

# Should the mining in Odisha go ahead?



As we have learned, there are different groups (stakeholders) who are affected by the mining that takes place in Odisha. The main stakeholders are:

- **The Adivasi tribal people** (*e.g. the Dongria Khond*)
- **Industrialists** (*e.g. the TNC Vendanta Resources*)
- **Anthropologists** (*people who study human culture*)
- **Environment Organisations** (*e.g. Greenpeace*)
- **Local Government** (*focused on the benefits for Odisha*)
- **National Government** (*focused on the benefits for India*)

# The Adivasi tribal people

**Scenario:** You are the Dongria Khond tribal group against the mining.

You live in isolation from the rest of society in the remote highlands. You have no access to communication with the outside world. You have no access to health and welfare and very limited access to education.

You will lose your homes, traditions and livelihoods if the mining persists. Everyday, you see huge areas dug up for extraction of iron ores and trees that have been cut down and the remaining left are found in a very bad condition.

Even though the land belongs to you by right of occupation for generations, you will be forced to leave and shifted to new areas and there is no guarantee of work or benefits from the wealth the government will gain from selling your forestland.

Your community has lived in the mountains for generations, using the forest resources to live and also to earn. You sell sal tree, timber and firewood.

To you the Niyamgiri Hills are sacred and you believe that god lives in the tribal hills. Some of you will become Naxalites and will fight to stay.

Some of you just simply do not want to be a part of this system and no amount of compensation will make up for you being forced to leave. Money is beside the point for you. To you, it has no value.



# Industrialists

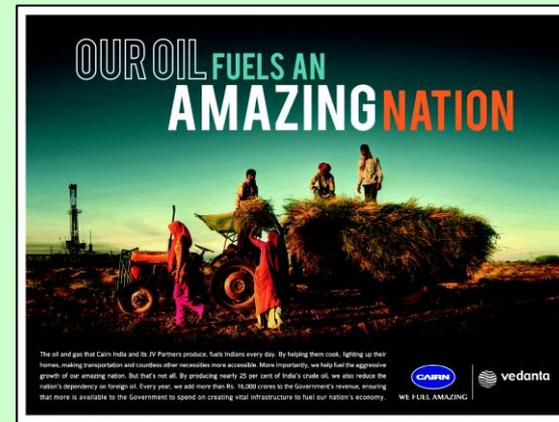
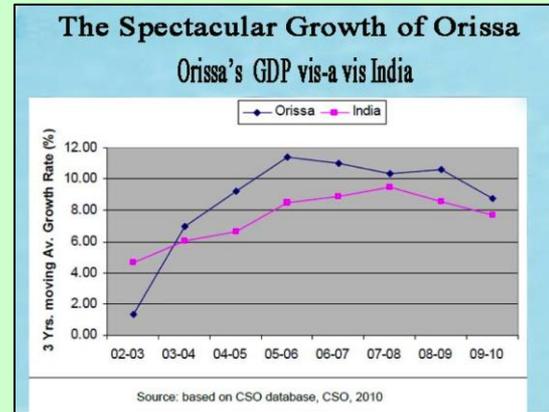
**Scenario:** You are the British mining giant **Vedanta Resources**. You organise mining activity in Odisha and locate valuable minerals across the state. You want to start another new project in the Niyamgiri Hills – this time you will win the fight.

Odisha is one of the states in India which is endowed with a lot of raw materials - natural resources. Very huge deposits of iron ore, coal, nickel, copper, aluminum. It has got huge facilities for fresh water. It has vast forest land.

Your research suggests that bauxite is the most important of the ores which when processed becomes stainless steel, a key input for manufacturing industry, a central driver of growth in developing countries whether India or elsewhere. When a country industrialises it is a catalyst for change; there is economic development and the community improves. People from various states, various places, will come. Learning becomes better. You start understanding the country better. A lot of new activities come about. Health care is introduced and service sectors grow.

Exploiting the mineral resources will raise the living standards for the people of India. You can help the local government by providing roads, employment and schools for local people. Your company will produce cheap goods for export, which will help earn the country money.

A new mine means the encouragement of potential employers to the area and more opportunities for the expansion of your booming business.



# Anthropologists

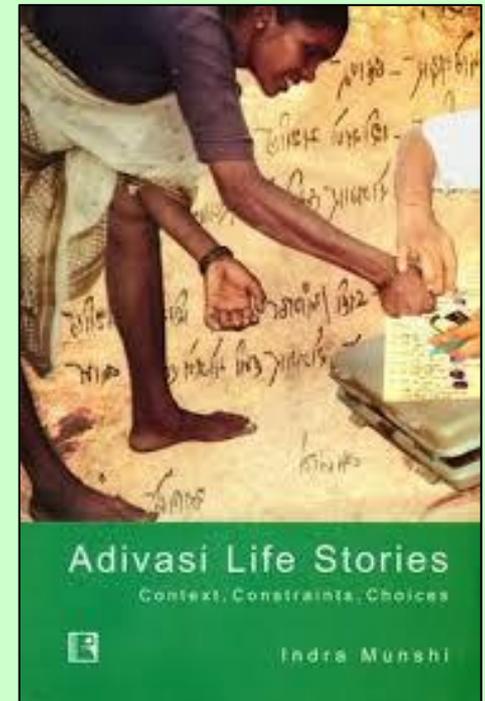
**Scenario:** You are the **Anthropologists**. You are researchers that study humans both in the past and the present. You have written books on the life of the Adivasi and believe that the mining is eroding their culture, which is at risk of being lost forever. You know the Adivasi culture well and believe that they are highly independent-minded people.

