

BAUXITE, HUNGER AND TRIBAL RESISTANCE IN KASHIPUR

Dr. Kuntala Soy

Head Department of History, Talcher Autonomous College

ABSTRACT

Kashipur, a predominantly tribal block in the Rayagada district of Odisha, holds one of India's richest bauxite deposits on the Baphlimali plateau. Yet, through the late 1990s and into the 2000s, the same region was regularly cited in reports of acute hunger, starvation deaths and entrenched poverty. This paper examines this profound contradiction and asks why a mineral-rich region continued to experience severe deprivation even as large industrial investments were being proposed and partly advanced. Drawing on secondary evidence, field-based accounts and existing literature on tribal communities in eastern India, the paper argues that the Kashipur movement was not simply a resistance against bauxite mining. It was, more fundamentally, a response to a development model that extracted resources from tribal landscapes while leaving behind hunger, displacement and broken livelihoods. The paper applies political ecology, resource curse theory and a tribal rights perspective to an eastern Indian context that has received far less scholarly attention than comparable cases in Latin America or Africa. The concept of developmental exclusion is introduced to describe how communities become embedded in large-scale development projects yet remain systematically excluded from their benefits. The paper concludes that Kashipur offers a powerful lens through which to understand the wider failure of extractive development in indigenous India.

KEYWORDS: *bauxite Mining, Tribal Displacement, Resource Curse, Political Ecology, Developmental Exclusion, Odisha, Kashipur, UAIL, PSSP.*

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INTRODUCTION

In the early years of the twenty-first century, Kashipur appeared in two entirely different kinds of news reports. One set of reports celebrated the region as a storehouse of bauxite wealth, a site where India's expanding aluminium industry could anchor its future. The other set of reports described families going to bed hungry, children showing signs of severe malnutrition and occasional deaths that investigators attributed to starvation. That both sets of reports were describing the same place, at roughly the same time, is not simply a disturbing coincidence. It is a question that demands serious intellectual engagement.

India's economic liberalisation after 1991 fundamentally altered the landscape of natural resource governance. The state increasingly positioned itself as a facilitator of private industrial investment, and mineral-rich tribal regions became especially attractive to national and transnational capital.¹ Odisha, with its vast deposits of bauxite, iron ore and coal, found itself at the centre of this new dispensation. In the decade following liberalisation, the Odisha government signed dozens of memoranda of understanding with mining and industrial corporations, promising infrastructure, employment and revenue generation as dividends of development.²

Kashipur was among the earliest and most contested of these sites. The Baphlimali plateau, which overlooks the Kashipur block, holds an estimated 150 million tonnes of high-grade bauxite. The state government, along with Utkal Alumina International Limited (UAIL), a joint venture that eventually involved Norsk Hydro, Alcan and later Hindalco, proposed to mine the plateau and establish an alumina refinery in the plains below. The investment figures ran into thousands of crores of rupees. The promise was simple: industrial activity would bring growth, and growth would lift living standards.

That promise never materialised for the people who actually lived on and around Baphlimali. What materialised instead was the threat of land acquisition, the dismantling of forest-based livelihoods, the anxiety of an uncertain future and, eventually, a sustained movement of resistance led largely by the Kondh tribal communities of the area. The movement, organised principally through the Prakrutik Sampada Suraksha Parishad (PSSP), was non-violent, culturally rooted and strategically sophisticated. It drew national and international attention and became one of the defining cases in India's long debate over the meaning of development.

This paper takes Kashipur as its primary case and works outward from it. The central research questions are three. First, why did industrial investment fail to reduce deprivation in Kashipur? Second, how did the plans for large-scale mining reshape local perceptions of what development actually means? Third, why did resistance emerge with such intensity in a region that was officially being offered the gift of growth? To address these questions, the paper draws on published scholarship, government data, movement literature and journalistic accounts. The method is interpretive and synthesising, bringing together evidence across disciplines to construct an argument that no single strand of the existing literature has fully made.

