of the nation-states, the development planners deprive themselves of creating alternative interpretations of development policies. Thus the issues like ecological sustainability, safeguarding the

interests and concerns of the indigenous and other ecocentric communities, physical and psychological health of the people remain unresolved and development executors use violence as the only tool to silence people's dissents.

Dayamani Barla has interpreted the lives of the displaced adivasi villagers living in the rehabilitation centres as hellish in comparison to the living conditions in the villages which lack the abundance of urban facilities like water, electricity, transportation, health and education facilities. Munni Hansda and her team when visited the company proposed rehabilitation centres the sheer barrenness startled their aesthetic sense. Nandi Kachhap and the villagers of Nagri failed to understand why the government officials chose to encroach on the fertile agricultural lands instead of the uncultivable barren lands for building premier educational institutes.

In the semantics of the economic and industrial development, the Indian nation-state's fundamental ethos of respecting the values of cultural diversities does not get a chance to stand. The development planners-representing the section of India that has more or less unquestionably accepted understanding of development from the perspective of economic productivity interpret the socio-economic down gradation of the displaced adivasi people as their physical incapability of working hard and intellectual incompetency to adopt the mainstream outlook. The environmental degradation of the local ecology falls under the category of collateral damage.

The oral testimonios that Dayamani Barla and the village representatives of the Khunti area collected in the wake of Arcelor Mittal's land encroachment endeavour show that in the rehabilitation programmes, the authorities hardly cared about ecological perspectives while relocating the displaced people. That situation has led them to abandon the farming tradition completely. The transition of the efficient farmers to the inefficient unemployed lot has increased the cases of migration and

disintegration of the village community. The development projects have entrenched more profound inequality between the displaced village communities and the beneficiaries of that development.

Sainath's *Everyone Loves a Good Drought* how the ECL's coal mining has devastated the ecological, economic, and social lives of locals. ShriPrakash's documentary *Buddha Weeps in Jadugorah* has documented the catastrophic effect of Uranium mining on the local people, livestock, water bodies, agricultural systems and vegetations. Both Sainath and Shriprakash have pointed out how the authorities related to coal and uranium minings have chosen to ignore, mislead, or misinterpret the complaints, pleas, and objections of the local communities mainly consisted of the adivasi and moolvasi (non-advasi lower-caste Hindus who came to the land of Jharkhand in the eighteenth century and gradually adopted adivasi cultural ethos) population.

Ajitha S George, while analysing the consequences of minings and land encroachments on Jharkhandi indigenous communities, writes :

A major handicap with all these acts is that the forceful acquisition of land does not consider the damage that is caused to close-knit indigenous communities whose existence is closely linked to land and forest. None of these acts provides any actual space for protest or dialogue or negotiations between the Government or the companies and the affected persons. To confound matters, there is a total lack of information sharing with the people who will be displaced or affected by any project. This is true for all minerals and all companies, big and small, private sector and public sector. None of them considers its incumbent on them to inform the project affected persons at the outset about possible displacement and relocation and get them prepared for that eventually. (George 2014, 41-42) Even if the notification gets published in print or digital media, the villagers cannot get information till they get "notice of taking possession". (George 2014, 42)

After the independence, the development policymakers have envisioned development as a growth in material production.

Countries once treated as colonial underdogs now measure up to their masters, and people of colour take over from the white man. Yet what amounts to a triumph of justice threatens to turn into a defeat for the planet. The desire for equity is largely fixed on development-as-growth, and it is development-as-growth that strains human relations and fundamentally threatens the biosphere. (Sachs. 2010)

From the green revolution to the emphasis on various infrastructures related to the heavy industrial productions, the various development plans adopted since the independence of India prove how the conviction about economic growth and material prosperity as the only viable mean of ascendance to power has dominated the mind of the nation-state's policymakers and planners.

What has been left unseen is the ecological and social impacts of the project-related topographical changes on the local people and the more significant economic impacts on them. The project affected people displaced from local ecology, social relations, traditional knowledge, and community support system could not replace those with the cash-based economy. Water bodies' pollution, loss of farmlands and gradual deterioration of the local environments have compelled the villagers living near the project areas to migrate. The more they have relocated to the urban spheres, the ecological balance of overpopulated city have got severely compromised. All these things have further endangered the issue of gender equality and gender empowerment. The women bereaved from their existing traditional and community protections experience social vulnerability, economic insecurity, deprivation of their agencies on work, production, free food collection from local biodiversities and leisure.

Sharma's paper focusing on hunger, poverty, and food security in the Palamu district of Jharkhand has linked deforestation, land grabbing and poor water harvesting to the hunger problem of the district's landless sections living on subsistence farming and forest collection. According to Sharma,

The degree of dependence on forests for subsistence or cash income varies locally and depends on the state of the local forest, access to it and availability of other income generation opportunities. The slogan 'protect and prosper' should define the relationship of villagers with the forests (Satpathy, 2017; Suresh, 2017). This is particularly true of weaker sections with low or no land ownership, as non-timber forest produce can play an important role in protecting them from destitution and hunger. (Sharma 2019, 50)

Sharma has not focussed on the hunger and starvation conditions amongst the displaced people. Nonetheless, the states like lack of forest produce, farmlands, water bodies, poor ecological condition for maintaining livestock and thus the absence of alternative income generation system indicate how the economic growth-centric projects have induced the issue of hunger and starvation among the displaced indigenous communities.

The monologue inherent to the top-down development planning model is the root cause of its failure. Cutting out the local people's diversified ecology-based culture and social experiences in the name of national integrity and economic growth is the pitfall that fails to see the meanings attached to *jal-jangal-jameen* and the presence of women's strong voices against land encroachment.

Rabindranath Tagore, in his analysis, has pointed out the pitfall of monologue attached to the idea of the modern nation-state. According to him, understanding nation and national progress as a giant machine that can function smoothly without considering the diverse needs of the local communities has sown the seeds of injustice

in the dominant system. In 1918 he criticised the unharmonious characteristics of the nation state's political and commercial cultures like this :

When this organisation of politics and commerce, whose other name is the Nation, becomes all powerful at the cost of harmony of the higher social life, then it is an evil day for humanity...When it (society) allows itself to be turned into a perfect organisation of power, then there are few crimes which it is unable to perpetrate. Because success is the object and justification of a machine, while goodness only is the end and purpose of man. When this engine of organisation begins to attain a vast size, and those who are mechanics are made into parts of the machine, then the personal man is eliminated to a phantom, everything becomes a revolution of policy carried out by the human parts of the machine, with no twinge of pity or moral responsibility. (Tagore 1918, 10-11)

Tagore's emphasis on empathy and moral responsibility points out how nurturing the pluralities and safeguarding the freedom of thought and heart in human society is the apriori condition of inclusive progress.

Sen's argument on the capability approach also points out the imperatives of maintaining plurality in development semantics by arguing that the freedom of choices and freedom of exercising the agencies to select from the options connect development with moral values of justice.

In the case of development-induced displacement, displacement involves radical inclusion and backgrounding; the rehabilitation process incorporates within its realm the process of inclusion, objectification, and homogenising. The method of incorporation or rehabilitating the displaced people first background the environmental identity of the people; after that, the ways of objectifying them take their turn. Finally, the displaced people, placed at the margins of the mainstream, are left with no choice but to accept the values of an imagined nation and submit their will to the higher will of the nation-state.

Within the monologic structure of development, the planners fail to understand *jal-jangal-jameen* constitute the complex and diversified ecosystems of soil, forests, and water bodies. When the adivasi women speak of protecting their local ecologies and agricultural lands, the semantics include indigenous communities' comprehensive traditional knowledge about sustainable interventions into the diversified local ecological systems. As the sustainable mode of intervention has secured self-reliance of the communities in the context of food security, health, nutrition, and general wellbeing of the various community members, the term *jal-jangal-jameen* also incorporates the emotional relations of the people that have laid down the basis of the indigenous cultures, that is, of maintaining mutual relationships with the local environments.

The universal model of economic development has ensured the degradation of the physical, psychological, and emotional health of the indigenous as well as ecocentric communities across cultures. The aggression of the economic development has caused alienation of the subsistence farmers, fishers, hunters, gatherers from the local ecology and ecology-based community culture. The development executors compromise with the overall well being of the development-induced displaced people.

The history of Hawai'i after the arrival of James Cook in 1778 can be read as the history of gradual displacement of the indigenous people from their land, water, sea, and even language. U.S military occupies the biggest land share of Hawai'ian islands. Trask writes,

Today Hawai'i serves as a territorial possession of the United States...At present, our Native people of Hawai'i are crowded into urban areas or rural slums. And our socioeconomic, health and educational profiles are depressingly poor. The military, in the meantime, controls huge land areas for bases and settlements, while its personnel receive subsidies and other economic privileges. (Trask 1999, 49)

The corporate-controlled tourism industry comes next as the encroachers of the rest of the lands and water.⁴¹ Encroachments of the lands and seas from the small and subsistence producers who are mostly *maka'āinana* (born to the land), these people, after failing to cope with the stringent prevailing conditions socio-economic model, fall into the state of absolute penury. They not only lose their primary living conditions but have to accept all the emotional and spiritual distress and social indignation that exist in the sub-texts of the state welfare system. “These “developments” displaced people who continued to live “Hawai’ian style” relying on land-based subsistence practices like fishing, gathering, and farming” (Goodyear-Ka’ōpua ed 2014, 7). Displaced from lands and livelihoods, alienated from the freedom of living in an indigenous way, the settlers have robbed the *Kānaka Maoli* people off from their capability of creating an alternative socio-economic culture of self-reliance. Development-induced displacements have led the *Adivasis* of Jharkhand (India) and *Kānaka Māoli* of Hawai’i (USA) to development-induced poverty. As the ecocentric indigenous communities lose their traditional rights over local ecology, they lose their knowledge of self-sustenance, culture, language. With the loss of food and livelihood security, language and culture the displaced communities lose hope for envisioning a better future according to their choice. This state of hopelessness is the root cause of *Kānaka Maolis* psychological and spiritual impoverishment.