You are concerned that the mining projects are damaging and unsustainable (if more mining projects operate there will eventually be no trees or rare species left for future generations). How will the Adivasi people living in the Niyamgiri Hills cope when they no longer have any of their forestland or sacred hills?

The government is being quite clever since they are saying that we must respect and preserve *some* aspects of the tribal Adivasi culture, provided they decide which aspects. For example, it is ok to preserve arts and crafts but not ok to continue a disinterest in materialism (owning things).

You believe that the government has become corrupt and takes bribes from large mining companies, like Vedanta Resources.

You acknowledge that development is needed in Odisha but you feel that the new mining project has not been thought out properly. The Adivasi have a lot of traditional knowledge – why can't we make use of that also? They have knowledge about traditional medicine and they also have respectable values; dignity, integrity and sincerity. We can learn from them and help to end the corruption.



# Environment Organisation

**Scenario:** You are **Representatives of an International Environmental Organisation**. You believe the proposed mining project will lead to a huge loss of forest resources for the Adivasi and will also add to pollution levels in Odisha.

The mining has reduced much of the forestland to scrubland; date palms rather than coconut palms have been planted because date palms have deep roots and can flourish in desert-like conditions. These use up more water which can lead to shortages and alter the climate. There have been severe ecological changes due to illegal mining. Certain species of animals, like the sloth bear, have disappeared. Medicinal plants from the area do not grow anymore.

The lack of effective regulation in the mining and transport of iron ore has adversely impacted road safety. Overloaded trucks carrying ore have caused hundreds of fatal accidents on the roadways. The number of cases of respiratory tract infection is increasing significantly in the surrounding area of mines, which indicates the pollution load of the environment.

Many species have now become endangered due to the mining activities and the incompetence of the local government. It is your duty to consider the needs for the planet, animals and the beautiful forestland that is present in Odisha.



# Local Government

**Scenario:** You are working for the **Local Government** of Odisha. The mining project will bring work for your local people, they will build you new schools for your children, bring water supplies and electricity to your homes and build new roads. For those local people already employed by the mining industry, their quality of life has greatly improved and they aspire to greater things.



There has been a quantum leap in terms of economic development because of mineral-based industries coming out of the State of Odisha. You have made stipulations that any mineral-based industry has got to have some kind of manufacturing unit in the State of Odisha because it adds to the value of the product when you export the raw materials. Also, when there is an infrastructure facility you get education, better skilled people, the employment issues get resolved because we have got youth coming from various colleges in India.

You are slightly concerned about the Adivasi since last time they fought against the mine and they won. You welcome the mining companies but think that they should give some percentage of their income for the benefit of rural and tribal societies. At the moment the companies are only interested in giving people a lump sum and that is all. You think that 12-15% each year should be set aside for the benefit of the local people. Even this worries you since you know that the Adivasi have no interest in money whatsoever.

You are concerned about the welfare of the Adivasi and other rural communities and realise that they need to improve their standard of living; they need better education and medical services. If we welcome the new mining project, it will improve everyone's living standards. 62% of the population are still living below the poverty line and this is not good enough.

Odisha accounts for a third of India's iron ore — a vital steel making material— production. It also holds a quarter of India's coal, and half its bauxite. You want to attract large international companies and believe that this is the way forward for Odisha.

It is your job to convince the members of the meeting that the new mining project is a good idea.

# National Government

**Scenario:** You are working for the **National Government** of India. It is your job to act in the best interests of India, not just Odisha.

India has the second largest agricultural output in the world. You are happy that India has a strong primary industry, however you think to improve the lives of its people, India needs to develop and get more people working in the secondary and tertiary industries. You are very impressed with Odisha – here 56% of people work in the tertiary industry and it is the mining projects that they have to thank for their strong development.



Odisha has also been successful in terms of their education. They are able to teach up to 20,000 children in one school, which helps children to fulfill their dreams of becoming doctors or engineers to make it a better place for everyone. This was only possible through government schemes. You want the same for other parts of India.

You are excited about the prospect of the new mining project as more money will be made in the area for your government. By developing the mining industry in India, money will be created allowing Indians to buy essentials such as petrol, medicine, manufactured goods, etc. It will also provide work for local people and help develop a more advanced economy.

You just hope that the Adivasi people that ruined it last time don't ruin it again. You can't understand why they don't want better living standards. It's about time they were brought into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Otherwise the worry is that Vedanta Resources will go elsewhere, like China, and then we all lose out.

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