UNDERSTANDING THE RESOURCE RICH BUT POOR PARADOX

The idea that natural resource wealth tends to produce economic stagnation rather than prosperity has a long pedigree in development economics. Richard Auty, writing in the early 1990s, coined the term *resource curse* to describe the counterintuitive pattern he observed across several mineral-exporting nations: the greater their dependence on extractive income, the weaker their long-run development outcomes.³ Terry Lynn Karl later extended this analysis by showing how oil revenues in particular tended to consolidate rentier states that were structurally insulated from the productive social demands of their populations.⁴ The resource curse, in these formulations, was primarily a macro-level failure, a problem of fiscal structures and political incentives at the national scale.

¹Nandini Sundar, "Babus, Dalals and Dikus: Anthropology, Tribal Welfare and the State in Bastar," in *A Subaltern Studies Reader*, ed. Ranajit Guha (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 42.

²Walter Fernandes, "Sixty Years of Development-Induced Displacement in India," in *Interrogating Development: Insights from the Northeast*, ed. Walter Fernandes and Sanjay Barbora (Guwahati: NESRC, 2008), 89.

³Richard Auty, *Sustaining Development in Mineral Economies: The Resource Curse Thesis* (London: Routledge, 1993), 1–15.

⁴Terry Lynn Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 7.

Political ecology offers a different and, for this paper, more productive analytical lens. Rather than treating resource wealth as an abstract aggregate, political ecology asks who controls resources, under what institutional arrangements and with what distributional consequences.⁵ Anthony Bebbington and colleagues, working across the Andean highlands, showed persuasively that resource extraction tends to generate deeply uneven geographies of benefit and cost, with local and indigenous communities absorbing environmental and social disruption while surplus is captured by corporations, states and distant investors.⁶ Amita Baviskar's foundational work in the Narmada Valley drew attention to how development itself becomes a field of struggle, with state and corporate visions of modernity colliding against place-based, livelihood-centred understandings of what it means to live well.⁷

A tribal rights perspective adds a dimension that is often absent from both resource curse economics and political ecology. For indigenous and tribal communities, land is rarely merely an economic asset. It is the material foundation of culture, identity and spiritual life. The prospect of losing land is therefore experienced not only as an economic threat but as an existential one.⁸ This is particularly acute in the Kondh communities of Odisha, where relationships with specific hills, forests and watercourses are woven into the fabric of religious practice, oral tradition and collective memory.

Most of the scholarship applying these theoretical frameworks has focused on Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia. Sub-Saharan Africa has generated the largest body of resource curse literature, and the Andean region has produced important work in political ecology. Eastern India's tribal regions, despite offering some of the most striking examples of mineral wealth coexisting with persistent poverty, remain comparatively under-studied in these frameworks. This paper's contribution lies partly in applying these lenses to Kashipur, and partly in extending them through the concept of developmental exclusion. The concept moves beyond displacement to capture the systemic way in which people are incorporated into development as its objects and its costs, but excluded from it as its beneficiaries.

KASHIPUR BEFORE MINING

Kashipur is a community development block in the Rayagada district of southern Odisha. The block sits in the foothills of the Eastern Ghats, a landscape of forested hills, seasonal streams and small valleys where pockets of flat land support rainfed cultivation. The dominant communities are Kondh, along with smaller numbers of other Scheduled Tribe groups and Scheduled Caste communities. In the 2001 census, Scheduled Tribes accounted for over 70 percent of the population of the Rayagada district, and within Kashipur block the proportion was higher still.⁹

The livelihoods of Kashipur's tribal communities were, before the arrival of mining proposals, fundamentally shaped by two intersecting systems: rainfed agriculture on small and often fragmented landholdings, and the gathering of forest produce from the surrounding hills and forests. Paddy cultivation was the primary agricultural activity, though yields were modest and vulnerable to rainfall variability. Mahua flowers, kendu leaves, sal seeds, tamarind and a range of wild roots and tubers were gathered seasonally and served both as food and as sources of modest cash income through sale in local markets.¹⁰

⁵Paul Robbins, *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012), 13–21.