Once displaced from their ecology, these people lose their rights over traditional knowledge regarding maintaining people’s wellbeing, freedom and creativity in relation to the environment. The denial of natural resources to the

⁴¹ In 1985 the independent documentary production group Na Maka O Ka A’ina made *West Beach Story* to register the anxieties and concerns of the local farmers, fishers, activists over upcoming West Beach resort project of the Campbell company in the Wainae area of the ‘Oahu island. The small farmers were concerned that the resort project would not only encroach lands but also the water sources of the area. The encroachments of the natural resources would force the farmers’ either to face the rising expenses of farming or to abandon farming practices. The local fishing community apprehended that the access to ocean would be cumbersome.

indigenous communities who have structured their ways of living along the ethos of mutual and harmonious relationships with the local ecosystems by the white men's development model, from the perspective of Trisha Kehaulani Watson, is 'Ecocolonization' (Watson 2008, 23). Watson, in her dissertation has argued that,

Colonization is driven by economics, not politics. At the core of colonialism's methodological web is a need for resources. The "colonization of Hawai'i" was a struggle for resources; political occupation is only one of many problematic results (Watson 2008, 23).

The idea of development based on the idea of profit and using the natural resources as profit-making machines do not feel any obligation to care for it. Colonization also denies the ethics of sharing the resource with others / colonised communities (who follow different ideologies, metaphysical ethos, and cultural practices) as that would surely carb down the amount of profit. The dominant development model thus functions as the tool of colonizing the local ecosystem in the hand of the economically powerful people.

Development projects that thrive on the encroachment of natural resources from the hands of the indigenous people create an oppressive environment of psychological and physical degeneration of the 'eco colonized' community. Denying the resource and depriving the scope for the community-based work culture leads to the disintegration of the community.

The advocates of the dominant development model initiate dialogue because their interpretation of development is limited to the profit-centric neoliberal economy. The arrogance of the industry-driven development planners and executors is caused by the fact that they perceive human existence and wellbeing as independent of well-being and unrelated to other ecological creatures. Therefore, the others (read

indigenous and ecocentric people) are always interpreted as irrational, primitive human beings. In Freire's words, development planners and the neoliberal elites lack humility.

In other words, the propagators of the existing development model, are not aware of the limitation of their knowledge. Hence, encouraging participation of the project-affected people to visualise and create development models that would include multiple interpretations of progress and secure the freedom of the indigenous people in choosing their ways of living remain absent from the thinking process of the development planners. Therefore, the existing development model cannot possibly break away from the vicious cycle of inequality and injustice as it cannot value dialogues over economic profit.

Cutting out the local people's diversified ecology-based culture and social experiences in the name of national integrity and economic growth is the pitfall that fails to see the how the world of human are thriving in relation with environment.

Ek Inch Bhi Jameen Nahi Denge (We won't give an inch of land): Resistance Movements as Celebration of Solidarity

Those who have been denied their primordial right to speak their word must first reclaim this right and prevent the continuation of this dehumanizing aggression(Freire 2005, 88).

Development projects that transform the self-reliant indigenous communities into hapless poor represent “the dehumanizing aggression” of the political and economic elites. Hence, seen from this perspective, one can interpret indigenous resistance movements against development-induced displacements as the indigenous people's fight for reclaiming the “primordial right to speak” their words. Against the

coercion of state and corporate aggressions, indigenous resistance movements can be read as the indigenous people's demand to have equal participation in choosing their future. Participation of the people as pointed out by the Majid Rehnama, is neither manipulation of the public opinion in favour of development goal nor the usurpation of people's voice by a small group of "actomaniac, the missionary, the obsessional intervenor and the mentally programmed do-gooder" (who) think they alone care about the situation, while the victims do not" (Rehnama 138).

Therefore, in the context of any kind of transformative change, people's participation in dialogue refers to a process that focuses on building solidarity among the people through dialogues. It is a way to understand people's perceptions about their existence, concerns, views towards life and awareness of the situation. Hence, people's participation means including the multiple views of the people to build a meaningful consensus. Therefore, the persons who represent people's concerns reflect the opinions of mass.

Dayamani Barla who is an eminent adivasi activist of Jharkhand has never claimed to be the leader of the Arcelor-Mittal resistance movement even though she played the role of whistleblower and organiser in structuring the movement. While reminiscing the time of the Arcelor-Mittal movement she always pointed out that her words represent the opinions and concerns of the villagers who were to be displaced because of the Arcelor Mittal integrated steel project.

Jo larai Dayamani lari hai, Dayamani akeli lari nahi hai. Yahan ke ek ek byakti, bachha, mahila, purush uthke khara hua Dayamani ke saath. Tab jaake humne larai jeeta hai. Mai akele nahi, par saath milke ye larai jeete hai. (Barla, 16)

[Dayamani never fought alone. Every individual-child, woman, man- stood with me (against the development project). After that, we won the battle. I solely have not won the struggle, we got the triumph together.]

Dayamani Barla thinks of herself as one of the participants in the villagers' resistance movement. In her opinion, she shared her experiences of the adivasi movements like the Koel-Karo movement, Jharkhand movement, understanding of the conditions of the displaced villagers and the imperatives of forest, land and water for adivasi ways of living, and knowledge of legal and constitutional rights of the Adivasis with the villagers. That means by the time Dayamani Barla connected to Khunti areas adivasi resistance movement against Arcelor-Mittal Integrated Steel Project in 2004, she had developed sensible cognition about her adivasi identity as the youngest child of a Munda family that became lost family lands to the village moneylender, as a village girl and student struggling for survival and dreaming to integrate her disintegrated family, as an adivasi girl student working as low-paid manual labour in different kind of jobs in Ranchi, as a single young woman who gradually gained confidence to speak out her mind and stand up against wrongful approaches, as an office worker in a non government organisation that worked on adivasi children's education, but was reluctant to take any suggestion from the adivasi female staff, as an owner of the tea shop, as a young Munda adivasi female activist of the Koel-Karo movement⁴², as a rural journalist publishing the disempowered and despairing conditions of the displaced adivasi villagers in the rehabilitation centres, in the city slums, as a member of Jharkhand movement, as an independent woman who went against community custom and married to a person of her choice⁴³, as an

⁴² Koel -Karo Movement went for 34 years. Koel-Karo area is the abode of Munda community. The movement was led by Munda community from 1974-75 up to 2008. Dayamani Barla joined the movement during 1994-95.

⁴³ In *Adivasi* custom man and woman having same title cannot marry each other. The village community abandons the couple and do not let them enter in the village. In her case Dayamani Barla married Nelson Barla. As they both belonged to Barla clan, they could not marry each other according to traditional custom. It was rebellious step taken by both of them because they were aware of the consequences. One must not remember that community is an important part of *Adivasi* life.

individual who chose to stand beside her irrespective whatever pains she received from a part of her village community.

From the perspective of aesthetics of connection, it can be said that by 2004 Dayamani Barla developed sensible cognition about herself, her identity and her agency from multiple experiences that she gathered through various connections. These connections included both personal experiences and the experiences of others who had come in contact with her at different points in time.

What I want to point out is that Dayamani Barla evaluated the connections from the perspective of a rudimentary adivasi value system that upholds justice, righteousness and a sense of equality. She evolved as an individual and as an indigenous activist with her evaluations of connections. The process of evaluation is continuous and open to transition from morally unacceptable reality to morally acceptable reality. The metaphysical ethos of the community and the aesthetics of experiential connections both work in the evaluating process.

This point can further be extended from the perspective of environmental pragmatism. The proponents of environmental pragmatism which rejects the split between nature and human lives, suggest that “both the human organism and the nature within which it is located are both rich with qualities and values of our experiences (Rosenthal & Buchhloz 1996, 40)”. Therefore human is not just a passive spectator but an active participator in evaluating the experiences that she accumulates during her physical interactions with her surrounding. As time (both cyclical and horizontal) changes, the surrounding of individual changes in multiple ways. An individual learns to value or devalue a connection depending on how the experiences related to that connection helped her to grow (materially, physically, emotionally, morally, spiritually, and aesthetically), to make her more capable of resolving

“conflicts in terms of enlargement of context which can adjust or adjudicate the conflicting perspectival claims” (Rosenthal & Buchholz 1996, 41). Rosenthal & Buchholz further has argued that,

The value quality of immediate experience is structured in large part by the context of moral beliefs within which it emerges. The extent of one’s awareness of this functional relation between valuing and evaluation or, in other terms, the extent of one’s awareness of the moral meanings which enrich experience, determines the extent of morally directed action within experience. (Rosenthal & Buchholz 1996, 42)

Being from the Munda community Dayamani Barla’s moral belief system follows the basic characteristics of *adi-dharam*. From the perspective of *adi-dharam*, the Great Spirit created every organic and non-organic element of the Earth based on equality and mutuality. No single element creation can claim exclusive existence and the real sin against creation is to destabilise the harmonious balance of the Earth and make it unliveable for other creative elements (Munda 2014).⁴⁴ Hence Dayamani Barla’s experiences are evaluated by her adivasi metaphysical ethos or *adi-dharam*. The adivasi sense of dignity and pride is built on the belief system that adivasi existence is equally valuable like other elements of creation. In the Khunti region, the traditional Munda village system shows how the village community collectively maintain a fine balance between self-sustenance and a culture of sustainability⁴⁵. Hence when Dayamani Barla mentions that from her experiences as a manual labourer in Ranchi city she has understood that in the non-*adivasi* society, individuals who sustain themselves through toiling as farmers, fishers, hunters, gatherers, vendors, porters, maidservants, wage labourers and so on are seen by the non-*adivasi*s

⁴⁴ *Sosobonga* (Munda Creation Myth)– Ram Dayal Munda

⁴⁵ For further reading one can read Praveen Kumar and Sonika Tuti written *Munda Jan-Itihaas: Sanskritik Itihas Khuntkatti Gaon Ka*

as exploitable subhumans (Barla 2015), her cognition is the result of her evaluation of the experiences she gathered as manual labour in city space and her moral belief, that is, adivasi belief system. On the other hand, while narrating her early days as an activist she emphasises phrases like *Biswas* (trust), *Pyaar* (love), *Saathi* (friends). In the words of Dayamani,

Wahan mujhe bahut pyar mila. Hum sab saathi mahila log milke Hindi aur Mundari mein slogan taiyar karte thein. Phir gaaon ke leader logon ko mujh mein itna biswas aa gya ke court ka kagjaad bhi samhalne diya.
(Barla 2015)

[There (In the Koel-Karo movement area) I got enough love from the villagers. We all female comrades used to sit together to prepare slogans in Hindi as well as in Mundari. Thereafter the leaders of the Koel Karo movement began to trust me so much that they asked me to take care of the legal documents of the movement.]

