

10th March. 1998

The Inspection Panel,  
World Bank,  
1818 H Street,  
N.W. Washington, D.C.,  
20433, U.S.A.

We, The Nagarahole Budakattu Janara Hakkusthapana Samithy (NBJHS) who represent the tribal people living in the area known as Rajive Gandhi National Park, Nagarahole, Karnataka State, India, claim the following for your due consideration and favourable disposal.

1. It is a known fact that the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and International Development Agency (IDA) of World Bank has approved on 5th September, 1996, the financing of an Eco-Development Project to the tune of U.S.\$ 68 million, comprising 7 Protected Areas of bio-diversity in India, of which, The Rajive Gandhi National Park, Nagarahole extending over 643.39 Sq. k.m. to the south of Coorg & Mysore districts of Karnataka state, is one. (map attached).

2. The perplexing logic and pressures for the introduction of the project are stated as " India's bio-diversity is rich, often unique and increasingly endangered. India is one of the 12 megadiversity countries in the world that collectively account for 60-70% of world's bio-diversity..... India's biological resources are economically important; both globally and nationally. Many species of crop plants found world-wide and their wild relatives originate on the subcontinent.....The biodiversity in India's forests, grasslands, wetland and marine ecosystem faces many pressures. These include grassing cattle, cutting of trees for fuel, timber and non-timber forest products, hunting, uncontrolled forest fires and conversion and spill over from agricultural infrastructure, industrial and commercial development. India's high level human population density and growth, high incidence of poverty and large numbers of livestock, speed the degradation. Local people, when traditional rights and access are limited by the establishment of Protected Areas, often have little incentive to use natural resources in a sustainable way.....( India Eco-Development Project: Project Information Document, March, 22, 1996 -pp 1-2)

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3. We understand that World Bank has clear cut policies and directives for the implementation of such a project. Besides giving due attention to safeguard human rights aspects, the Operational Directives 4.20 and 4.30 clearly tell the policy directives with regard to the consideration for Indigenous Population and their involuntary resettlement. There are serious violations of Human Rights as well as of World Bank Policy Directives in the proposed Eco-Development Project.

4. The affected indigenous population of the project area whom we represent and the supportive NGOs have been opposing the implementation of this project, and now place our strong protest before the Inspection Panel, on the following grounds:

a) Human Rights Violations:

- i) India has been a signatory to the U.N. Declaration of Forced Evictions since 26.8.1991 and is duty bound to honour that commitment which explicitly states that the "ultimate responsibility" for preventing evictions "rests with the government" and "Forced Evictions constitute a gross violation of Human Rights"....."Conscious that governments often seek to disguise the violence that may be associated with forced evictions by using terms as ".....progress and development" And again, "Aware that forced evictions can be carried out, sanctioned, demanded, proposed, initiated or tolerated by a number of actors, including but not limited to occupation authorities, national governments, local governments, developers, planners, landlords.....and bilateral and international financial institutions and aid agencies". The World Bank India Eco-Development Project attacks the very spirit of the above Declaration.
- ii) The actions of the World Bank together with the national and Karnataka state governments collectively violate Articles 3,12,13 and 14 of the I.L.O. Convention ratified by India as well as 26 other countries, related to protection of properties, respect for customary procedures of transmission of traditional ownership of lands, obligation of the state to securing ownership or use of lands belonging to tribals, obligation of state to

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undertake special measures to protect institutions, persons property and labour of the indigenous communities, and when they are to be displaced in national interests, to be rehabilitated in an environment similar to the one from where they have to be displaced

- iii). The World Bank with the sanctioning of the project has also become a corroborator in violating the special Constitutional Rights & Privileges accorded to the tribals in India, especially the provisions for Tribal Self-Rule, under the Panchayath Raj Act (Extension to Scheduled Areas), 1992, which provides for self-governance of tribal dwelling areas.

The proposed Eco-Development project covers a total area of 6,714 sq.k.m. comprising the 7 Protected Areas and Tiger Reserves in the states of Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, West Bengal and Kerala and having an affected tribal population of 48,800. The World Bank Project Report has not shown any tribal population as living in the "core areas" of Nagarahole National Park, where as there are 58 tribal settlements inside the park with a population of 6145 and who belong to different communities like Jenu Kurubas, Betta Kurubas, Yeravas, and Soligas, with distinct culture and identity. At the same time the report insist on "rehabilitation of tribals from the core areas by developing "voluntary reallocation opportunities for people" especially based on the "wishes of local people". The concept of "local people" is used ambiguously giving convenience for misinterpretation and thus for the dislocation of the tribals forcefully.

b. Violation of World Bank Directives:

- i). The World Bank Operational Directives 4.20 clearly spells out that any development project implemented have to be socially and culturally compatible to Indigenous/tribal groups who have distinct social and cultural identity from that of the dominant society. This policy directive is conveniently discarded in the case of the proposed Eco-Development Project.

It is a world-widely accepted truth that the cultural traditions, social order and the values of  
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Indigenous/tribal societies have flourished through their maintaining a life-style in symbiotic relationship with the nature and forests. They have been the real protectors or conservators of the forests through out the history until otherwise in instances manipulated and made use of them by outside dominating forces (which has been

an extensively continuing process in the modern times and cited as examples of forest destruction by Adivasis!). And uprooting them from their forest habitats;- their socio-cultural life base - for any sort of so called "development project" is not only the total denial of their fundamental human rights, but also pushing them to gross ethnocide.

- ii) The above mentioned Operational Directive of World Bank also tell that there should be "informed participation" of the affected Indigenous/Tribal groups and NGOs involving for their development, in the planning and implementation of such development projects. In the case of the proposed project;- at least in Nagarahole - any such meaningful process hasn't been taken place. What has taken place is a meeting of the concerned people with the World Bank representatives on 09-08-1996 at Aranya Bhavan, Mysore, where the people;- with their grievances and reasoning with an alternate People's Plan for the conservation of bio-diversity and protection of the forests in Nagarahole - were unheard and unheeded to. What overtonned were the versions of the Forest Officials. Nor did the visit of World Bank Representative Ms. Jessica Mott to the project area in January-February, 1996, did have any discussions with the local people, other than hearing the versions of the Forest Department. This, coupling with the mention of there not being any tribal population in the "core area" of the National Park and then providing for "voluntary dislocation of local people" in the project report account for the dubious intention of the project. It is also learned that World Bank is informed to the effect of discussions having been taken place with concerned local NGOs and of their assured co-operation for the implementation of the project. This is a false information and some of the

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prominent local NGOs have protested against it and written directly to the World Bank for having been misquoted as participants to such consultations/discussions.