⁶Anthony Bebbington, "Extractive Industries and Stunted States: Conflict, Responsibility and Institutional Change in the Andes," in *Transnational Companies and the Construction of the Global*, ed. R. Raman and R. Lipschutz (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), 97.

⁷Amita Baviskar, *In the Belly of the River: Tribal Conflicts over Development in the Narmada Valley* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), 34.

⁸Lyla Mehta, ed., *The Limits to Scarcity: Contesting the Politics of Allocation* (London: Earthscan, 2010), 54.

⁹Government of Orissa, *District Statistical Handbook: Rayagada* (Bhubaneswar: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, 2001), 14–18.

¹⁰Debaranjan Sarangi and Nagbhushan Patnaik, *Kashipur: A People's Struggle against Displacement and Destruction* (Bhubaneswar: Agramee, 2002), 22–27.

These were not idyllic or comfortable livelihoods. Poverty in Kashipur before mining was real, documented and substantial. District statistics from the late 1990s placed Rayagada among the lowest-ranked districts in Odisha on indicators of per capita income, literacy, health outcomes and infrastructure.¹¹ Malnutrition among children was widespread. Primary health centres were few, understaffed and poorly supplied. Road connectivity to interior villages was poor, limiting access to markets and services. Literacy rates, particularly among women, were well below state and national averages.¹²

Table 1: Summarises the Pre-Mining Conditions in the Region

Table 1: Socioeconomic Conditions in Kashipur Before Mining Proposals

Indicator	Situation Before Mining
Main livelihood	Subsistence agriculture and forest gathering
Population composition	Predominantly Kondh and other Scheduled Tribe groups
Health facilities	Sparse; one primary health centre per multiple villages
Irrigation coverage	Less than 15 percent of cultivable land
Road connectivity	Largely absent in interior villages
Literacy rate	Below 30 percent among adult tribal population
Poverty incidence	Among the highest in Odisha

Two points bear emphasis here. First, the deprivation visible in Kashipur before the arrival of mining proposals was itself partly a product of historical neglect. The Indian state had not invested meaningfully in education, healthcare or agricultural development in this region for decades after independence. The scheduled areas that included Kashipur were governed under constitutional provisions that promised special protections and developmental attention, but actual implementation was consistently weak.¹³

Second, and critically for the argument of this paper, the poverty of Kashipur before mining did not mean that communities lacked resources or capabilities. Tribal livelihood systems were resilient and adaptive within the ecological conditions of the region. Forests provided food security during lean seasons. Common lands supported livestock. The very hills that industrial planners viewed as bauxite reserves were, for the communities below them, sources of water, fodder and spiritual meaning. Pre-existing poverty was real, but it was not a condition that made local people passive recipients of whatever development others might offer them.¹⁴

BAUXITE WEALTH AND INDUSTRIAL AMBITIONS

The Baphlimali plateau, rising to approximately 1,400 metres above the plains of Kashipur, holds one of India's highest-quality bauxite deposits. Surveys conducted by the Geological Survey of India estimated reserves of around 150 million tonnes. The bauxite is of high alumina content and relatively shallow depth, making it technically accessible and commercially attractive.¹⁵ In an India pursuing rapid industrial growth after 1991, and with a global aluminium market hungry for raw material, this deposit attracted attention from some of the world's largest corporations.

¹¹Pradip Prabhu, "Tribal Land Rights: Political Economy of Alienation and Resistance in Scheduled Areas of India," *Economic and Political Weekly* 38, no. 41 (2003): 4316.

¹²Sushmita Pati, "Starvation, Development and Dispossession: Understanding the Kashipur Crisis," *Social Change* 33, no. 2 (2003): 72–86.

¹³Manoranjan Mohanty, "Tribal Movements and the Developmental Paradox: Notes from Odisha," *Sociological Bulletin* 53, no. 1 (2004): 108.

¹⁴Oxfam India, *Land Acquisition, Displacement and Livelihoods in Odisha* (New Delhi: Oxfam India, 2012), 31–35.