Thereafter she narrates how she has developed long term connections with many urban non-*adivasi* and *adivasi* social activists, journalists, academicians Shri Faisal Anurag (journalist and activist), Smt Basabi Kiro (journalist and activist), Shri Prakash (documentary filmmaker and activist) who supported the cause of the Koel-Karo movement and worked on to register the voice of the villagers who stood against administrative coercive forces. Here in this part of the narrative, one can see Dayamani Barla's transition from a young educated woman conversant in Mundari and Hindi languages belonging to a Munda farming family with a personal history of displacement to a learner of the Koel-Karo movement, from a young *adivasi* women listening to the villagers, preparing slogans in Mundari with the village women, understanding legal technicalities from the elders to a determined activist and rural journalist reporting the plights of the displaced *adivasi* villagers in the context of the Koel-Karo movement. When the mainstream print media went against the movement. Koel-Karo people's forum brought out leaflets and magazines to clarify their position

on the hydroelectric power project. To counter the state propaganda against the Koel-Karo movement, Dayamani Barla wrote the perspectives of the villagers resisting development-induced displacements. In Dayamani's words,

Jo director tha (Koel-Karo project ka) wo mere khilaaf bolne laaga. Ke dayamani Barla ko kuch aataa nahi hai, logon ko bahka rahi hai. Koel-Karo pariyojna banne se Vikash hi viksh hoga. Tab mujhko lagaa ke ye bare aadmi hai, sarkari adhikarik hai, unko counter kayse kiya jaaye, taab mein jitna bhi displace huye hai, unke beech me jaake rahna shuru kar di. Gaon gaon mein Jahan unko rehabilitation center mein basaya gaya tha, main wahan wahan chali gayi aur unke zindegi ko mein dekhne lagi. Aur mujhko laaga ke nahi inke saath anyay hua hai. Aur Koel-Karo hydel power project agar banta hai, to wahan se qareeb dhai laakh log displace hote, tab main compare karne laagii ke yahan (Koel-karo kshetro) ke log swarg ke zindagi jeete hai, aur jo mein displace logon ke basti mein jaake aayi, mujhe lagaa ke hamara log isi tarah ke Jeevan mein aayenge. Tab mein lagaataar mane vishthapan ke khilaaf Jahan bhi log bol rahe hai ki nahi jameen nahi denge unke saath jaake khara ho gayi (Barla 2015)

[The director of the Koel-Karo project started to speak against me. He said that Dayamani Barla knew nothing. She was trying to mislead the people. A full-fledged development would come through the Koel-Karo project. Then I thought about how to counter such a high ranking government officer. Thereafter, I went to the people who were displaced and started living with them. I went among those villagers who were relocated to the rehabilitation centres and observed the lives of the people over there. Then I realized that injustice was done to the displaced people. If the Koel-Karo project were to happen, two and a half lakh of people would be displaced. Thereafter, I compared the lives of the displaced villagers to that of the resisting villagers of Koel-Karo. I realised that the people of Koel-Karo were leading to heavenly life compared to those settled in the Rehabilitation centres. After I stayed in the settlements of the displaced people, I felt that if displaced our people (people of the Koel-Karo area) would be living that lives. Then, after that, I decided to stand against the issues of development-induced displacements. Wherever the villagers say, no we won't give our land, I stand beside them.]

Here we can see how one connection led her to another and the experiences she made out of those connections structured her choice against development-induced displacement. At the same time, she admits that she stands with those villagers who decide not to give the village lands for the proposed development project.

Dayamani Barla chose to go against the dominant form of development projects because in her interpretation the projects inflict injustice upon the displaced villagers. Alienated from *jal, jangal, jameen* (water, forest, land) the displaced villagers do not have the access to pure water, forest and farm produce, comfortable housing, enough space for cattle and community support. The compensation amount is poor as the ceiling of land price in the underdeveloped zone is low. The families with small landholdings get meagre amounts. The employments offered in the compensation structure do not fulfil the need of the big *Adivasi* families. Hence the family is forced to disintegrate in search of livelihood.

Moreover, for a person who has followed the *adivasi* way of living recess is as important as work. Having the freedom to take rest as per requirement, freedom to choose the time of work and the type of work is also integrated part of *adivasi* way of living. The pressure of a tight schedule and the stress of labouring every day psychologically worn them out. For a community that is dependent on mixed food resources (hunting, gathering, farming), the burden of earning daily wages to have food on the plate is an undesirable state of living. No time for community recreations in the *akhara* (community ground) or celebrating festivities in the desired environment is also against *adivasi* cultural practices. For women keeping the balance between earning daily wages, taking care of multiple household chores like fetching water, collecting firewood (to relieve the burden of household expenses), taking care of family members (specifically children) without any support from the community is

the traumatic experience (Barla 2007). For adivasi villagers, local ecology is an intrinsic part of human experiences. That experiences evaluated by the Adivasis in the context of the ethos of *adi-dharam* perceive changes (displacements and aftereffects of that environmental change) as impediments to their freedom of growth and capability to resolve conflicting issues by making suitable (hence functional) choices.

In 2006 during a protest struggle for securing the hundred days employment scheme for the local villagers in the Basia block of Gumla district, Dayamani Barla came to know about the Arcelor-Mittal integrated steel project from the Kamdara block office. She prepared the list of the village lands including the common land, forest, rivers, mountains were demarcated for the project by the project planners and went to every village to let the villagers know about the project and the impending consequences. In 2006 The villagers selected five representatives and they visited the rehabilitation centres where the displaced villagers were settled by the project executors (Barla 2007). After their visit, they shared their experiences with other villagers and the villagers decided to go against the project. They formed *Adivasi Moolvasi Astitva Raksha Manch* and the people's movement against the integrated steel project started in 2008.

To humlogo ne aapna jeetna bhi gaon mein pahonch na joruri tha, wo gaaon mein pahonch ne ke kosish kiya. Nau round, dash round meeting mein baith ke ye Adivasi Moolvasi Astitva Raksha Manch ko barane ka kaam kiye. (Barla 2017)

[We tried to reach every village that was required to be visited by us. After nine or ten meetings we started extending the function of *Adivasi Moolvasi Astitva Raksha Manch*.]

Dayamani Barla chooses words to show how the villagers of the forty-two villages, came together decided to stand in solidarity against the Arcelor Mittal Integrated Steel Project. The whole process was slow because the villagers relied on

dialogues to arrive at the final decision. Villagers took almost two years to stand in solidarity against the development project-induced land encroachment. Villagers invested their time in communicating, listening, learning, sharing information and thereafter reflecting on the situation from their realities. To show how the whole process of getting to a final decision on accepting or rejecting the land encroachment due to the development project took its required time Dayamani Barla states,

*to yahin karte karte panch gaaon, chay gaaon,
aath gaaon, dash gaaon aysa karte karte vistar ho
gaya.* (Barla 2016)

[like this (the consensus of the villagers regarding resisting the encroachments of the adivasi lands) extended from five villages, then six villages, thereafter eight villages, ten villages..it (the general agreement on collective resistance) spread like that]

What is extended (*barte gaye*) here is the connections among the villagers in the backdrop of the development project.

In adivasi village society, according to Dr Munda, before coming to a unanimous decision chain of discussions take place because every village members irrespective of gender and age represent their view/s on the issue. After listening and discussing the decision is taken by the villagers. The decision taken after the discussions is followed by the village members. This is the traditional governance system of the adivasis (Munda 2002, 34-35). Therefore, it can be said that the adivasi resistance movements against development-induced displacements expose the sensible cognition of mass. Within the collective sensible cognition, every villager's reflections on her realities get connected. The process of connecting different realities and finding a resolution by considering the reflections of the villagers is the key to adivasi solidarity. The resistance movements thus can be read as the common ground

where multidimensional, multiple and interrelated reflections get connected over certain values.

Munni Handa's narration evinces that Dayamani Barla's emphasis on building connections among villagers through dialogues (that include listening, sharing, reflecting) is not an exceptional case. In Munni Hansda's narrative in 2007 the villagers got to know about the project when the company people went to conduct surveys in different parts of the block area. Then the villagers came to her to seek her help in understanding which lands were demarcated, which parts of forest would be destroyed due to coal mining, which villages were to be submerged due to the hydroelectric power plant. They also wanted to know about the compensation and rehabilitation package that the company offered. Munni Hansda emphasized (time and again) that only after getting assured of the fact that the villagers had decided to safeguard their ancestral lands and local ecology, did she agree to extend her support to the villagers. Munni Hansda is an educated Santali woman. She worked with the village women of Kathikund block (consists of mainly Santali and Paharia adivasi communities and a few moolvasi communities like Lohar, Raay)⁴⁶ experienced NGO worker In Munni Hansda's narrative she speaks about how the villagers of Aamgachia experienced, reflected and decided to go against the thermal power project. She says,

2007 ko bhū-arjan bibhag se gaaon ke Pradhan ke paas ek nutis (notic) aaya. Us mein likha tha ke falna falna jameen Sarkar adhigrahan ke tahat le rahi hai. Hum log meeting bulaye Us mein hum ne bola kaun kaun sa jameen le rahi hai. To gaonwala ne naksha dekh ke bola ke ye gochar jameen hai, ye jangal ka plot hai, par hum to wahan kheti karte hai. Par hum logo to wahan kheti karte hai. Tab tak to 2006 Forest Act aa chukaa thaa. To hum Pradhan ko bole ke jo khas jameen mein chass kheti kar raha hai unkaa patta aap unko de dijiye. Aur jangal ke jameen ke liye abedan kar dijiye. (Hansda 16)

⁴⁶ As per the 2011 census of India in Kathikund block Scheduled Tribe population is 63.54% and Schedule Caste population is 2.45%. (Wikipedia)

[In 2007 the village headman received a notice from the land acquisition department. The notice stated such and such plots were to be acquired. After getting the notice, we organised a meeting in the village. We told villagers about the lands that were to be acquired by the government for the project. The villagers saw the map and pointed out grazing lands, *khas*⁴⁷ lands, forest lands. They also said that all these lands were used by them for farming or farm-related activities. Then I suggested to the village headman that he should provide lease holding rights to those who farmed on the *khas* lands. To get the lease of the forest lands I suggested that the villagers must submit their applications (to the forest office).]