- iii) World Bank Operational Directive No.4.30 deals with the policy and procedures on involuntary resettlement and the conditions to be met in such situations. These policy directives and procedures are evaded by not mentioning the tribal habitats inside Nagarahole National Park in the project report to World Bank. This evidently shows the intention of the concerned authorities for forceful eviction of the tribal population from the project area. Threats and pressure tactics are already in force in this regard.
- iv) The project paper says that the project would be "owned by Indians". There is the question who would "really own" it- the government? the tribals? or the masses?. Since World Bank has overlooked the existence of tribals in the core area, it is understood that the project will not be handed over to the tribals. This, together with the purposiveness to circumvent the World Bank policy directives referred above, account for the World Bank and the Government of India neither inviting nor involving the tribals of Nagarahole during the negotiations of the project. Every deal is being kept under cover and even the texts have not been translated into local language for fear of the disclosure of the details.

Other Implications:  
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- i) The proposal in the project for " bio-mass constitution/generation" as a means to "foster alternative livelihoods, resource use and specific measurable actions by local people to improve conservation" might imbalance the ecology of the forest especially when new varieties of plants/trees are planted in place of traditional one. This is a deliberate move to bring back "Social Forestry" to the centre stage which has earlier caused irreparable damages to the rural economy of Karnataka.

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- ii) The stress on "managing enterprise and visitor enclaves" has opened up a new enterprise system called "Eco-Tourism" in the forest area. This has provided scopes for big industrialists to operate their star hotels in the midst of the forests. Taking this advantageous opportunity, the Karnataka state government has leased out its Jungle Resorts and adjacent lands at Moorkal inside the park to Taj Groups of Hotels and constructions by them are in progress for luxurious facilities for the tourists. The tribals of the area are mounting rigorous protests and struggles against this move on the grounds that the eco-tourism enterprise will further alienate them from the forests, superimpose alien culture, link the tribal communities with consumerism, increase unemployment, destroy the ecology, and further more, provide spaces for the dominant forces to appropriate the forests both for genetic resources and entertainment.

The Appeal:  
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In the context of blatant Human Rights violations and rampant negligence of World Bank Policies and Directives involved as detailed above, we appeal to the Inspection Panel to abandon the proposed Eco-Development Project and in place, to seriously consider for due implementation of the People's Plan we have developed conducive to our ethos and traditional culture, for the eco-development/conservation process of Nagarahole National Park. (Annexure-1.)

Conclusion:  
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Conscious of the hidden agenda in the World Bank aided Eco-development Project in its present form, the tribals of Nagarahole, have been making strong appeals and protests to the concerned authorities and also to the World Bank. The copies of such documents are also annexed herewith (Annexure-2). In the absence of any favourable response, we have no

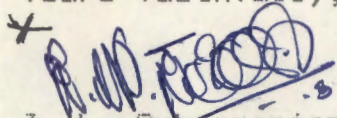
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other way than resorting to appropriate means of struggles against the implementation of the project. And this will be a "struggle unto death", for we prefer to die with dignity fighting to retain our "home lands" and identity, rather than allowing others to "kill" us.

Anticipating favourable consideration to our this appeal, We remain,

Yours faithfully,

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J. L. Subramanian,

President,

Nagarahole Budakattu Janara Hakkusthapana Samithi,

Nagarahole.

Annexures: 1. Nagarahole People's Plan.  
2. Copies of previous correspondance/appeals.



## PEOPLES' PLAN FOR PRESERVATION OF ADIVASI AND NAGARAHOLE FORESTS IN KARNATAKA

### PREFACE

The Peoples' plan for Nagarahole is the outcome of decades of adivasi struggle with the State in protecting their cultural identity and asserting themselves as the real agents of conservation of a pristine nature cover which is also their habitat. The Plan has evolved in its current shape after a series of discussions with the entire adivasi population of Nagarahole and is based on their long cherished dream of recognition of their rights by the State.

Through this plan, the adivasi offer a viable alternative to protecting the forests and their own ethnicity and seek the confidence of the State in evolving a social fence involving the adivasi in conservation efforts. The Plan has its genesis in the sustained efforts of the State in forcible eviction of the adivasi from their habitat.

The Plan has evolved with the ongoing adivasi struggle in Karnataka for assertion of their rights, stalling the efforts of the environmentalists at painting the adivasi to be the biggest threat to conservation of Nagarahole. Though the legislation of the Bhuria Committee recommendations by the Parliament has provided a fresh impetus to the adivasi struggle nation-wide, the People's Plan was a natural outcome of the adivasi struggle against Taj Resorts at Murkal and efforts at forcible imposition of the India Eco Development Project by the World Bank in connivance with the Government in 1996.

This Plan is offered as a model for the world in co-relating the adivasi identity with conservation endeavors even as self styled environmentalists, incapable of fighting the true threats to the meagre nature covers in the form of organized mafia, target the adivasi population as the prime destroyers of the precious wildlife reserves.

The Plan, in a nutshell, lays stress on community participation in conservation and preservation of the cultural identity of dying endogamous groups which offer wisdom for the future.

### CHAPTER ONE

#### INTRODUCTION

For centuries, the adivasi traditions and cultural idioms remained the touchstone of value systems of World Civilisations. But, the consumptive materialistic lifestyle of 20th century triggered off rapid destruction of the environment and degeneration of values. This resulted in a global awareness regarding the need for preservation of the earth and its ecological balance. Understandably now, the adivasi value systems are seen as the only way to save earth and preserve human sanity during the 21st century and beyond. The situation is no different in India.