¹⁵Smita Gupta, "UAIL and the Politics of Extraction: Anatomy of a Mining Dispute," *Economic and Political Weekly* 38, no. 33 (2003): 3489–3493.

The central corporate actor in Kashipur was Utkal Alumina International Limited (UAIL). UAIL was structured as a joint venture that evolved over time but included at various stages Norsk Hydro of Norway, Alcan of Canada and Indian partners. The plan was integrated: mine bauxite from Baphlimali, transport it to a refinery in the Doraguda area of Kashipur block, produce alumina, and eventually connect this to a smelter elsewhere. The proposed investment for the refinery alone ran to several thousand crores of rupees. ALCOA, the American aluminium giant, also proposed a presence in the region. The Aditya Birla Group, through its Hindalco subsidiary, made overlapping proposals for adjacent areas.¹⁶

Table 2: Summarises the Major Industrial Proposals in the Kashipur Area

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Project	Company	Proposed Investment (approx.)	Area Affected
Baphlimali Bauxite Mine	UAIL (Utkal Alumina International Ltd.)	Rs 4,000 crore (initial phase)	Rayagada and Koraput districts
Alumina Refinery	UAIL (joint venture with Norsk Hydro and Alcan)	Integrated with above	Doraguda area, Kashipur block
Greenfield Smelter	ALCOA (proposed)	Multi-billion dollar	Kashipur region
Aluminium Complex	Aditya Birla Group (Hindalco)	Rs 2,500 crore (proposed)	Adjacent tribal land parcels

The Odisha state government was, through the late 1990s and early 2000s, broadly supportive of these proposals. Mineral-based industrialisation was presented as the solution to the state's own fiscal difficulties and its persistent development challenges. Government rhetoric framed the Kashipur projects as a historic opportunity: investment, employment, revenue and transformation. The region would be lifted out of backwardness by the momentum of industrial modernity.¹⁷

What this framing systematically obscured was a fundamental difference in perspective. For the planners, engineers and investors who looked at Kashipur from outside, the Baphlimali plateau was a mineral zone, an inert geological deposit awaiting industrial activation. For the Kondh communities who had lived alongside and on Baphlimali for generations, it was something altogether different. Baphlimali was not simply land containing bauxite. It was a living landscape. The streams that flowed from the plateau irrigated fields below. The forests on its slopes supplied food and medicine. The hill itself held a place in Kondh cosmology and ritual life. The divergence between these two ways of seeing the same terrain was not incidental to the conflict that followed.¹⁸

It is also important to note that the scale of industrial planning was entirely incommensurate with the social and institutional capacities of the region. The refinery, if built at full capacity, would have required enormous water supplies in an already water-stressed area. Power requirements would have been substantial. The workforce for skilled operations was expected to come largely from outside the region. The promised local employment was likely to be dominated by unskilled construction work, which is temporary by nature. Once the construction phase ended, the industrial complex would have employed relatively few local people permanently.

¹⁶Sanjay Basu Mallick, "Land, Identity and Resistance: The Case of Kashipur," *Indian Journal of Human Development* 1, no. 2 (2007): 303–318.

¹⁷Felix Padel and Samarendra Das, *Out of This Earth: East India Adivasis and the Aluminium Cartel* (New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2010), 113–130.

¹⁸Ramachandra Guha and Joan Martinez-Alier, *Varieties of Environmentalism: Essays North and South* (London: Earthscan, 1997), 18.

DEVELOPMENT FOR WHOM

Any serious accounting of the Kashipur mining proposals must begin with a clear-eyed look at who would lose what, and who stood to gain. The evidence on this question is, when examined carefully, deeply troubling for the official narrative of development and transformation.

Land acquisition for the UAIL refinery and related infrastructure affected thousands of acres across multiple villages. Estimates from different sources vary, but the broad picture is consistent: several thousand households faced the loss of agricultural land, common land or forest land they depended on for survival. Among those affected, Scheduled Tribe communities were overwhelmingly the most exposed.¹⁹ This is not surprising given the demographic character of the region, but it matters enormously for any assessment of developmental equity. The communities with the least political and economic leverage, with the most direct dependence on land-based livelihoods and with constitutional protections that were supposed to shield them from exactly this kind of dispossession, were the ones bearing the heaviest burden.