The villagers then submitted their application to the office of the Sub Divisional officer for *pattas* (lease holding certificates) but only two or three applicants received the approval. Thereafter the village head received a leaflet from the RPG (Rama Prasad Goenka group) company regarding compensations for the villagers who were to be completely displaced due to RPG (Rama Prasad Goenka group) company's integrated Thermal Power project.

Another village meeting was held and the compensation package was discussed. After the discussions, the villagers concluded that the compensation package provided to the raiyats were not only meagre but also oblivious to the needs of the adivasi agricultural families. Moreover, the families who do not have lease holding certificates would get nothing. For a farming community, the promised employment opportunity would be limited to low paid manual jobs. The women opposed the compensation package as their independent earnings from cattle rearing, from forest produce were at stake. Moreover, they were not comfortable in completely

⁴⁷ According to Munki Hansda, small landholders are allowed to cultivate on Khaas (village common lands) plots. The plots are under the jurisdiction of village head. It is clear from the above narrative villagers used those plots under mutual verbal agreement. They did not feel to get hold of the legal papers as the in the kincentric traditional adivasi village society sense of trust runs deep enough to turn verbal agreement as the final settlement. Moreover, in the traditional adivasi village governance system, big families with small landholdings are allowed to farm on the collective uncultivated lands to meet the need of the families. Those who farm on the lands, enjoy sole rights over the farm produce.

changing the ways of living They did not want to cut their relationships with farmlands, forests, community members and ancestral homes. The adivasi villagers rejected the project proposal and decided to resist it. Munni Hansda is proud of the fact that the village members of the Kathikund block were well aware of the project, compensation package, and the consequences. After reflecting on the proposal the villagers found their existing lives more valuable than the development. Hence they came together as one collective body. The opinions of the villagers were not manipulated. On the contrary, each villager who participated in the movement chose to be part of the resistance movement as a free reflective agent.

Rahnama has argued that true participation means participating in dialogues with others as a free agent who is empowered to choose the future from her understandings that evolve out from her gathered experiences. For Rahnama,

to participate means to live and to relate differently. It implies, above all, the recovery of one's inner freedom – that is, to learn to listen and to share, free from any fear or predefined conclusion, belief or judgement. As inner freedom is not necessarily dependent on outer freedom, its recovery is an essentially personal matter and can be done even in jail, or under the most repressive conditions. Yet it enables one not only to acquire a tremendous life power for the flowering of one's own life but also to contribute, in a meaningful way, to everyone else's struggle for a better life. As such, inner freedom gives life to outer freedom and makes it both possible and meaningful. (Rahnama 2010, 140)

“Inner freedom” mentioned by Rahnama, in the context of adivasi struggle against development-induced displacements, can be read as the sensible cognition of adivasi self in relation to the surrounding organic and non-organic elements. That sensible cognition of self includes reevaluations of the existing connections to different local ecological elements from the perspectives of personal experiences, community kinship culture, ancestral memories related to the village, sacred places,

and the history of the community as a whole. In the time of impending displacement, an individual re-evaluates the value of the elements related to work and also related to rest. Thereafter she chose those connections that in her reinterpretation appear as the symbols of her inner freedom. This sense of freedom structure her choice of participation in the struggle that is read by the participant as the way of protecting her freedom to choose a “better life”.

The above argument, I would like to justify from one of my experiences that I gathered during those days when I engaged in the act of listening from Dayamani Barla, Munni Hansda, Nandi Kachhap and their *saathis* (camaraderies).

In 2015, I visited Korkotoli with Dayamani Barla. Korkotoli’s villagers participated in the resistance movements against Arcelor Mittal integrated steel project. It was the time of rice plantations. Most of the villagers were out in the field busy with sowing the soft green *jawa dhaan* (rice saplings). During lunch recess, the villagers talked about their struggle. They pointed to the agricultural lands, monsoon rivers, ponds, distant forest land, and green hillside and said that because of the movement the lives of *jal, jangal, jameen* continued to thrive. On being asked by one of us representing the urban, non-*adivasi*, middle class, degree holders about the kinds of artefacts the villagers made within the village, one man immediately pointed to a plough resting on the trunk of a tree and said: “ We make this”.

The villagers of Korkotoli have found new interpretations of the landscape as well as the farming tools like plough after the struggle. The plough, in my reading, has become the symbols of Munda identity, the agricultural village community, *adivasi* solidarity and the history of people’s struggle.

Nagri women after the resistance movement understood that they are capable of continuing dialogues with the government officials. Nandi Kachhap’s narrates the

way she made one police person withdraw striking lathi through dialogue. The women of Nagri narrated a story to make me understand how the movement made them realise their strength and courage to stand against injustice and oppression even outside the village boundary.

After the Nagri movement, on Women's Day, the women were invited to a women's organisation in Ranchi. On their way back to Nagri, the Nagri women found that traffic police persons intimidating a single elderly village woman who could hardly communicate in Hindi. While most of the passersby chose to overlook the situation, the women of Nagri chose to stand beside the woman and resolved the issue. The whole incidence can be seen as the extension of the solidarity that the women of the Nagri experienced and cognised during their *satyagraha* (non-violent sit-in protest in Gandhian way)⁴⁸. During this time the women went the sit-in protest on the agricultural fields that were to be acquired. Surrounded by the armed force, the women of Nagri continued to stay day and night under a temporary built shelter. This sit-in protest that started in March 2012 continued for a hundred fifty days. The Nagri women who endured the harsh summer heat and the pain of losing three compatriots during the Satyagraha do not remember the days of *satyagraha* as painful. They interpreted the time as the "days of joy" (*bahut majaa aaya*). Then they went on telling how the women took turns to come back to their houses to cook for their children and family members, how the children came straight back to their mothers in the protest site from their schools. The sense that their *satyagraha* was to secure the

⁴⁸ Mahatma Gandhi's idea of *satyagraha* can be interpreted as the anti-imperialist strategy to stand against every injustice that harm the basis tenets of human rights. If violence is the language of the imperialist strategy, people's strategy cannot take the course of violence because in that case the people's struggle would be nothing but poor man's imitation of imperialist ideology. Non-violence is the pragmatic ethical stand of the oppressed. They take stand against injustice and at the same time do not intend to cause physical harm to those who act as the instruments of violence. Peaceful protest, from the Gandhian perspective, is a way of communicating to the people with power that their violent and unjust acts of oppression have brought dishonour to them. [Dasgupta 2001 (Third publication), 57-80]

future of the children led these women to rediscover their values as nurturers and farmers. Thus, the phrase ‘days of joy’ can be read as the sense of agency that these women have developed during the movement, through their experiences. The women have understood that they are capable of standing against injustice. Hence, one can read, the incidence of the Women’s day narrated by the Nagri women as the expression of the sensible cognition of the freedom attached to agency and capability.

The memories of people’s struggle against development elites have structured a sense of empowerment. Thus adivasi resistance movements evince that protesting masses are neither passive spectators nor incapable of cognising better choices in a given context. The realisations of the resistance movement participants regarding their agency in making better choices have extended the border of the movement beyond the area of the village space. Hence, the adivasi resistance movements can be interpreted as the *akhara* (community ground) where the adivasi villagers have communicated about their ‘lifeforce’ which exist in relation to the community, local ecology, and the adivasi worldview. The adivasi resistance movements against development-induced displacements can also be interpreted as the adivasi way of celebrating their solidarity with *jal-jangal-jameen* (water-forest-land) to let the development executives know that without the inclusion of adivasi concerns regarding the adivasi ways of living, development plannings would be reduced to meaningless unethical jargon.

Lareng, Jitenge [In Struggle, We will Win]

In his book *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An indigenous manifesto* Taiaiake Alfred has emphasised that “strong attachment to the land” is the fundamental characteristic

of being indigenous (Alfred 1999, 111). Hence “indigenous justice” or indigenous way of interpreting justice refers to,

the achievement of respectful coexistence-restoration of harmony to the network relationships, and a renewed commitment to ensuring the integrity and physical, emotional, and spiritual health of all individuals and communities. (Alfred 1999, 42)

Indigenous resistance movements, seen from this perspective, can be read as the people’s struggle to achieve “ respectful coexistence-restoration of harmony to the network relationships” and also “renewed commitment” to ensure physical, emotional, and spiritual health of all individuals and communities that are holding places in different sections of “the network relationships”. That also means individuals and community members who through experiences and reflections value the ethos of harmonious coexistence become part of the “network relationships”. The possibilities of indigenous resistance movements to go beyond the boundaries of cultures rest on the network relationships because the relationships can expand with new connections. The imperative of emphasizing safeguarding the harmonious network of relationships is that it holds hope for a humane and righteous interpretation of democracy, economy, and development.