The Common Indian and the adivasi always lived in harmony with nature, each depending on the forests only for their bare sustenance. But during recent decades the adivasi and the common Indian parted ways, with the adivasi maintaining a unique lifestyle which is dependent solely on the forests and based on a symbiotic relationship with the forests and the living things in it. Simultaneously, the forests have preserved the traditional adivasi wisdom.



The materialistic lifestyle based on consumptive desires, developed by those living outside, began to tell on the forests and its flora and fauna during the early part of the current century. The adivasi began to be targeted for their resistance to such irreversible destruction of the forests. But, untouched by these developments, the adivasi have preserved their remarkable cultural identity, nurturing an unbreakable bond with nature. It is the British who brought about a perceptual change in the Indian towards the forests and the adivasi. For the British, forests and wildlife, be it the flora or the fauna, was a resource to be exploited and the adivasi expendable 'jungles'. Free India adopting the British model of conservation, brushing aside indigenous knowledge and wisdom, continued the destruction. The forests and the forest dwellers, from the adivasi to the wildlife, have been at the receiving end. The self assertion of the adivasi which began nation wide towards the later half of the 20th century now remains the only hope

### ROLE OF THE BRITISH RAJ & THE EARLY DAYS OF INDEPENDENCE

The British brought in commercial exploitation of the forest cover into the sub-continent. If forest trees were cut for timber and hectares and hectares of forest turned into teak plantations, the wild animals became their objects of pleasure during their hunting expeditions in search of trophies. The adivasi became 'funny and curious creatures'. They legitimized their acts by bringing in the 1877 Forest Act. Sadly, this anti-people act, which was formulated with the sole objective of filling the coffers of the Crown, continues to be the touchstone of the Nation's forest laws even today. This brought untold miseries to the adivasi and aided unabated state sponsored destruction of the forests during the fifties and the sixties. A new breed called forest contractors came into existence and many are now millionaires at the expense of the Nation's forests. The wild animals became target of the poachers, who exploited the laws and began to cater to commercial markets of skins and body parts of wild animals. The destruction of the forests and the woes of the adivasi increased manifold with extensive mining operations and construction of Mega dams and reservoirs. The commercial loot of forest wealth by the Government and its agencies without any thought being given towards sustaining it had a direct impact on the life of adivasi. The adivasi, who had nurtured their precious home lands across the country by putting off forest fires and carefully maintaining the ecological balance through indigenous parameters like nurturing medicinal plants, hunting food based on the re-generation cycle and leading a life style without disturbing the forests, had their umbilical cord violently severed. Many indigenous cultures died and few tribal communities disappeared. Only few Adivasi communities like Bhilsa Munda and Santhal tribes of Central India resisted this loot of the forests and destruction of their habitat. However, this meagre resistance was not enough to push back the British bulldozer and the forest cover began to shrink and undisturbed forests turned into teak plantations. Many animals and birds became extinct and those still living figure on the endangered list.

But this adivasi resistance in Central India heralded the freedom struggle for the Nation and the British also granted partial autonomy and declared these regions as 'scheduled areas' recognising the adivasi rights and capability to manage and enjoy the resources in a sustainable manner. However, the woes of the adivasi in free India has also been a story of untold misery and struggle with independent India refusing to recognise both this right and capability of the Adivasi not only in Central India but also in other parts of the Nation.

### THE GOVERNMENT POLICIES:

Directly related to the decay of adivasi communities and destruction of indigenous cultures is the shrinking forest cover. The world wide cry for wildlife conservation in the sixties and early seventies shook the Indian Government to take stock of the home realities. However, the resultant Wildlife Act of 1972 only heightened the miseries of the adivasi. The Act recognised only the need for preserving the wildlife. The forest dwellers and their rights were curtailed and even forcibly displaced. "Forests are only for the animals and forest dwellers are agents of destruction", became the 'mantra' of the government. This formalised the forced evictions of the forest dwellers on the one hand, and ushered in the era of Sanctuaries and protected areas on the other. Adivasi came under tremendous state sponsored pressure to leave their habitat and many adivasi communities fell prey to the hawks of the



village societies. But, the eighties revealed the naked failure of these protection efforts with evaluations showing more and more areas of denudation. The Government grudgingly accepted this harsh truth and acknowledged the vital role indigenous communities in sustaining the forests. The outcome of this institutional acceptance of ground realities is the Forest Policy of 1988. Accepted and acknowledged across the board by one and all, this policy has

(a) "meeting the requirements of fuel wood, fodder, minor forest produce and small timber of the rural and tribal population", as its basic objective.

(b) "to ensure environmental stability and ecological balance including atmospheric equilibrium which are vital to sustenance of all life forms, human, animal and plant. The derivation of direct economic benefit must be subordinated to this.....", as its principle aim.

(c) "The rights and concessions from forests should primarily be for the bona fide use of the community living within and around the forest areas specially the tribal.....If the principle is accepted that entry of private persons into forest for collecting fuel is to be avoided, alternative arrangements for fuel supply through depots can be augmented. In making these changes rights and interests of tribal should be fully protected", as its forest management strategy.

(d) "Having regard to the symbiotic relationship between the tribal people and the forests, a primary task of agencies responsible for forest management.....should be to associate the tribal people closely in the protection, re-generation and development of forests.....", as its focus on tribal people and forests.

#### THE GROUND REALITIES:

But, despite this stated policy of the Government, the forest laws in operation continue to be based on the repressive Act of 1972. The proposed amendments to this Act in 1991 also did not reflect the State Policy either in its letter or spirit. Consequently, the state has taken away the forest rights of the 40 lakh plus forest dwellers who are living inside the 521 tribal habitats declared as Sanctuaries and National Parks covering 4.25 percent of the total land area in the country. Caught in the vortex of this double speak of Government's conservation paradigm in practice to date, nearly 25 % of the Eight crore adivasi population have been violently uprooted and their cultures disintegrated. The adivasi living inside the national parks have been declared illegal residents by the forest laws. As for those living inside Sanctuaries, the forest department has sought to illegitimate their presence with the Government giving its tacit approval for forced evictions. If one follows the current provisions of law to its letter and spirit, as many as Five million adivasi will join the 20 million already displaced from their natural habitat.