Table 3: Presents the Distribution of Displacement and Land Loss by Social Category

Table 3: Distribution of Displacement and Land Loss by Social Category

Land Category	Households Affected (approx.)	Area Acquired (approx. acres)	Primary Livelihood Lost
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	Over 2,500	Largest share (est. 60%+)	Agriculture and forest produce
Scheduled Caste (SC)	Approx. 300	Moderate share	Tenancy farming and wage labour
Other communities	Approx. 200	Smaller share	Mixed agriculture and trade
Total (all categories)	Over 3,000 households	Several thousand acres	Multi-livelihood loss

These numbers require interpretation, not merely tabulation. Tribal land in Odisha's scheduled areas was supposed to be protected from alienation under the Orissa Scheduled Areas Transfer of Immovable Property (OSATIP) Regulation of 1956, as well as the broader framework of the Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. In practice, these protections were systematically circumvented. Land was reclassified, acquisition procedures were rushed and consultation requirements were either ignored or conducted as formality rather than genuine engagement.²⁰

Beyond the immediate question of land acquisition, there is the larger question of what development was actually offering. The rhetoric of employment creation was central to official justifications. Yet the employment arithmetic was consistently unfavourable for local tribal communities. Skilled and supervisory positions in aluminium refining require technical education that most residents of Kashipur lacked and that the state had made no serious effort to provide. Unskilled labour would have been absorbed during construction but shed afterward. The service sector opportunities generated by an industrial complex tend to favour communities with pre-existing educational capital, market access and social networks, none of which the Kondh communities of Kashipur possessed in abundance.²¹

¹⁹Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 87–89.

²⁰World Bank, *Development and Human Rights: The Role of the World Bank* (Washington DC: World Bank, 1998), 12.

²¹K. Balagopal, "Physiognomy of Violence," *Economic and Political Weekly* 41, no. 22 (2006): 2183–2186.

The question the paper's title implicitly poses, development for whom, admits of a fairly clear answer when the displacement data are read against the employment projections. The burdens of development fell overwhelmingly on tribal communities. The benefits, whether jobs, tax revenue or industrial output, were expected to flow primarily elsewhere, to the corporation's shareholders, to the state treasury and to downstream industries operating far from Kashipur. This asymmetry is not incidental to the logic of extractive development.²²

Tribal land in the constitutional sense carries the weight not only of subsistence farming but of a bundle of rights and relationships that formal acquisition procedures were simply not designed to recognise. When a tribal community loses access to a forest slope, it loses not a parcel with a market value but a system of food production, medicine, spiritual practice and social reproduction that cannot be compensated through cash payments or alternative employment promises.

HUNGER, LIVELIHOOD LOSS AND DEVELOPMENTAL EXCLUSION

The most striking and, in a sense, the most damning aspect of the Kashipur story is the documented occurrence of acute hunger and starvation-related deaths in a region where thousands of crores of rupees of industrial investment were being planned. Understanding how this happened requires going beyond the immediate facts of land acquisition to examine how tribal food systems actually worked, and how the cumulative pressures generated by mining plans and the anticipatory disorder they created undermined those systems.

Tribal communities in Kashipur did not depend on a single resource or a single livelihood strategy. Their food security rested on an intricate web of complementary activities and resources, each of which contributed to household nutrition at different times of year and under different weather conditions.²³ Agriculture on rainfed plots produced paddy and minor millets. Forests supplied mahua flowers, which are both a food and a fermenting ingredient, alongside kendu leaves for sale, sal seeds for oil, tamarind and a variety of wild tubers and leafy greens. Streams and ponds supported small-scale fishing.