To substantiate the claim, here I shall take the case of the Mākua beach movement to show how the beach community members during the resistance struggle explored multidimensional connections in relation to their restored sense of freedom. Ileana Haunani Ruelas’ thesis titled as *Mākua Valley* describes the Mākua valley like this,

The Mākua military reservation extends over three verdant valleys, between Wai‘anae and Ka‘ena point on the island of O‘ahu. It is home to over 45 rare and endangered species of endemic flora and fauna, is the setting of Hawai’ian creation stories, and contains over 100 identified archaeological sites that are living

links to Hawai'ian cultural practices (Henkin 2008). The military presence expanded in 1941, shortly following the attack on Pearl Harbor. At this time 6,600 acres of Mākua, and the entire island of Kaho'olawe (28,800 acres) was confiscated by the U.S. Army for use in target practice, and preparing combat troops for America's participation in World War II. These events precipitated the forceful eviction of the remaining residents and ranchers in Mākua Valley. (Ruelas 2013,5)

In 1964 President Johnson officially sanctioned exclusive lease holding rights of the Mākua valley to the U.S Army for 65 years. The army received exclusive access to 4200 acres of land for one dollar. "The coastal area of Mākua was granted from the federal government to the State as a public trust and allowed for public access and use, except when training activities would present a danger" (Kelly and Aleck 1997:9)." (Ruelas 2013,5)

Kalama's essay *Sanctuary and Struggle at Mākua* states that the government on the pretext of building a beach park for public use displaced beach residents in 1964, 1977, 1983, and 1996. "After the 1983 sweep," the residents returned to the place. Before the eviction, the Mākua beach community had 282 people and twenty per cent of the total population was Kānaka Māoli (164-165) Leandra Wai introduced Kalama to the Mākua beach community. She started living with the community (Kalama 2017). When the eviction seemed inevitable, Kalama along with the Council Members stood on the ground till she was forcefully removed and arrested with others (Rodrigues 2017).

Sparky Rodrigue's narrative states that the beach residents who for one reason or another took refuge at *Mākua* rediscovered their inner freedom by living differently from the norms of mainstream society. The process of rediscovering the freedom of choosing the traditional indigenous way of living that is to survive on the land and to lead a less hectic life in my reading has been referred to as healing by the beach

residents in the Na Maka O Ka Āina made documentary *Mākua: To Heal The Nation* and also by Sparky Rodrigues in his oral narrative. The process of healing thus involved clearing the land, transforming it from a trashed ground to a thriving self-sustained village community, building emotional and interdependent connections with the land, ocean, and other community members.

Bereaved from the shed of trees, Mākua beach according to Kalama, was harsh on summer days. Despite it, the community members identified it as a ‘safe place’ for those who had suffered the trauma of disintegration physically, emotionally, and spiritually because the ecocentric Kānaka Māoli way of living helped them to reintegrate themselves.

A new feature, common to most of these genuine grassroots movements, seems to be the substitution of various modern methodologies, project designs, organizational schemas and fundraising constraints, by more traditional and vernacular ways of interaction and leadership. As a rule, the necessity for a spiritual dimension, and for the revival of the sacred in one’s everyday relationships with the world, seems to be rediscovered as a basic factor for the regeneration of people’s space. Wherever this spiritual dimension has been present, it has, indeed, produced a staggering contagion of intelligence and creativity, much more conducive to people’s collective ‘efficiency’ than any other conventional form of mass mobilization. (Rahnama 2010, 140)

What Rahnama referred to as the “revival of sacred in one’s everyday life”, can be interpreted as rediscovering the valued connections in everyday’s life.

David D. Rosa one of the prominent voices in the Mākua documentary of Na Maka Āina described Mākua Beach Community members’ everyday living from the spiritual dimension. According to him, for the development authority and mainstream media, the villagers looked like a bunch of homeless people or squatters. If one could look at the term from the perspective of the Mākua villagers, the Beach Community

consisted of families. He mentioned the resident families as “ Polynesian brothers” who lead very busy life evincing how the beach community people rediscovered lifeforce by choosing Kānaka Maoli ways of living which gave them an alternative interpretation of “better” living.

In that busy life, the villagers not only planned about procuring drinking water, maintaining sewage problems, arranging shelters, farming, fishing but enjoyed swimming in the ocean, sitting by the beach, singing and making art, - thereby realising their ability to transform the grim reality into meaningful future. Hence every valued element of everyday life becomes sacred. (Mākua - To Heal The Nation 1996)

In the documentary as well as while remembering the days of resistance Sparky Rodrigues in his narration has connected the newly rediscovered spiritual dimension in relation to everyday life to the spiritual extent of the Kānaka Māoli Creation Myth. With the sensible cognition of the sacred, the villagers recreated their sense of the people’s space. Hence, the Mākua Beach Community families wanted to safeguard their home which included their *hales* (houses that they built and decorated by themselves), the ocean and the marine lives, the land and every non-human creature living on it because the Mākua community members rediscovered their emotional and spiritual connections to the various elements of that place through their direct physical interactions with the land. The people with the least economic power reconstructed their lives at Mākua by rediscovering the potentialities hidden within the practices like coexistence and collaboration through their real-life experiences. As the people realised their capabilities in recreating the interpretation of better life and found a sense of pride by establishing mutual and harmonious relationships with the surroundings, the residents found the land sacred and tried to ‘heal the wound’ of the

Āina. The earth lives that lost their habitat and natural rights of living due to the military training and related anti-ecological human practices was interpreted as the ‘wound’ by the Mākua Beach community members. In the documentary *Mākua: To Heal The Nation*, Leandra Wai’s voice has registered the oral representation of the intention of healing the land.

We are healing our past, our torment, our destruction.
We are here to ripe the land not rape the land. Here we
are discovering what is here before. With that, we are
finding our connection. (Mākua - To Heal The Nation
1996, Leandra)

The word ‘rape’ here refers to the live ammunition training of the U.S military. The sense of violence related to the activities of warfare and the violations of living rights caused due to the violent activities of modern human civilisation from the perspective of Leandra Wai can only be countered by engaging with the activities that can make this Earth livable for all including the men dealing with the ammunition and violence in everyday life. Hence, this alternative understanding of lifeforce based on the ethos of coexistence and harmonious relationships cannot possibly opt for violence as a measure. The immense sense of love towards the other lays the cornerstone of revolutionary change because that encourages one to understand the anxieties and shortfalls of the people standing on the other side. In 2017 while talking to Sparky Rodrigues, I found this sense of empathy reflected in his words. For Rodrigues, the process of understanding others’ standpoints, in my reading, have started during the Mākua movement when he played a pivotal role in communicating the world outside regarding the experiences, perspectives, preferences, and reflections of the villagers of Mākua. At the same time, he also documented the views of the villagers on behalf of Na Maka O Ka Āina. Connecting multidimensional perspectives of individuals on Mākua Beach Community to his subjective understandings of the

place, in my opinion, have structured his understandings about the victimhood of the common men and women who struggle to stay afloat in the individualistic neoliberal economic culture. In his interpretation, the individuals who despite their marginal situation in the mainstream economy failed to stand in solidarity with the Mākua beach community appear as the persons living in constant anxiety of losing jobs and being homeless. The sheer pressure of hanging at the end of the economic thread disempowered them so viciously that they could not exercise the freedom to go beyond their closed space. They could not invest the time and the engagement required to understand the meanings of self-reliance, self-determination and healing. Evolution of Sparky Rodrigues as the 'dialogic man' (Freire 2005, 91) who showed his "faith in the people's power to transform the future through empathetic connections evinces the spirit of the Mākua and the Mākua movement have continued to survive within the participants of the movement.

The sense of right action existing within a cultural group depends on the value system that stands on the bedrock of multigenerational lived experiences. The differentiation between good and bad depends on what kind of connections the individual cognise as valuable. In a democratic people's space, the individuals have the freedom to retrospect and reinterpret the efficacies of the existing valued connections within a given socio-political-economic context. The past experiences are the only "ethical foundation" of a community. "We know from past experiences that some ethical concepts work better than others in given situations. The collective experiences that have identified some actions as needful to maintain the community's sustenance, wellbeing, and progress have received the recognition of being ethically correct. In the words of Parker,

The aim of ethics is not perfect rightness, since there is no absolute standard for reference, but rather creative

mediation of conflicting claims to value, aim at making life on the planet relatively better than it is. (Parker, 1996, 27)

The idea of progress is then related to the emergence of choices and choosing the right at a given context through creative imagination and intelligence. In the ecological context, the moral responsibility attached to the human value system can not leave the environment as a separate entity as they are an integral part of this planet's system. For the ecocentric community, the local ecology is an intrinsic part of lived experiences and an imaginative part of the self. Any development model bearing the threat of alienating the members from the growth of that imagination and interpretation would impair community members' right to renovating the value system by making creative choices based on their past experiences.

Such a human development model would fail on the scale of "absolute justice". The idea of absolute justice "looks at the availability of fundamental capabilities and freedoms without which an unblemished life would be impossible. Absolute justice is non-comparative and context-specific. It focuses on basic living conditions and points to the norm of human dignity" (Sachs 2010, xx).

In the light of the above argument, the resistance movement of Mākua and the voices of the Mākua Council members appear as the transformed people who are empowered to create alternative interpretations of freedom. Within the movement, the movements learned about their connections to the land from *Kupunas* (indigenous elders), academicians, lawyers, other activists working on nuclear-weapon-free pacific islands, conservations of indigenous plants and animals, restoration of Hawai'ian cultures. The villagers also realised that their history of struggle is the intrinsic part of the Hawai'ian indigenous struggle for indigenous sovereignty. The process of reconnecting with the histories involved various other individuals who

could not stand beside them in that time due to fear (of getting arrested, losing employments) but showed their support through small acts or words (Rodrigues 2017). All these experiences made them realise that the persons standing on the other side were human beings stuck within a unidimensional interpretation. According to Sparky Rodrigues – one of the members of the participants of the Mākua movement, member of Mākua beach council, and founder member of Malama Mākua organisation as the chasm between the myth of state-power and natural resource-dependent economic progress and the reality of economy centric activities would become wider, the people living in the margin or near margin would look for the ways to live differently (Rodrigues 2017).

Meanwhile, the responsibility of the indigenous activists is to find newer avenues to start a dialogue with the people living within the dominant system by using their creative imaginations. To counter the anti-dialogic mechanism (state-authority, military, media, corporate-controlled capital) of the neoliberal structure, it is imperative to struggle for initiating dialogue because faith, love, hope, respect towards the agency of the other party, and critical consciousness structure the basis of the dialogic platform. Freire has argued that,

The "dialogical man" is critical and knows that although it is within the power of humans to create and transform, in a concrete situation of alienation individuals may be impaired in the use of that power. Far from destroying his faith in the people, however, this possibility-strikes him as a challenge to which he must respond. He is convinced that the power to create and transform, even when thwarted in concrete situations, tends to be reborn. And that rebirth can occur—not gratuitously, but in and through the struggle for liberation—in the supersedence of slave labor by emancipated labor which gives zest to life. Without this faith in people, dialogue is a farce which inevitably degenerates into paternalistic manipulation. Founding itself upon love, humility, and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialogues is the logical consequence. (Freire 2005, 91)

Following the arguments of Freire, the resistance movement of Mākua can be read as the dialogic platform where the community members started communicating with nature, history, culture, and people living outside the Mākua Beach community and obtained ‘ the power to create and transform’ even after the eviction of 1996. The foundation of Malama Mākua and the involvement of Sparky Rodrigues and Leandra Wai Rodrigues (the couple who transformed from a wounded family to the comrades of Hawai’ian people’s sovereignty) evinces the previous claim.