This cumulative failure of the Governmental agencies resulted in the involvement of many peoples' organizations and activist groups in protection of indigenous cultures and conservation of the green cover in the 80's. The adivasi assertion of rights over their natural habitat as per the constitutional guarantees and the current demand for self-rule are indicators of this adivasi struggle against the oppressive Forest laws and insensitive Government.

#### THE NEED FOR ADIVASI PARTICIPATION:

The experience with forest conservation during the last Fifty years clearly establishes the need for participation of the adivasi in the conservation efforts. In fact, it will be more appropriate if the adivasi themselves are to manage and sustain their natural habitat. The forest department which has personnel who are 'paid servants' has failed in its brief as the personnel do not have any emotional attachment with the forests nor are they mentally tuned to conserving the forests, belonging as they do to a department which was born for commercial exploitation of the 'resources'. This apart from the lack of indigenous knowledge regarding the forests which the adivasi possess. More startling a reality is the widespread corruption within the forest department, which has come to be established beyond any reasonable doubt. There can be no better testimony to this truth than the reduction in the forest cover



and denuded forests, and teak plantations after decades of 'scientific' conservation efforts by the forest department. A crucial aspect, generally forgotten as the obvious, is the fact that the personnel of the forest bureaucracy belong to the consumptive culture and perceives the forest as that to be protected after his material needs are met. Forest department, for all its claims of scientific management of the forests, appears to have crystallised into a sales outlet for forest produce. Protected areas turned into nurseries for timber yielding Teak, Eucalyptus, Sal, Sissu, and Khair trees. Thus, rampant poaching, timber smuggling and denuded forests cast a dark shadow of doubt on management of forests by Forest department without peoples' participation.

### ADIVASI AND CONSERVATION:

Adivasi perception of conservation, on the other hand, needs no explanation. Having sustained the forests over centuries, they have evolved a 'low desire level'(LDL) lifestyle which enables them to live in unique harmony with nature. Rather than being mere watchmen of the forests as the Government agencies have been, the adivasi realises and inherits the sensibilities regarding the conservation and sustenance of the bio diversity. These endowments of the Nagarahole adivasi is seen in their lifestyle right from their sketchy dwelling hutments to their food collecting habits. The huts of these adivasi is seen constructed utilising only deadwood and dry leaves. As a tradition they do not cut branches of live trees for any purpose including their fuel requirements. During the past decades, the adivasi had a migratory lifestyle like most forest beings moving from one location to the other within a specified area in order to help re generation of the forests. However, with the shrinking forest cover, the adivasi also adopted lifestyles based on the behaviour of the animals and instead of migrating the adivasi himself moved to distant ocatons to return with their daily requirements. The medicinal plants which the adivasi use are nature's gifts and after their movement was hampered, the adivasi began to spread the seed around to have these plants available in more than one location. The conservation idioms of the Adivasi is also seen in their hunting practices. The Jenu Kuruba never takes the honey completely from the honey comb in order to ensure that the bees did not suffer and the production does not come to an abrupt end. Similarly, the tubers and other roots on which adivasi sustain are never uprooted fully and is used ensuring that the mother plants survive and reproduce. And the rare hunts on which the adivasi embark is guided by availability of left leftovers left behind by the carnivores. Contrary to the popular perception that the adivasi are junglees using bows and arrows, the adivasi use only mud balls and other traps to stun small preys and use stones and sticks to move away from elephants and other animals. The adivasi also do not fear the beings of the wild as they have a deep rooted belief that the beings of the wild are spirits of their ancestors and would only protect them.

The conservation sensibilities of the adivasi are also seen in their rituals and their songs. The adivasi ritual revolves around sacred trees and the use of forest vegetation is predominant. The songs of the adivasi also center around the forest bio diversity and focus on the changing seasons with each tree and each being of the forests being worshipped. The adivasi also worship many animals such as elephants and snakes and nurture the firm belief that all the beings and life species of the forests are nurtured and protected by the presiding spirit 'Ajjappa'. Hence, it is beyond doubt that the adivasi are part of the forest eco system and there can be no conservation without them. The dependence of forest personnel on the adivasi for putting off forest fires, for tracking animals and identifying the flora & fauna is a reality not disputed. This must secure primacy for preservation of any eco-system.

During this era of global warming and acid rains, preservation of adivasi culture and traditions acquire greater relevance for the survival of mankind itself. Their sustainable agricultural practices and life which have over centuries kept the forests intact and left small pockets of earth undisturbed are parameters for future living. Hence, preservation of adivasi culture, traditions and the adivasi themselves in their natural habitat acquires a special significance and has to become a special area of focus in any conservation exercise.

Forests have never been amusement parks for the adivasi. The forests have always been and continues to be their habitat. They have an emotional empathy with the forests as any individual is patriotic



about his country. This gives them a moral legitimacy to 'nurture' the forests and those who are out to 'manage' forests through Eco tourism, National Parks and at all cannot shut themselves out of this reality.

### THE NEW WORLD ORDER & CONSERVATION:

The new economic order being pushed to the Third World by the leading economic powers of the world poses fresh threats to the common land resources. The rapid liberalisation of the Indian economy aimed at achieving growth through industrialisation, by soliciting multi national companies to come and open shop, puts tremendous pressures on the Nation's biotic resources.

Apart from bringing in a maximum degree consumptive lifestyle (MDCL) among the outside societies, in contrast to LDL, and selling them using the brutal idioms of market economy, these countries have targeted the bio diverse resources of the developing countries as potential rich pockets of earth to be colonized, through the world economic bodies which they control.