Table 4: Maps the Functions of these Traditional Resource Systems

Table 4: Traditional Resource Systems and Their Functions in Tribal Food Security

Traditional Resource	Function in Local Food and Livelihood System
Forest produce (mahua, kendu, sal seeds)	Direct food source and seasonal income
Agricultural land (rainfed)	Primary grain production for household consumption
Streams and minor water bodies	Irrigation support and freshwater access
Common and community land	Grazing, fuelwood and supplementary cultivation
Hill slopes (podu cultivation)	Rotational farming integral to tribal food systems
Wild roots and tubers	Critical famine food during dry seasons

The significance of this web is that it was deeply resilient. If the paddy crop failed due to drought, forests could provide emergency food. If forest produce was scarce in a particular season, common lands could yield supplementary nutrition. The system had built-in redundancies that protected communities against individual shocks.²⁴

²²Mahesh Rangarajan and Ghazala Shahabuddin, "Displacement and Relocation from Protected Areas: Towards a Biological and Historical Understanding," *Conservation and Society* 4, no. 3 (2006): 359–378.

²³Debarajan Sarangi, "The Kashipur Movement: Resistance and the Right to Livelihood," in *Dispossession and Resistance in India*, ed. Malini Bhattacharya (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2008), 64.

²⁴Vasudha Dhagamwar, *Law, Power and Justice: The Protection of Personal Rights in the Indian Penal Code* (New Delhi: Sage, 1992), 79.

What mining proposals and the disturbances associated with their advance did was systematically erode this redundancy. Land surveys and acquisition proceedings created uncertainty over property rights. Families were reluctant to invest labour in fields whose ownership status was in question. Forest access became contested as the state asserted rights over areas it intended to include in project zones. Common lands were subjected to competing claims. Even before a single tonne of bauxite was extracted, the anticipatory disorder generated by industrial planning had begun to disrupt the livelihood systems that stood between Kashipur's tribal communities and hunger.²⁵

Against this backdrop, the reported hunger and starvation deaths of the late 1990s and early 2000s become intelligible not as isolated misfortunes or failures of individual agricultural seasons but as outcomes of a structural process. Communities whose food security depended on integrated access to land, forest and common resources were experiencing simultaneous disruption across all three resource domains.

It is at this point that this paper introduces the concept of *developmental exclusion*. The concept is intended to name a condition that falls between the familiar categories of development failure and displacement. Developmental exclusion describes a situation in which communities become enrolled in the processes of large-scale development, their land, resources and territory are incorporated into development plans, their lives are disrupted by industrial and infrastructural activity, and yet they remain excluded from the primary benefits of the development in question.

This is distinct from simple deprivation, which implies that development has simply not arrived. In developmental exclusion, development has arrived, but it has arrived as a force of extraction rather than as a process of shared improvement. The people of Kashipur were not outside the UAIL project. They were very much inside it, as its subjects, as the bearers of its costs. They were, however, excluded from it as its beneficiaries. Their land was needed. Their labour was needed for construction. Their acquiescence was sought. But their wellbeing, their food security, their cultural integrity and their future were not part of the project's architecture.

Developmental exclusion as a concept has broad applicability. It can describe the condition of communities adjacent to large dam projects who receive no electricity from the dam. It can describe the situation of agricultural labourers in regions converted to industrial use who find no employment in the new industries. It can describe the experience of mining communities whose mineral wealth generates government revenues that are spent on urban infrastructure and services they cannot access. In each case, development happens, and people are touched by it, but the touching is a wounding rather than a benefiting.

TRIBAL RESISTANCE AS A DEMAND FOR ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

The resistance that emerged in Kashipur through the late 1990s and persisted through the first decade of the 2000s is often described in terms of what it was against. It was against displacement. It was against bauxite mining on Baphlimali. It was against UAIL. These characterisations are not inaccurate, but they are incomplete. A more careful reading of what the movement said, who participated in it and how it organised itself reveals a resistance that was also very much in favour of something, a different and more honest relationship between the communities of Kashipur and the development that was being pursued in their name.