The spirit of dialogic relationships is to build horizontal connections with people to mutually understand what kind of valued connections are required to protect for a hopeful future. According to Sparky Rodrigues, “ If we can change someone who was against us to be neutral, then we have succeeded”(Rodrigues 2017). For him, this small change is the success of the dialogic process. The process of making dialogic connections that began within the boundary of Mākua Beach Community continues with Mālama Mākua which came into being in 1996.

Mākua beach community members failed to safeguard their Home, *Pu’uhonau*, their place of refuge and the place of healing. “The village was razed to the ground” (Kalamaoka'aina 2014, 176-177), but the spirit of safeguarding and restoring the lives on the land continued with the Malama Mākua group. The achievements of the Malama Mākua group are: securing “Native Hawai’ians” cultural access inside the Mākua valley and stopping the live ammunition training in the valley.

By 2010, the tenacity and successful persistence of Mālama & Earthjustice’s activity in the judicial branch – initiated a transformation of Army framing regarding Mākua. The first change was the head of the U.S. Army Pacific, Mixon’s decision to move live fire training from Mākua to Pohakuloa, and “shift the use of Mākua toward training soldiers to cope with convoy

fighting and roadside bombs, known as improvised explosive devices” (Army Needs 2010). The second frame adjustment was that the Army began to emphasize their work to build a council that would bridge relationships with the Native Hawai’ian community, but “the Army did not invite several Hawai’ians embroiled in ongoing disputes with the Army to join the council” (McAvoy 2010). The shifts signified the initiation of frame transformation in approaching the conflict at Mākua by adjusting proposed land usage and creating alliances with a Native Hawai’ian council that could affirm their commitments to cultural resource management. (Ruelas 2013, 100)

Behind this success there exist multidimensional and plural stories of building dialogic relationships and bringing small changes. Mākua beach movement of 1996 in a way won the battle because it gave birth to critically conscious dialogic agents who never ceased to struggle for a “better life” which stand on the cultural and the spiritual ethos of Kānaka Maoli.

The critical consciousness and empathy that the indigenous villagers acquire from the fields of resistance movements, in my reading, help them to relate to those who face oppression, displacements, violations of lifeforce. At the same time, the Mākua movement as an intrinsic part of the indigenous sovereignty struggle of Hawai’i can be read as the struggle against the value system of the ‘development’ culture that tries to annihilate the epistemology and ontology of the local value system. Mākua villagers based on the Kānaka Māoli ethos developed a workable value system that expressed the preferences of the village members. As the villagers rediscovered their connections to the local ecology in relation to their ‘healing’, restoring the relationships with the local ecology of Mākua, became one of the cardinal ethical and pragmatic choices of the Mākua villagers. During the movement, they recognised their values as the ecological community in the light of environmental

injustice and global ecological crisis. The conception, existence and struggle of the Malama Mākua group evince my above-mentioned claim.

Mākua villagers struggle against eviction and the continuing struggle Malama Mākua in collaboration with Earth Justice (to restore Kānaka Maoli's cultural, ecological, and spiritual connections to Mākua) can be interpreted as the continued struggle of the critically conscious Kānaka Māoli who have never ceased to be in 'strong rediscover, with every change in the context (ecological, political, social, and personal), the existing knowledge system could extend. The Hawai'ian Kānaka Maoli can be read as the continuous struggle of the Kānaka Maoli community who even after being continuously displaced by the settler community's political, legal, economic systems have not lost 'strong attachment to the land'. That is why, they have never ceased to reconnect, reinterpret and extend the Kānaka Māoli knowledge system with the changing contexts. Borrowing the words of Rodrigues it can be said that with every non-violent indigenous movement, the *Adivasi* villagers of India and Kānaka Māoli villagers of Hawai'i have become aware of their value as protectors, preservers, reinterpreters and regenerators of local knowledge systems through "small learnings" by establishing horizontal connections to and dialogic relationships with ecological elements (both human and non-human, both living and non-living).

Norton in his concluding remarks on the need of "integrating of multiple values across multiple levels/dynamics" for structuring workable environmental ethics has argued that "the environmental community must struggle immediately as individuals and indefinitely as a community both to survive and to know". In this process of knowing, he argues, an "inquirer" understands her/his "moral responsibilities" as a knower.

We humans will understand that our moral responsibilities only if we understand the

consequences of our actions as they unfold on multiple scales; and the human community will only survive to further evolve and adapt if we learn to achieve individual welfare in the present in ways that are less disruptive of the processes, evolving on larger Spatio-temporal scales, essential to human and ecological communities. (Norton 1996, 132-133)

As the ecocentric knowledge system understands human existence in relation to the multidimensional ecological structures, it comprehends human agency in relation to the agencies of the other elements of the bio-organic unit known as Earth. That is why, in this knowledge system, dialogue and dialogic relationships are seen as the primary methodology and the principal ethics of inquiry. As a result, the enquiry leads to the inclusion of plural values and context-specific open-ended solutions. Hence, the ecocentric knowledge system continues to evolve with the values related to sustainability and sustenance as human experiences undergo various changes.

From this perspective, indigenous resistance movements can be read as part of that continuous struggle to survive and know. It is this strive for survival and knowledge through dialogic connections and based on the ecocentric values that open up the possibilities for both *Adivasis* of India and *Kānaka Māolis* of Hawai'i to go beyond their cultures.

Conclusion

Indigenous movements against development-induced displacements have revealed the ways eco-centric communities specifically the indigenous communities living within different ecological relationships chose eco-centric living over economic growth to secure the community members' means of sustenance, freedom of choices, and authority over traditional knowledge systems from their epistemic standpoints. The communities have communicated their interpretations of indigenous identities,

sovereignties, and justice through their movements. From the perspective of inclusive development, it is imperative to understand how the communications possess capabilities to collaborate to structure the alternative interpretations of social development that would prioritise ecological sustainability, freedom of choice over sustainable food security and welfare over hardcore (therefore short-sighted) economic growth. If the power of taking decisions regarding liberty and growth is related to justice and equality, the experiences of the different cultural groups have gathered with the change of time and have adapted the transition to their socio-ecological relationships would justify the plurality and evolution of knowledge present in every cultural group. That is why the alternative interpretation of development stand steadfastly on the logic of initiating dialogues among different cultural groups and thus forming an integrated network of knowledge.

The imperative of understanding indigenous interpretations of ecological values in this time of climate crisis is vital as the profit-driven human-made environmental imbalance is the root cause of this most talked about century's danger. The Climate crisis in today's world is that grim reality that the world leaders and development policymakers are finding hard to refute. The general deteriorated condition of this planet's environmental health have gained attention as the growing instability in the climatic condition have affected the idea of resource-centric and technology-dependent unilinear and unlimited economic growth. The powerful nation-states, with their economic growth and powerful military strength, have failed to resolve the financial loss due to heatwaves, irregularities in the rain and snowfall, super cyclones, forest fires, pest attacks, the rise of sea levels.

Moreover, the steady shrinkage in the reserves of fossil fuels and groundwater have posed an impending threat to the idea of linear and unlimited materialistic

growth of human beings. People related to food production are no longer ignorant of the adverse effects of climate change and the failure of profit-centric food production systems.

The narratives of peasants and fishers of the Sundarban delta area would prove how the people related to the agriculture and fishing sectors have been losing interest in their traditional professions as both farming and fishing businesses have been exhausting them physically, financially, and psychologically. The two-pronged strike of unpredictable climate conditions and the technology-based, agribusiness controlled food production system has left the small food producers almost high and dry in food and job securities. That is why people's migration from the villages to the urban spheres is getting rampant.

The transition of small scale food producers into manual labours directly affects the food production system and, in gestalt, affects the retail markets' price. The steady increase in the cost of living leads the consumers of lower and middle economic stratum to compromise with both the quality and the quantity of food. Women bear the price of this compromise most because of the gender discrimination existing in the social, administrative, and economic structures. Ecological empowerment of women is imperative to address existing gender inequality in the realm of food security. The alternative understanding of ecological empowerment is essential as the dominant sense of empowerment over ecology means exploiting the natural world for monetary profit. The issue of inequality and injustice will remain in the latter structure as ecological imbalance; its impact on food production would exist.

The climatic condition that once favoured the growth of technology, capital and dominance of white men's materialist culture on the back of colonialism and

economic imperialism has posed a serious challenge against the economy's monopoly in interpreting the route of human development.

In this context, the pressing issue is to find an alternative interpretation of development. As time passes, the interconnection between ecological balance and human sustenance has become the reality of human existence. Therefore, the need of the time is to envision a future that can balance technology and ecocentrism based on the sustainability principle. “Sustainability principle”, according to Bryan G. Norton, “asserts that each generation has an obligation to protect productive ecological and physical process necessary to support necessary for human freedom and welfare” (Norton 1996, 105-138).