Coming in the garb of good Samaritans with concern for conservation, after having destroyed and utilised the resources to the hilt at their end of the planet, these forces through their MNC agents and pliable state governments are zooming in on marketing these bio diversities and establishing ownership on them. The British model of seeing forests as a resource base to be exploited rather than being conserved is now seen transformed in the form of international commercial and business houses entering into the 'arena' of 'green industrial revolution', motivated by the lucrative business propositions and therefore marketing 'tree and vegetation growth' in different hues and forms. This the adivasi recognise as the challenge of the new horizon.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE NAGARAHOLE FORESTS

Nagarahole forests in Karnataka spread over Mysore and Kodagu districts is a stretch of precious tropical semi ever green forests nurtured by the Dravidian indigenous people over centuries. Declared by the Government as a National Park, comprising an area of 643.39 sq.kms, in 1975, it was christened as Rajiv Gandhi National Park five years ago. The forests are now seen as a part of the Nilgiri Biosphere, which comprises an extended adivasi homeland of 5,500 sq.kms. The Nagarahole is surrounded by River Kabini which divides the forests from the Bandipur Tiger Project in the South-East, the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary of Kerala in the South, the Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary in the South-West and the Coffee plantations of Kodagu in West and the Mavukal reserve forests in the North. The dry farmlands of the Deccan plains to the East is the only non-forest stretch abutting Nagarahole.

The Nagarahole on the inner frills of the Western Ghats and abutting into the southern tips of the Deccan plateau receives an average rainfall of 50 to 70 inches each year. The Nagarahole is a bio reserve of hard wood, the Big cats and its preys, Elephants and a range of indigenous Dravidian tribes. Hard wood species such as Adina, Dalbergia, Terminalia, Pterocarpus and Careya, to name a few, makes Nagarahole a valuable green cover on earth. The divergent riches of wildlife sheltered by the Nagarahole include Langur, Jackal, Hyena, Hare, Gaur, Fox, Wild Dog, Spotted Deer, Mouse Deer, Barking Deer, Small Indian Civet, Jungle Cat, Wild boar, Leopard, Giant Flying Squirrel, Sambar, Porcupine, Pangolin, Slender Lois and many more apart from the Tiger and Elephant. A wide variety of reptiles and birds and a wide range of vegetation embellish Nagarahole, which is also the abode of indigenous dravidian tribes such as Jenu Kuruba, Betta Kuruba, Paniya and Panjari Yerava and Soliga. Nagarahole was the favourite haunt of the Mysore Maharaja who were subservient to the British. The Maharaja's hunting expeditions in Nagarahole perforce involved the adivasi who used to accompany the Maharaja's parties during their forays into the forests to hunt Tigers, Elephants, Leopards, Gaurs, Barking Deer and Wild Boars. The famous Khedda Operations in Nagarahole for trapping wild pachyderms was based solely on the expertise of these indigenous people.



The Old Mysore administration declared a portion (284.16 sq.kms) of Nagarahole as a game sanctuary in 1955, heralding in the era of protected areas in Karnataka. In 1975, the State Government expanded the game sanctuary to cover 571.55 sq.kms and declared it as a national park. Further expansion of the National Park to cover 643.39 sq.kms of Nagarahole came about in 1988. The Park area was demarcated into Four zones namely Core, Buffer, Tourism and Restoration Zones for restricting the movement of tourists and purportedly for conservation needs. For administrative purposes, the Park area was divided into Seven blocks called Ranges, namely Mathigodu, Kallahalla and Nagarahole in Kodagu district and Metikuppe, Kakanakote, Sunkadakatte and Veeranahosahalli in Mysore district. The Park area nestles 36 tribal hamlets called the 'Hadis' which are inhabited by more than 7,000 indigenous dravidian adivasi, belonging to Yerava, Paniya, Jenukuruba, Bettakuruba and Soliga communities. Before Nagarahole was declared as a National Park, these adivasi living in harmony with the wild flora and fauna sustained themselves on forest edibles like tubers, mushrooms, tender bamboo shoots, honey, yam, pumpkins, a variety of greens and small games.

These edibles except for small games were later declared as minor forest produce by the Government and despite policy formulations have barred the adivasi from sustaining themselves with legal permissiveness. The indigenous medicine systems of these adivasi based on forest produce such as wild turmeric, wild ginger and 'sarpa ghandhi', a wild scrub, apart from many other barks, roots and leaves also flourished inside the park area.

#### DESTRUCTION OF NAGARAHOLE:

More so during the 20 th century than earlier, Nagarahole has fallen victim to various forces which have with the changing times inflicted varying degrees of irreversible damages to the bio diversity and left behind scars which continue to destroy the forest to date. The tale of woe of Nagarahole which began with the hunting expedition of the Mysore Maharaja and his British guests, aggravated further when the British appropriated the forests as Government property in an impropriety, using it also as a convenient 'resource' base for loot of pristine timber. The British perpetuated this destruction of the forests by formulating laws using their authority.

Simultaneous was the stampede of the rich coffee planters of Kodagu to Nagarahole, devouring forest lands to expand their plantations. The planters continue the encroachment to date with the administration turning a blind eye. Major irrigation dams like Kabini and Taraka of the post independence era resulted in submergence of large portions of Nagarahole and displacement of as many as 500 adivasi families.

The 90 sq.km teak plantation, apart of what is now known as the Nagarahole National Park area, stand mute testimony to the organized destruction engineered by the British. These plantations, tombstones of destruction of pristine tropical semi ever green forests, are now the match sticks which ignite Nagarahole each summer. The fires apart from creating a scarcity of forage for the herbivores, creates soil erosion and engineers irreparable damages to the Nagarahole bio diversity.

During the recent decades, high levels of corruption among the forest bureaucracy and the unholy nexus between them and poachers and smugglers has virtually destroyed large tracts of Nagarahole and many wild animals have fallen victims to the guns of the poachers. And the laws still profess conservation, by bureaucracy.

#### ECO TOURISM & ECO DEVELOPMENT:

One of the major intrusions into Nagarahole, consequent to the acceptance of British mind set of forest as resource to be exploited for material needs, is eco-tourism. A government domain till the 80's, the liberalization of the economy and opening of the nation's economic gates for outside invasion in name of investments has resulted in the MNCs of the tourism industry casting a hawk's eye on



Nagarahole flouting the provisions of even the Wildlife Act. These MNCs include both the Indian and Foreign companies.