²⁵Sumanta Banerjee, "Social Forestry, Rights and Conflicts in Central India," *Economic and Political Weekly* 40, no. 18 (2005): 1850.

The Prakrutik Sampada Suraksha Parishad, which translates roughly as the Council for the Protection of Natural Wealth, was the main organisational vehicle of the movement. It was not a political party or a non-governmental organisation in the conventional sense. It was a people's assembly, rooted in village-level committees across the affected blocks. Bhagaban Majhi, one of the movement's most visible leaders, consistently framed resistance not as opposition to economic improvement but as a demand for the right of communities to determine what economic improvement would look like in their own context.²⁶

The movement's methods were primarily non-violent. Village assemblies, road blockades, rallies, representations to government authorities and mass meetings characterised its repertoire of action. Cultural mobilisation was important: tribal songs, symbols and ritual invocations of relationships with the land were woven into protest activities, communicating to participants and observers alike that what was at stake was not merely economic interest but an entire way of life and a set of rights that extended well beyond the monetary value of landholdings.²⁷

The movement's insistence on gram sabha (village assembly) consent as a precondition for any project activity was not merely a procedural demand. It reflected a principled position that development decisions affecting tribal communities must originate in those communities rather than being imposed upon them. This position anticipated by several years the provisions of the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas Act (PESA) of 1996 and the Forest Rights Act of 2006, both of which gave legislative form to similar principles.

The movement was not asking for an end to change. Bhagaban Majhi and other leaders acknowledged that Kashipur's communities needed better schools, health facilities, agricultural support and market access. What they rejected was a version of development that delivered these goods, if at all, only after dispossessing communities of the land and resources that made survival possible in the first place. The framing was not anti-development but anti-dispossession and, implicitly, a demand for development that was sequenced, accountable and grounded in the actual conditions of people's lives.

WOMEN, CULTURE AND THE POLITICS OF SURVIVAL

Scholarly and journalistic accounts of the Kashipur movement have tended to foreground male leadership and to treat women as supporting participants rather than as political actors in their own right. This framing misrepresents what actually happened and obscures a significant dimension of what made the resistance so resilient and so culturally grounded.

Women like Mukta Jhodia and Sumani Jhodia were among the most visible and committed participants in the movement. They spoke at rallies, participated in road blockades and engaged with visiting journalists and researchers in ways that demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of both the local stakes and the broader political dynamics of the dispute.

Understanding why women were so centrally involved requires understanding the gendered dimensions of tribal livelihoods in this region. Women in Kondh communities carry the primary responsibility for forest gathering, for water collection and for the food preparation that depends on forest produce. They are, in a very practical sense, the managers of the natural resource systems that stand between the household and hunger. When those systems are threatened, women's vulnerability is immediately and acutely felt.

²⁶Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*(London: Zed Books, 1988), 55–62.

²⁷Govind Kelkar and Dev Nathan, *Gender, Tribe, and Alternative Development* (New Delhi: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 1991), 34.

Women's participation also carried important cultural weight. In tribal societies where community identity is expressed through collective ritual, the involvement of women in the invocation of protective relationships with land and hill communicated the depth and seriousness of what was at stake. Their presence at demonstrations that combined political demands with cultural performance gave the movement a character that was not easily assimilated into the categories of standard political protest.

DISCUSSION

When the findings from Kashipur are brought together and read alongside comparable cases from other parts of the world, several important patterns emerge. The most fundamental is the persistent decoupling of resource wealth from local human development. This decoupling is not accidental. It is produced by a specific set of institutional arrangements that route resource revenues away from affected communities, while concentrating physical and social costs on those communities.

Nations with high dependence on natural resource exports tended to grow more slowly than their counterparts over the period from 1970 to 1990. But at the sub-national and community level, the mechanisms of the resource curse look different. They are less about aggregate fiscal outcomes and more about the specific distributional decisions that determine who absorbs the costs of extraction and who captures the surplus. In Kashipur, the state government captured the prospect of revenue and investment. The corporations captured the bauxite deposit. The Kondh communities captured displacement, food insecurity and the destruction of the livelihood systems that had sustained them.