The lens of ecocentrism is pluralistic. From the perspective of the human self's relational existence, the ‘richness of aesthetic experiences’ of individuals belonging to various geographical and cultural locations set forth the discreet sense of values depending on the community members' relationships with their local surroundings. The environmental values share an intimate bond with the carnal principle of sustainability. As securing the “productive ecological and physical process necessary for the freedom and develop cornerstone is human beings' environmental relationships, ecocentrism is essentially pluralistic. The dynamism of ecocentrism lies within the multiple value systems and the sustainability principle attached to them. From the perspective of ecological sustainability of earth and climate change, the imperative of building networks among different local cultures lies in the science of integrated networks of this planet's climate. In his book, *The Great Derangement*, Amitav Ghosh has pointed out how the climatic interrelations have affected the cultural and literary histories of human civilisations in the past. The site of Monogabe states how the destruction of the Amazon rain forest would affect not only the rainfall

of the Amazon region but also the rainfall of Mexico, the Gulf of Mexico, and Texas. The extinction of the Amazon rainforest that plays a significant role in absorbing greenhouse gas would escalate global warming will cause various ecological impacts like sea-level rise, increased storm and hurricane intensity, changes in ocean currents. All these changes are to affect the worldwide system of food production. The scarcity of food, fresh water and habitable place would incur further conflicts not only between human and non-human animals but also among humans. The rising cases of disputes would stall the process of economic growth. The violence that the nation-states are presently directing to the local ecology and ecocentric people will finally return to development advocates' lives. In this light, the communications of the indigenous elders, activists of the Amazon area regarding protecting the biodiversities, forest lands and indigenous knowledge systems of the region's indigenous communities become ecologically crucial for Mexico's farmers, Gulf of Mexico, and Texas. The report published on the site of Monogabe again reestablish the truth that –“we all depend on one biosphere for sustaining our lives” (Sachs 2010). Sachs argues that the phrase acts as the leitmotif of every development idea/ discourse in the present situation of the climate crisis. Therefore the existence of the Amazon rainforest is necessary for the farmers of the Mexico and Texas regions. The importance of coexistence rests on the truth of ecological connectivity. Sachs' emphasis on thinking in terms of coexistence while interpreting coexistence development in the recent time of environmental crisis. He argues,

What links the peoples of the world together is not the rule of civilization anymore or the interplay of demand and supply, but their shared dependence on biophysical life-support systems. The metaphor of spaceship earth captures nicely the gist of this thinking. Consequently, unity is not to be pursued any longer through the spread of progress or the stimulation of productivity, but through securing the necessary system requirements (Sachs 2010, 118-119).

The imperative of connecting with the indigenous understandings of environmental identity, ecological sovereignty, and sustainable cultural evolution rests on the fact that the neoliberal version of economic growth has proven itself acquisitive and misanthropic. Through the dialogic relationships, we can acquire multiple interpretations and distinct creative ways to resolve those problems without compromising the demand for ecological sustainability. To avoid the impending climate catastrophe, we are to envision a global culture that would understand the relational existences of earth-lives scientifically, emotionally, and spiritually. The environmental ethics paired with the ethos of harmonious and reciprocal relationships of human beings with the multi-scalar networks of global ecosystem thus becomes crucial for the future as that would promise to focus on sustaining perennial dialogic relationships among different aesthetic of experiences to proliferate the choices and imaginations of every stakeholder in structuring the courses of the future.

CONCLUSION

The research began to explore the standpoints of the adivasi women on technologically-driven, economically productive development projects that posed the threat of displacements to the village communities from the ancestral village space. The people's movements they led took up the slogan of saving the three major life-lines of the adivasi villagers -jal-jangal-jameen. Some of the pro-development lobbyists marked that demand of the adivasi people as the reactions of the primitive people who were way behind the civilisational (read technological) progress. Some thought about reworking the rehabilitation and resettlement programmes meant for mainstreaming the economically marginal and technologically regressive displaced people. However, the state administrative bodies chose to implement coercive force to dissuade the protesting villagers (Sundar, Kumar, Gupta, Dungdung). In reality, the projects and the solutions proposed, planned and implemented to put the villagers in the line of economic growth failed miserably (Mehta, Porter, Sundar, Padel, Barla, Nathan, Fernandes). The physical, psychological, social, and economic conditions of the displaced villagers or the villagers living within the vicinity of the project sites were downgraded. The oral testimonies of the displaced people collected by Dayamani Barla show that the alienation from the village's ecological surroundings played a pivotal role in the overall down gradation of the displaced adivasi villagers. The sense of losing adivasiyat or adivasi identity and capability as providers was dominant, specifically among women.

Dayamani Barla, Munni Hansda, and Nandi Kachhap have also expressed the same fear of losing livelihood and adivasi sense of being acted as the primal driving force behind the movements of Khunti, Kathikund, and Nagri. The sentiment has played the role of the dominant motif in the collected oral narratives. The motif has

pointed out that in the oral histories of the adivasi villagers' resistance movements, *jal-jangal-jameen* is the theme of the collected oral histories. Exploration of the layered meanings of *jal-jangal-jameen* in relation to the adivasi villagers' resistance movements against development-induced displacements has revealed that the inclusion of ecological relationships of the villagers is one of the imperative factors in understanding the adivasi dissension against development project plannings.

Bringing the ecological dimension in reading oral texts has proved that the social identity of adivasi villagers is intrinsically related to the local ecology. The adivasi cultures, the way of living and understanding life have developed the skill to weave local ecology with social life intricately. Thus ascertaining the social identity of the adivasi people without considering the importance of the local environment would be erroneous from the beginning. Unfortunately, while assessing the condition of the adivasi people in the development index, the policymakers focussed on the economic status quo of the village communities. The epistemology that the adivasi people have developed knowledge about maintaining the balance between ecology and social well-being has remained beneath economic development hubris.

The historical, social, and cultural meanings of *jal-jangal-jameen* to adivasi narrators hold a sense of freedom that, as argued by Sen, exists at the centre of the development idea. Therefore, local ecological understandings of the adivasi villagers stand in gestalt with the adivasi way of perceiving progress. Therefore, finding a balance between ecology and economy, technological advancement, and people's freedom of making choices should be the primary emphasis of any development projects.

The increasing threat of environmental crisis has already established that the appeal of finding a pragmatic balance between ecology and human civilisation is a

concern of immense importance. The arguments for finding a balanced structure of human progress that would advocate for mutual collaboration among the various class, caste, gender, race, nation, and metaphysical and empirical understandings are not new in the development theories. However, arranging the future development plannings following the conditions of polyphony demands a more careful focus on the relationships the community members hold with their surroundings at various levels.

The oral narratives of the adivasi women representing their communities' collective interpretation of the jal-jangal-jameen substantiate the rationale of the ecological relationships in forming the cultural identities of the societies. The accounts also point out that the idea of freedom and prosperity attached to the logic of development includes the health of the surrounding environment.

In the context of freedom and well-being, the so-called economically impoverished indigenous communities have communicated through their protest movements how their sense of security and capability thrive on the existence of local ecology. To the villagers, specifically women, the village ecology in gestalt stands as the symbol of food security. The women who are the primary caregivers of their families possess the optimum knowledge of utilising natural sources. Their skill of collaboration with other female members of the village and their ecological knowledge make them efficient providers and proficient caretakers. The ethics of environmental sustainability that these caretakers maintain in their everyday life and have turned the practice into cultural expression has its root in cognising jal-jangal-jameen as the source of sustenance.

Identifying self in relation to the environment thus emerges as a part of bare necessity, and the collective conviction around that identity has grown with time. It

has not just happened in a day. Like the evolutionary process, the adivasi /indigenous metaphysical views on maintaining the ethics of sustainable utilisation of the local ecology have passed the trial of time and proved to be the main instrument of nurturing their status quo as self-reliant communities. The sense of freedom attached to the status-quo of self-reliance, which is again intrinsically connected to the community members' close relationships with the local ecology, is the driving force behind indigenous existence, identity, culture and sense of development. Therefore development projects that do not care about safeguarding the ecological prosperity of the indigenous communities appear coercive to the communities.

The knowledge systems about the local ecological species stored in the indigenous communities' collective memories in their vocabularies face a severe threat of obliteration when the development project induced displacements roots the people out from their surroundings and village networks (Sen 2008). With that, what gets eroded is the knowledge of maintaining a delicate balance between ecological sustenance and human prosperity. Undermining the destruction of local expertise with the logic of survival of the fittest is fatal for the progress of human civilisation in general. The g as the blind faith over the power of technological development could no longer secure the well-being of every citizen leading a modern life which denies its dependency on the ecological structure of this planet for the last hundred years.

The myth of replacing the ecological crisis with human-made technology and economic progress has been falling apart visibly for quite a long time in the food and health sectors. For example, Rachel Carson has shown in her book *Silent Spring* the negative effect of using pesticides in the economy-driven monocropping culture. The denial of the influence of local ecological networks in the food production systems

has caused accumulation of poison in the human bodies and created depletion of groundwater level, reduction of fertile lands, and shortage of healthy local food resources. These ecological problems, in turn, spawn social and political issues like unemployment, labourer migration, farmers' suicides, civil unrest, hate crimes, social and economic exploitation, economic instability, lifestyle diseases, woman and child abuse, and weaker human resources. A bird's eye view over our present threat to our daily life (even if we only zoom our focus in the zone of safe food and politics of corporate-controlled agribusiness) would be enough to realise the inefficacy of determining/ interpreting prosperity or progress only through the lens of financial profitability.

Under the code of materialist culture, the thinkers and policymakers controlling the arenas of the state-administrative offices, trade centres, institutions, and social lives have adhered to the market-centric value system. The value system is flawed as it does not possess any means to cognise the value of anything outside market-centric cognition. The imperatives of maintaining the local ecology's biodiversity to strengthen the local communities' overall well-being thus get neglected in this value system. As it has overlooked the interdependency between the biodiversity, local knowledge system, physical, psychological, aesthetic sense of freedom and making choices and its cumulative impact on the quality and sustainability of the global network of the consumerist market economy, the system has failed not only to render social and ecological justice to the class, caste, race, gender living at the socio-economic margin, but also has put the future of human existence in peril.

It is high time to understand that human existence, even its cognitive progress, is not independent of the diversified local ecosystems. On the contrary, the local ecosystems' multidimensional networks shape the global ecological structure.

The agroecology discipline has already pointed out the dangerous and far-reaching effects of ignoring the local ecological network for the sake of profit-oriented monocropping. The overemphasis on the three major elements of the soil over the ecological networks between the peasants and farm products has affected society. The high yield in the fields has failed to address the problem of hunger and unemployment. Therefore, the grand development myth, which poses economic growth as the panacea to cure social ailments like economic inequalities and unemployment, has lost its ground.