The modus operandi of these companies is to promise eco-development and 'development' of the adivasi till they secure an entry into the Forests for earning tourist revenue by meeting the consumptive needs of nature tourists and pleasure seekers. The first such onslaught on Nagarahole by the Taj Group of hotels in 1996 was protested by the adivasi through a public interest litigation filed before the Karnataka High court questioning the eco tourism project keeping view the larger interest of the tribal residing in the forest and the apprehension that the promoting of such eco tourism will spell doom for the precious undisturbed forest cover and will bring in modern day vices of the ultra urban culture.

The adivasi secured a land mark judgement by the court terming the resort project 'illegal' and directing this Indian MNC to hand over the property at Nagarahole to the Government. Noting the dangers of consumptive tourists and projects such as resorts being destructive to the eco balance, the court observes in its orders. "The issues raised herein are quite fundamental in nature affecting the wider public interest requiring maintenance of ecological balance and environmental requirements.....There is an absolute prohibition on the grant of such rights under Sec.20 read with Sec 35 (3) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972".

The adivasi reject all such projects funded by private business interests and international monetary agencies like the World Bank and the IMF, which promise to preserve the ecological balance and sustain bio diversity. Some efforts in the current decade by the forest department and the government to push through such projects, which were motivated by market forces, and use the same to displace the adivasi have been forcefully rejected. The Eco Development Project of the World Bank - GEF is one such which has zoomed in on Nagarahole projecting the cause of conservation and proposes to gain a foothold in the natural wealth of what has been left untouched by the forest department in this pristine nature cover. "The forest needs to be 'nurtured' and not 'developed' or 'managed' and is not a resource to be exploited but a habitat to be sustained and preserved"-- This is the mantra of adivasi of Nagarahole.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### NAGARAHOLE AND ADIVASI

Adivasi of Nagarahole are indigenous people of Dravidian origin. Though the present day rulers and die hard environmentalists bend backward to disown the Nagarahole adivasi of their habitat, the earliest record documenting the presence of these indigenous tribes show that adivasi such as Jenu Kuruba, Betta kuruba, Paniyas and Yeravas have had Nagarahole as their habitat since Seventh century A.D. British Anthropologist Thurston in his book "Castes and Tribes of South India" (1909) deals with the Nagarahole adivasi from an ethnographer's perception. He traces the ancestry of the Nagarahole adivasi like Betta Kurubas, Yeravas and Jenukurubas in their habitat to the Seventh Century A.D basing himself on the data available through the 1891 'Madras Census Report'.

The 'Madras Census Report' shows that these adivasi are part of a large group of descendants of the Pallavas, who were inhabiting the then vast forest tracts of what is now known as the 'Nilgiri Biosphere'. Over centuries since then, these adivasi have come to be chocked in small protected areas following sustained destruction of their biosphere by various races which invaded thereafter. Many fell victims to the destruction of their habitat and only the adivasi surviving inside the Nagarahole and other forest pockets have their cultural identities, inextricably linked as it is to their habitat, intact. A few who were forced out of their habitat have fallen victims to the dominant sections of the outside societies since then.

Supporting these frugal documentary evidences in the possession of the mainstream societies is the life and ethos of Nagarahole adivasi according to adivasi themselves. The traditions and history of the Jenu Kuruba adivasi, according to adivasi elders revolves around 12 'Kotthis' meaning different streams which have similar characteristics and has over the years adopted the a homogeneous lifestyle and thus



have come to be recognised as the Jenukuruba adivasi. The story of these jenu kuruba adivasi, as passed on by the word of mouth over the centuries, revolves around Nagarahole forests which has been their habitat for decades. The 12 jenukuruba streams were spread over different locations within Nagarahole like Gonigadde, Ganagooru, Siddapura Hadlu, Ammale, Lakkunda, Bargur and Billanahosahalli. The complete list is not available as the recent decades have seen certain jenu kuruba streams disappearing or merged with the mainstream society abetted by the conservation laws and the ever increasing destruction and encroachment of the forests by the farming communities and other village societies.

But, these streams which have disappeared are still remembered as part of jenu Kuruba traditions in the form of 12 pillars which symbolize each 'Kotthi' in a marriage pendal. Yet, these 12 'Kotthis' are still alive in the form of the traditional burial grounds and places of worship of their spirit 'Ajappa'. These spirits are invoked even to this day on every auspicious occasion through a ritual performed by the Yajamans (which is known as 'Burude Kartha' in Jenu nudi). The same rituals are followed by other forest dwellers too though each tribe identifies with these rituals in different forms as per their dialects. For ex: 'Burude Kartha' is 'Thudi' beating for the Yeravas and these forest dwellers have 16 'Chammas' instead of 'Kotthis'. The habitat of the Yeravas earlier spread over from the forests of Wayanad in Kerala to Nagarahole in Karnataka was earlier known as 'Yeravanadu' and these adivasi use the same 'Thudi' for both marriage and death ceremonies reflecting the deep rooted belief of the adivasi that the generation-re generation cycle of nature was a process of creation affecting all beings.

During the rituals the adivasi invoke all beings of the forests from trees to other forest produce. The crux of adivasi traditions and belief is that the spirit of the dead is equal to god and it is these spirits which protect them. If the predominant belief of the landed communities is to accord a befitting and ceremonial send off to the 'atma' of the dead, it is just the opposite among the adivasi. The adivasi invoke the spirits of the dead during each funeral ceremony to come and dwell in their household, reflecting the surreal nature of life and death being a eternal process which is physical and at the same time metaphysical. The Yerava adivasi observe an annual celebration named 'Kaanemmaru' in which the spirits of all those who were responsible for the birth of nature and its beings are called seeking answers to the woes of those times. These apart the Nagarahole adivasi reflect tribal characteristics which has found global acceptance. These are:

(a) Nagarahole adivasi do not beg and beggary is alien to their sensibilities.

(b) Nagarahole adivasi do not hoard food and this is in keeping with the realities of their life in their natural habitat.

