
Critical Analysis of the Documentary 'The Hunt' by Biju Toppo

Gopika Nair U.I

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Abstract: Not many films and literature have been produced citing the protection of life and security of tribals in our country. However, some genuine attempts from certain kinds of souled personalities have helped to improve the lives of tribals to an extent, at least to portray the inhuman oppression meted out to the tribals by the corporates and the government. Biju Toppo is one such documentarian and a filmmaker from Ranchi, Jharkhand. He uses film as a medium for social activism on behalf of marginalized indigenous communities. Biju Toppo's documentary film 'The Hunt' explores the lives and consequences of being 'children of the forest.' The documentary explores the condition of human rights in the Naxal-affected areas of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Orissa.

Keywords: Biju Toppo, The Hunt, Tribal Life, Tribal Literature

1. Introduction

Development is defined as a process to create positive changes or progress in society, taking into account various environmental, economic, social, and demographic components. However, the word development has become a contronym in the present scenario, particularly considering the tribal lands of our country. Despite having a rich source of minerals

and oil, the tribals who live on their land are denied fundamental living conditions or are forced to vacate their lands. Atrocities faced by tribals are either ignored or are considered false allegations set by them for better living conditions by the government.

The scenario is worse in the tribal areas of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Orissa. The abundance of mineral resources in these states has added to the misery of the tribals living there. In haste to win the race of millionaires, the corporates and the governments who change every five years solely with maligned ideas and greed have turned the tribal communities into poverty-ridden, malnourished communities deprived of their essential needs and right to live in their land. Adding to the misery is the situation when they are deprived of even fundamental human rights and directives that the Constitution of India guarantees. Tribals have been classified and degraded to the status of second-class citizens in India by the "civilized" society. The statement posits some pertinent questions: What is the term civilization? Who determines the range of civilization to keep a particular community on the pedestal and other communities as inferior ones? Can every type of development be associated with civilization?

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However, some genuine attempts from certain kinds of souled personalities have helped to improve the lives of tribals to an extent, at least to portray the inhuman oppression meted out to the tribals by the corporates and the government. Biju Toppo is one such documentarian and a filmmaker from Ranchi, Jharkhand. He uses film as a medium for social activism on behalf of marginalized indigenous communities. He belongs to Akhra, an agency working in culture and communication in Jharkhand, India. Akhra is a pioneering group making films on indigenous peoples' issues since 1995. Several films created by them have received several accolades from prestigious organizations citing the genuineness in their portrayal of the tribal situations.

II. Tribal Life As Pictured In 'The Hunt'

This is the time for the blossoming of Palash flowers...

On the banks of the river from Niyamgiri,

...

Here every knock on the door is of the color red.

This is the season of blossoming Palash flowers...

Every corner of forest is Palash

Tendu is Palash

Sal is Palash

Teak is Palash

Palash is fire, fire is Palash.

Biju Toppo's documentary film 'The Hunt' explores the lives and consequences of being 'children of the forest.' The documentary explores the condition of human rights in the Naxal-affected areas of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Orissa. These areas inhabiting several tribal groups and being rich in mineral resources have posed a considerable threat to the competitive world where governments and corporate try to utilize and exploit the resources in whatever way they can to become rich. The

greed innate in human beings is fully expressed when it is clear that the central and the state governments have signed MOUs with several corporate giants despite being fully aware of the tribal people's right to their land. Thus, the governments face tough opposition from the tribals who do not wish to give up their land. A significant event to be noticed is that what once acted as a severe threat to the government has now become a threat to the innocent tribal societies themselves; The rise of Naxalism.

Naxalism was prevalent in the areas of Jharkhand even before the rise of Bihar. Earlier, there were a lot of fruitful reasons for Naxalism to flourish. Political issues like the support of CPI, the influence of the Chinese Communist Party and Mao Zedong, arms-oriented movement, insensitive political system, and poor governance are some of the main reasons for the emergence of Naxalism. Other social factors that add to the rise of Naxalism include poverty and economic inequality, negative impacts of MNCs in tribal lives, slow implementation of land reforms, and consequences of liberalization of the Indian economy. The emergence of differences between perceptions and expectations of the past or the future situation of individuals has led to dissatisfaction and frustration within the society. Moreover, thus, violence emerges as a result of this frustration. The social structure of the society, lack of adequate facilities, poor awareness, and lack of education have led certain sections of tribal areas to join Naxal movements hoping that violence will help them overthrow the mighty ones in power.

This is the time for the blossoming of Palash flowers...

On the banks of the river from Niyamgiri,

Tendu fruits are ripe and red

Cobwebs have been torn apart
Moreover, caves are aware of it.

Saranda, a forest of 700 hills', is the largest forest of Sal trees in Asia, located in the West Singhbhum district of Jharkhand in India. The Saranda is the abode of the Ho and Munda tribes, whose population is approximately 125 thousand. The tribals directly depend on the forest products for their livelihood. They sell herbs obtained from trees for their livelihood. With an area of 847 sq. km, the Saranda forest was once a natural habitat for various tribes and several wild species of plants and animals and was famed for its abundant green cover. The place was also famed for being a vital elephant corridor till the early 1990s.

Advertisements of Vedanta are hanging in the mines
And a sea of branches Saranda
It is matted with landmines.
In our forests, flowers of iron have bloomed...
Bouquets of bauxite
have been decorated...