The projects, on the one hand, deny the ecological rights of the people over the local biodiversities as thousands of acres of forests, grazing and farmlands, mountains, and water bodies go to development projects. Losing the ecological rights turn the people from environmental solvency to ecological penury. The state of impoverishment begins when a community loses its freedom to engage with the existing knowledge system. The elders cannot pass on their knowledge repertoire to the next generation. The children also lose their chance to amplify their ancestral expertise according to the need of the time. Thus, in the long run, they lose a considerable amount of vocabulary and the meanings of those words from the collective memories, skills of collectively and sustainably utilising the knowledge of local ecology, and the ability to recognise the reasons existing behind the cultural ethics. These losses affect the creative ingenuity of the people. As a result, the people exhaust the capability to envision futures on their terms. With this capability-shrinkage, the community members are forced to accept the interpretations and

imaginings of the dominant others. The people's inability to conceive a destiny according to the communities' cultural ethos, knowledge and practice cause their servitude. The cultural subjection of the indigenous people

The culture of nurturing a delicate balance of harmony between the individuals and collective, men and women, human and non-human species, ecology and economy, succumb to the idea of modern living. The colonial enslavement of the indigenous communities began from the abysmal state of creative barrenness and social sterility.

The annihilation of any indigenous knowledge will put closure to the cultural diversities. Replacement of diversified cultures and knowledge systems with the materialist culture that has proven itself lesser pragmatic in environmental sustainability and rendering absolute justice (securing the lives and freedom) to all the lives still thriving on this planet. By saying so, I in no account oppose technological progress's positive side. However, on the other hand, I try to point out how the dogmatism attached to the autonomous existence of the omnipotent machines proffers crisis in ecological sustainability, social dynamism and diversified knowledge systems.

In the present time, shifting towards an outlook that envisages humans as the stewards of the planet Earth is the call of the future. We need to understand that local communities living in close relationships with the local biodiversities have developed knowledge bases to manage the local biodiversities in ways that have combined ethics with progress and justice with innovation. For example, the indigenous farmers who have accumulated the knowledge of producing high-yielding paddy seeds (seeds like Bahubrihi) in India have tried to address the issue of food security for their communities without trammelling the ecological balance of that region (Pal 2018).

The seeds thus made hardly need tons of chemical pesticides for their fruition. Therefore, the general health of the consumers who are also part of the ecology remains unharmed in this process. Technologies that would sustain and proliferate the ethos, imagination and objectivity of the knowledge would induce symbiotic synthesis of the knowledge systems.

The histories of human civilisations have already established the intrinsic relationships among cultural amalgamations, synthesis of knowledge systems and revolutionary changes in the political, social, cultural, and technological domains. European rationalists could not experience the illuminating era renaissance had they not gotten the opportunity to establish cultural contacts with the Ottoman empire's culture. Before the advent of European colonial culture, the military might of the ruling races/ nations/ communities paid least or no attention to structuring the cultures of all the subjects as per the culture of the rulers. The cultural dynamism still existing in the Indian subcontinent is the evidence of such synthesis.

The variant folk genres existing in the mainland of India, where the Hindu caste system is dominant, prove that even the most abhorrent form of oppression could not rob the people living at the margins of the creative ability to envision a more justifiable future. The literary traditions representing the ordinary people's perspectives show the people's ability to criticise the oppressive rulers, religious preachers, and traders with the utmost ingenuity. It will not be an exaggeration if I claim that the codes exchanged between the addressers and the addressee through those literary creations acted as the catalyst to structure people's uprisings against every state of oppression.

The variances available in the oral and written traditions like *Raam Katha* reveal the copiousness of that literary genre has existed in the adherence of different

interpretations of *Raam* made by various composers from their discreet cultural perspectives. The different variations of *Raam* available in the Indian literary tradition have resisted the political manipulation of a single interpretation of Raam and, at the same time, have empowered the posterity with the alternative conceptions of *Raam*. The alternative meanings of *Raam* have, in other ways, resisted the predominance of one version of *Raam* even if propagated by the dominant sections of the Indian society. The tradition of Raam Katha is a living example that shows the imperative of alternative interpretation.

In the development discourse domain, the indigenous people's experiences and viewpoints represented in their narratives or other literary creations provide alternative interpretations of development. Preserving the ecological identities of the communities becomes necessary as the community members' ecological relationships form the basis of their cultures. The displaced and disintegrated villagers who lose all their cultural contacts with the local ecology, knowledge system, and freedom of making choices over interpretation, amalgamation, and expression as per their cultural ethos lose the power to exercise their creative power to subvert the interpretation of the dominant. The true nature of the colonised mind is the one that loses their rights to predict the future. The servitude of the body becomes inevitable after the colonisation of the mind. The hegemony of the dominant culture finds its authoritative power within the colonised society.

The culture of economic development generated in the global north/ western Europe and America has extended its cultural hegemony on the global south by projecting technological progress. A financial profit-centric market economy is the ultimate denominator of progress. The local ecocentric indigenous communities have borne this hegemony's cost as they suffered dislocations and alienations from the

local biodiversities, ecological knowledge regarding food security and self-reliance. The elders who, after displacements, appear as economically valueless appendages of the families are the living repertoires of the cultural knowledge systems that the indigenous people have accumulated, proliferated, interpreted and reinterpreted through generations. The village elders fail to pass that knowledge and abilities to create alternative interpretations to the next generations due to a lack of biodiversities, ecological relationships, the mounting pressure of the competitive labour market, and psychological depression. The displaced indigenous posteriority not only loses their knowledge but, more importantly, they suffer from the loss of creating interpretations from their cultural perspectives. The actual colonisation and impoverishment of the indigenous communities began from this point. The situation also initiates the shrinkage of indigenous sovereignty, that is, the freedom of interpretation and choice.

The dispossession of indigenous posteriority from their freedom of expression appears favourable for the powerful and establishment of the monoculture of the economically powerful "west"(Shiva). That situation not only put closure to the existence of local knowledge but blocks any future possibility of synthesising technological progress with ecological sustainability. The chance of breaking the dominant power-knowledge nexus shrinks with the loss of local knowledge systems. The alternative way of interpreting and restructuring development ideas lies in the endeavours that would try to build networks among local knowledge systems without denigrating the value and rights of the local knowledge producers. Decentralisation of power is intrinsically related to or 'democratisation' (Shiva)

There is a need to emphasise building a dialogic communication that would stand on the ethos of a harmonious relationship (Munda) to make the collaborative

network possible. In other words, the two primary principles of this dialogic communication are cognition regarding the limits of acquired knowledge and understanding of our relationships on the ecological network of this planet. These two conditions are mutually dependent. Even with our access to technological progress, it will be hard for us to understand the indigenous villagers' epistemic standpoints and esoteric knowledge. They possess discreet experiences, cognitive abilities, and interpretational abilities due to their cultural and ecological locations. In addition, the profound emotional attachments that the ecosystem people share with the landscape would be hard to decipher from the epistemic and cultural backgrounds that have visualised ecology either as appendages or the raw materials supplier to human progress.

The latter must start a dialogue with the former groups of people to know the nuances of sustainable ways of living. Listening, understanding, clearing the doubts, restructuring the meanings of the existing cognitions and exchanging the views are part of the dialogic process that eventually leads to the discussion. The method of building bridges across the distinct cultural and epistemic locations, the course of synthesis, begins.

Engaged listening also is a medium to understand how every existence is essentially relational. Ecological farming methods show how various environmental and social factors affect food production. The networks of people between the farmers and consumers with no direct relation to farming experiences are also essential elements of intricately woven food networks. Overexploitation of any part of that network bears the fatal future of insecurity and socio-political instability. Overexploitation means disrupting the ecological balance through excessive human intervention. The insects, birds, small animals, and aquatic creatures that generally

maintain the delicate balance between the quality, quantity, and economic profitability of the harvest suffer most from such intensive farming techniques. The agriculture policymakers who believe in the omnipotence of the white man's technological progress ignore the science behind sustainable agriculture and favour the corporate-controlled laboratory-conditioned intensive agricultural system, which is unsustainable and hazardous. The soil fertility gets eroded, pest attacks increase, the excess need for water affects the groundwater level, and the toxic elements present in the pesticides increase the number of cancer patients among the farmers and the consumers. The policymakers' general lack of listening to the experiences of the farmers and the attitude of viewing farming as unskilled work has played havoc in the agricultural sectors of India. Besides the rising number of farmers' suicide, the next generations of the small peasant families do not interpret farming as an economically profitable and socially respectable profession. The effect of climate change is adding to the woes of the farmers. In the Sundarban area, the average age of farmers is forty-plus. If the trend persists, the existence of small farmers will vanish after twenty to thirty years. That would eventually affect the price of food and would engender more social division and social unrest. The imperative of maintaining harmonious relationships lies in the cognition that our existence is relational and interdependent.

The awareness of the relational network's value sustains human existence and encourages conscious people to structure their ethos and culture around the care norms. These cognizant groups of people become careful about maintaining the delicate balance of the relational existence. They also become active participants in the acts of caring for those relationships that they value. Those two axioms of ecocentric culture build the foundation of ecological activism.

Indigenous women have expressed their dissension of the economic development projects strongly because of their awareness regarding the values of biodiversities available in the forests, common lands, farmlands, and waterways, as well as the village kinship structures in providing food shelter and personal security. Their narratives of resistance movements communicate their sense of care towards those valued relationships.

Hence, every endeavour to get the alternative meanings of development needs to understand how the addressers deliver their sense of care in their messages. Unlike the ethnographers, the researchers, thinkers, and activists who want to rebuild development discourse around the imperatives of sustainability and equal opportunity of exercising freedom of choices for all must focus on why and how people have structured their value system and sense of care in relation to their local ecological relationships. Simultaneously, there is a need to register how the adaptations of new ideas in the traditional value systems encourage community members to restructure and reinterpret their sense of care.

The challenge is to understand that dynamism is part of ecological evolution. Hence every alternative development strategy would need to structure and restructure itself according to the demands of time, place, and local communities. That is why the imperative of nurturing the networks of dialogues seems the only static principle in the quest for the alternative discourse of development.

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3. Kachhap, Nandi, interview by Sudeshna Dutta. 26th April 2016, 16th September, 2016.
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