(c) The endogamous societies of these adivasi clearly show that they are merged in a collective anvas emerging out of which is a lifestyle, harmonized with nature. The values of collective self with conceptual boundaries among these adivasi also has its genesis in they being thus supremely content and spiritually evolved with Nagarahole. This shames and brutalizes the possessive territorial feudalism and induced confinements of main stream societies.

(d) They possess an animistic belief in the spirits of their ancestors which they worship as being manifest in the various natural endowments of Nagarahole forests. Their traditions and ritualistic practices are symbolic of the pre-sanskrit era as also is their formless gods. This simply because the sanskritic practices did not touch these dwellers of forests for centuries. The latest records establishing these adivasi as forest dwellers is Karnataka State Gazetteer of Mysore District of 1988. Recording the adivasi community rights in Nagarahole ('Jamma' rights), the Gazetteer reads....."They had their habitats (forest area) divided which were exclusively meant for them and outsiders were allowed only on invitation"....."They have inborn talent for gathering honey. Men go for hunting, fishing, timber cutting and honey gathering etc., while the womenfolk with their digging sticks go in search of edible roots and fruits".(Chapter III -People-Tribes & Castes). Lifestyle Mirroring A Pristine Cultural Evolution: These adivasi still live deep inside Nagarahole, near water bodies in



harmony with the beings of the wild. The hamlets (Hadis) are so located that they blend with the topography of the forest. The hutments: simple shelters made of bamboo walls and thatched roofing of wild grass. The staple food : indigenous strains of rice called 'Doddi' ( which withstands vagaries of nature without chemical fertilizers), wild ragi, tubers, mushrooms, greens, tender bamboo shoots and seeds, honey , goose berries etc and small games. Traditional wild vegetables and fruits such as varieties of yams, beans, brinjals, bitter gourd, banana, lentils and pumpkins stud kitchen gardens of these people. Contrary to the popular perception, which has been propagated by the forest department personnel and other related agencies that the adivasi are poachers and killers, these indigenous people have hunting habits which are regulated by traditions, based on food gathering needs. When on search of food, these adivasi utilize the first morsel of meat they come across. This generally are left over of kills made by the carnivores.

Though these forest dwellers carry bows, they do not carry arrows to kill and instead carry hard mud balls and such others ammunition which generally stuns an animal and hence is used more often for self defence. Other forms of game hunting practiced by these adivasi include snares and traps. During honey collection, they collect honey just enough for them and leave behind the rest for the re-generation cycle.

The small games which these dwellers hunt include wild chicken, wild boar, hare, porcupine , pangolines, giant squirrels, flying squirrels, monitor, civet, wild cat and a variety of birds.

The folklore of these forest dwellers do not offer any evidence to support the claim of the Forest Department or the Naturalists that these adivasi are big game hunters or destroyers of forest life. Being worshipers of ,the spirit, believed to manifest in all beings of the forests, the folk traditions do not either glorify the hunt of game or express fear of the wild. The bonds with nature is so strong among these forest dwellers that the identification of all the beautiful constituents of the forests as the souls of their forefathers continues as a deep rooted ethos. Startling alive too is the animistic belief encompassing the entire Nagarahole with the deep felt adivasi virtual reality that the spirits of their forefathers control the elements of forest and protect them from all ailments. And so survives, the adivasi traditions and beliefs strongly rooted in this concept of protective ancestral umbrella of the forests, in everything from the whisper of trees to the movements of animals. The adivasi harbours no fear of the wild animals. He believes that the ancestors are controlling their movements and he enters the forests in search of food with this Armour in the mind. It is this empathy with Nagarahole which now makes the adivasi feel insecure and naked when he is violently displaced from his forest habitat. He continues to harbour the fear of the outside world and so, the villager first and the city man thereafter are entities he fears.

The Nagarahole adivasi do not fear death. Death merely provides an opportunity to enter the world of their elders and an opportunity for them to become a part of the protective ancestral umbrella. Marriage is no ceremony. It is an act of copulation for procreation. The younger adivasi choose their own partners and enter the forests for decision making. The courtship extends into living together if liking turns to love. And if it sours, man and woman have equality unparalleled in other societies to come out of the family bonds. The touchstone of all adivasi tradition is simple clean living and life itself is self sustained and holistic, closely knitted to Nagarahole.

The forest is the book for an adivasi child and the plants and animals the lessons. Preservation and Re-generation cycles the class rooms. All elders in the collective his parents. The sounds of the forests his music systems. It is a culture Nagarahole adivasi develops and carries with him from the cradle to grave and beyond. It is a unbreakable bond that cannot be severed. Nagarahole adivasi cannot survive without his forest and will not allow its continued desecration.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### CHALLENGES TO ADIVASI LIFE

These children of Nagarahole have survived constant pressure and threats from the outside systems, for centuries. The nomenclature, such as Yerava and Kuruba, with which these adivasi are identified is used as words signifying 'the lowly born' by the feudal gentry and the village societies of Kodagu and Mysore districts, even to date. The racial overtones are unmistakable.

Right up to the 19th century, Yerava, Kuruba and other Nagarahole adivasi used to cover themselves with barks and shreds of cloth. Though this continues among adivasi old timers even today, some started to wear a round of textile called 'Dhoti' to cover themselves during the early part of the 20th century, emulating the rest in the outside societies of South India. But, during those early decades, the feudal gentry had arrogated to themselves the sole right to let this piece of textile below the knee. The adivasi, who dared emulate them, were hounded and beaten up. They were expected to cover their modesty only upon their thighs, and this was applicable even for the adivasi women. Kuruba and Yerava old timers recall many such instances with emotion welling up in them.

But, it was not only in such forms that the adivasi came to be discriminated by the outside societies. Many were forced into bonded labour by the feudal gentry and adivasi women became a target for their pleasurable pastimes. The innocence and gullibility of the adivasi were thus thoroughly exploited. Meanwhile, the loot of the forests continued unabated and the British and their subservient Indian counterparts like the Mysore Kings started converting large tracts of the forests into teak plantations in the name of scientific forest management. Many adivasi were forced into menial labour, with the overwhelming power of the state stifling whatever desire they had in them to protest.