The forest covers 847 sq. km, where 25% of India's iron ore deposits are found. Currently, 50 mines are operational, and 19 new mining leases have been sanctioned to national and multinational corporations. According to the Indian Bureau of Mines report, West Singhbhum is the most mined district in Jharkhand. The mass deforestation of the area has turned it into a central industrial zone where nature is being destroyed to meet selfish ends. Saranda forests can be metaphorically called a forest, illegally killed for extracting iron ores. The place which has once been an abode of elephants has now turned into a zero elephant area.
Mica and Coal are sold at wholesale and retail prices in daily markets.

To sell them, military
schools have been opened.
Schools here teach 12 kinds of Guerilla warfare
Instead of 12 syllables.

The greed and selfish attitude of both corporates and the government have led to the rise of Naxalism. They believe that Marxist and Leninist ideas have to be used to create an alternative state and system. Earlier, this was the case. They pretended as if they were working for poor people. However, over time, they have splintered and changed their outlook. Now they resort to the use of violence and vandalism to get the upper hand in the society by overthrowing the government officials. They destroyed many schools and anganwadis in the area. Now the innocent tribal people have been torn apart between the clutches of both the government and the Naxalites. While the government does not provide them with basic facilities like clean drinking water and food, schools, and nutrient-rich food for children and other people, Naxalites destroy the already existing schools and loot the tribal people for money and food. However, considering the actual scenario, it has to be understood that the political corruption done by government officials is the real sabotage of democracy and not the violence of guns. People take up arms in the hope of setting up a better society. Thereby it shows the negligence and ignorance exhibited by the government.

The market has become so big.
Nobody of my own can be seen.
From here, everybody is turned toward the city
Yesterday, I saw a mountain going in a truck.
Before it, the river went, and the news is
My village will also go away!

Moreover, the traditional means of tribal life are being shattered. People who directly depended upon forest products are now made to starve out of unemployment and poverty. Deforestation has resulted in an unbalanced ecological system and has also become a significant reason for the disappearance of many tribal communities. This season of blossoming Palash flowers...

Smoke is rising from children's sand castles,
There is the scent of gunpowder in the wind
The sun is shining red
On dripping water from the rocks.

...

They advised that
If this area is vacated
The country would develop a lot from an 80 Billion dollar
So they must declare all Democratic movements as Maoist.

Tribal people have now started agitating against the illegal efforts of the corporate and the government. With the help of social activists, they have now started agitating against the mighty ones' efforts to throw them away from their land. However, their efforts have been termed Naxalism by the government, and they use this means to arrest and detain tribal people illegally. Fake encounters have become the norm of the day in tribal areas.

More than 6000 people in Jharkhand are kept in jail due to false cases of being a Naxalite. They are 17000 in Chhattisgarh and 2000 in Orissa. Innocent tribals are accused of keeping Naxal literature, providing them food, and being their supporters. Between 2001 and 2011, 4430 violent encounters between CRPF and Naxalites claimed 1847 lives. More than 450 schools in the villages of Jharkhand have been turned into CRPF camps. Due to

this, around 12000 children were severely affected.

According to the Superintendent of Police, Jharkhand, innocent tribal's will have to sacrifice their lives if they get caught between the police and the Naxalites, and they can have no say in it. Moreover, the police say they give compensation to the deceased family. The further irony comes to light when we realize that the police officers are free of accusations in any encounter. They are not tried or questioned for their actions. Thus, it is clear that the government and the mighty ones in power, in greed of exploiting the natural resources, are determined enough to eliminate the people from their land and leave them in poverty and unemployment for the rest of their lives.

However, with continuous intervention from Human Rights Activists, the government has initiated several operations to understand the actual scenario in the tribal areas. Activists help the government compile facts and records and send them to the concerned Human Rights Commission and Women's Commission for appropriate actions. The area has started witnessing positive changes where compensations have considerably increased, and government jobs are being provided to at least some victims of fake encounters.

"More changes to be witnessed with time and continuous effort. Either one has to be with the government or with the tribal people. One cannot be neutral. If we are silent, we are with the oppressors."

My friend from the city
These flowers are not of this season.
With them, my beloved cannot make garlands for her hair
With them, my mother cannot make soup
We do not use them in any of our festivals

If you meet my people in the city, please
take care of them.

While they were departing, I saw tears in
their eyes.

And yes! They do not know the customs of
the city too

With the pledge of meeting them here

It is my farewell to you.

The documentary ends with a touching note by Dr. Anuj Lugun, a poet and lecturer from the tribal area. The poem throughout the documentary highlights the anguish and helplessness of the innocent tribals who are destined to live a pathetic life just because of the fate of being born as the 'children of the forest.'

III. Conclusion

It is high time we realize the importance of practicing 'sustainable development. Sustainable development is

the idea that human societies must live and meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Using practicing sustainability, one must protect our natural resources and the tribal innocents destined to live as the 'children of the forest.' It is the responsibility of the State and the individual to ensure efforts and practices aimed at the positive development of the society. According to Gandhiji, "There is everything for our need and nothing for our greed." The above words are worth remembering in the current scenario when the selfish needs of the State and the society are badly inflicting damage upon nature and its resources.

Reference

The Hunt. 2015. [Film] Directed by B. Toppo. Akhra.

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