Leah Temper, Daniela del Bene and Joan Martinez-Alier, in their global mapping of environmental justice conflicts, found that indigenous and tribal communities were systematically overrepresented among the populations bearing the costs of extractive industries, across multiple continents and in markedly diverse political and economic contexts.²⁸ Kashipur fits this global pattern precisely. The pattern suggests that what happened there was not an aberration or a failure of policy implementation. It was the predictable outcome of a development model that treats mineral deposits as national assets to be exploited for aggregate growth while treating the communities who live with those deposits as obstacles, or at best as recipients of compensatory welfare, rather than as rights-bearing citizens with a legitimate claim on the benefits of their own territory's resources.

In Latin America, the concept of *buen vivir* (living well) emerged partly as a response to exactly this kind of development trajectory.²⁹ Indigenous communities in Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru articulated a vision of development that centred human and ecological wellbeing rather than growth metrics, that valued cultural continuity alongside material improvement, and that insisted on community agency in decisions about resource use. The Kashipur movement, while working within different cultural and political traditions, was articulating a structurally similar demand. The slogans about water, forest and land were not nostalgia for a pre-modern past.

Rob Nixon's concept of slow violence is also illuminating here.³⁰ Nixon argues that much of the violence inflicted on poor and marginalised communities by industrial and environmental change is slow, gradual and dispersed in time, making it politically invisible in ways that sudden dramatic violence is not. The hunger in Kashipur, the erosion of livelihood systems, the anxiety of uncertain land rights, the gradual deterioration of water access, these were forms of slow

²⁸Leah Temper, Daniela del Bene, and Joan Martinez-Alier, "Mapping the Frontiers and Front Lines of Global Environmental Justice," *Journal of Political Ecology* 22, no. 1 (2015): 255–278.

²⁹Eduardo Gudynas, "Buen Vivir: Today's Tomorrow," *Development* 54, no. 4 (2011): 441–447.

³⁰Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 4.

violence. They did not appear on the front pages except occasionally and briefly, while the investment figures and employment promises of the industrial projects were the subject of sustained government and media attention.

African cases, particularly from the Niger Delta and the mining regions of the Democratic Republic of Congo, suggest that the developmental exclusion visible in Kashipur tends to intensify over time when extraction proceeds without meaningful accountability to local communities. The initial phase, in which promises are made and projects are framed as development opportunities, tends to give way, once investment is committed and production begins, to a phase in which communities find that neither the promises nor the constitutional protections available to them translate into enforceable entitlements.

CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that Kashipur is not simply a story of anti-mining resistance. It is a case that reveals the limits of a development model that measures success through the scale of investment and the volume of mineral output while overlooking the livelihood security, food systems and indigenous rights of the communities whose land makes that output possible.

The concept of developmental exclusion, introduced in Section 6, is the paper's principal theoretical contribution. It describes a condition that is distinct from straightforward underdevelopment and distinct from displacement as conventionally understood. Communities in developmental exclusion are not left out of development. They are included in it as its material substrate: their land, water, forests and acquiescence are all required by the project. But they are excluded from development as its beneficiaries. The benefits flow elsewhere. This is not a failure of policy implementation in Kashipur.

The pre-mining deprivation of Kashipur, which this paper has documented carefully in Section 3, was not a reason to accept any development on offer. It was itself partly a product of historical state neglect, and it had produced communities with genuine capacities for resource management, cultural resilience and collective action.

The future of resource governance in India depends, in a meaningful sense, on whether development is assessed only by mineral output and investment volumes or also by its impact on the lives, rights and futures of those who live on and from resource-rich lands. Kashipur demonstrates, with painful clarity, the cost of choosing only the first set of metrics. It also demonstrates, through the movement that emerged there, that communities excluded from development's benefits are not passive. They are capable of sustained, principled and culturally powerful resistance. Whether that resistance is treated as an obstacle to be managed or as a legitimate contribution to the national conversation about what development is for remains, in India as elsewhere, the central question of our time.

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