### ERA OF DISPLACEMENT:

The engineered deprivation of these Nagarahole adivasi by the mainstream societies of Kodagu, even if one goes by available records, dates back to a century. The few well meaning efforts by concerned members of the bureaucracy during the British era negated itself by a lack of sensitive understanding of adivasi life and values and aided the land Sharks of Kodagu society make away with the benefits.

During 1899, the then Kodagu Chief Commissioner's administration brought to force a law known as 'Coorg Land Revenue and Regulation Act'. This Act benefited some Nagarahole adivasi communities with the Commissionerate distributing lands around the Nagarahole forests to few adivasi communities for cultivation. Sadly however, this was not based on an understanding of the community self of the adivasi and their ethos of community cultivation. Yet, the administrations' well meaning effort had provided an opportunity to the adivasi to stand on par with the land sharks. The Commissionerate gave individual land holding records to the adivasi, who in turn made efforts at cultivating these lands in accordance with their values of collective life, oblivious of the importance of individual land records in the State's scheme of things.

This lack of understanding of the tribal ethos by the administration which resulted in handing over individual land records to the adivasi, helped the village sharks to grab these landholdings from the gullible forest dwellers. Use of social pressures in such land grabbing are also not discounted. Reflected in these efforts by the Commissionerate of Kodagu is the classic lack of understanding regarding the adivasi among those in the administration or the State apparatus. Such moves at perceiving the adivasi reality, based on the State's understanding of the value systems of the poor and the landless of village societies over the century, resulted in adivasi being put under tremendous pressure. Violent displacement of many adivasi communities from Nagarahole during the decades that



followed, after conservation concerns became a global agenda for the States, is merely an amplification of this perceptual lacunas.

#### STATE SPONSORED CONSERVATION & ADIVASI SUBJUGATION

These projected conservation concerns resulted in the State's 1972 Wildlife Act during the later half of the current century which compounded the adivasi woes. The Act, by being silent on the adivasi issue and the rights of the forest dwellers, legitimized the exploitation of adivasi till then. The Act only recognized wildlife preservation needs after decades of forays by the trophy hunters. Simultaneously, the forest department continued felling of timber and loot of precious non-animal forest produce. The Department, busy with its teak plantations and commercial exploitation of the forests and the adivasi, turned a blind eye to the social atrocities on the adivasi and the rapid poaching of wild animals of Nagarahole.

By Eighties, Forest Department had identified adivasi as the biggest threat to their 'operations' in Nagarahole. Forced evictions of the adivasi from their age old hamlets inside Nagarahole, which was declared as a Wildlife reserve in 1975 and upgraded as a National Park in 1983, began. Many adivasi were forced to timber plantations in conditions worse than those at the concentration camps. Their human dignity and rights were molested by the hour at these plantations which continued till 1984.

Between 1975 and 1984 as many as 34 adivasi hamlets were forcibly dislocated by the Forest Department from the Nagarahole forests. While some were forced to new locations inside the National Park area, others were forced to leave their habitat. The hamlets which became targets of the Forest Department during this period are Athurkolli, Olalekolli, Ammale, Maaranakolli, Meedirakolli, Siddapurahadlu, Shantapurahadlu, Sullikolli, Meenukattakolli, Berukolli, Byranakolli, Kaatisattahalla, Joyikolli, Chotteparehadlu, Padusaarehadlu, Kolakere, Kanthooru, Malalukolli, Somanakolli, Navulugadde, Bandehadlu, Eermanehadlu, Aanesattagadde, Sujjilu, Kesavinakolli, Morsamihadlu, Karlugadde, Kuntuneragadde, Gundre, Chawdigadde, Doddagadde, Hebbala, Begur and Mattigodu. As many as 2000 adivasi families were cultivating around 5000 acres of land around these hamlets using their unique forest based techniques which did not even involve use of cattle.

#### ADIVASI DECAY & DESTRUCTION:

Once displaced, the forest dwellers were caught between the deep sea and devil called the forest department and the landlords of Mysore and Kodagu societies, respectively. The forest department 'rehabilitated' around 300 families in the outskirts of the forests in matchbox houses near Chandanakere, Brahmagripura and Majjigehalla. But, these concrete structures, each standing on Three cents of land and having a built area of 14 x 16 feet without the elements of nature having access inside, were alien to the adivasi. They use these houses as cattle sheds and live in thatched hutments adjacent to it, even to this day.

Apart from these structures, the department did not provide any alternative means of livelihood for these adivasi. Revenue lands provided to a handful of them, like those at Chandanakere, became easy meat for the coffee planters of Kodagu, with neither the Forest department nor the Revenue authorities offering them any protection. The adivasi were cheated, harassed or literally kicked out of these landholdings. These adivasi along with their less fortunate brethren were forced to become plantation labourers, their life at the mercy of the coffee planters.

In many such colonies to which they have been evicted, the adivasi have been forced to live life which are worse than the worst. Hunger deaths, deaths owing to newly acquired diseases from the outside societies and situations wherein they are consciously made to waste themselves away are dime a dozen. The hunger deaths at Daddadalli Colony and the wasting away of many adivasi especially in the H D Kote sector in Mysore district of the Park are recent examples.



The story of the adivasi still living inside the forests was no different. They became target of the forest department's highhandedness and exploitation. Old timers recall how department personnel had pushed many adivasi into the forest fires, and projected them to be accidents when they were involved in either putting off forest fires or creating fire lines, since 1950s.

Thus, the forest rights of the forest dwellers were severely curbed. They were prevented from leading their traditional lifestyle based on forest produce. Those forest dwellers who joined the forest department as watchers and guards became targets of ridicule and racial discrimination.

Other adivasi, who dared voice their protest were targeted for such special treatment, like beatings and false complaints of poaching and smuggling.

#### DESTRUCTION & EXPANSION OF NAGARAHOLE FORESTS :

Meanwhile, forest department personnel continued their loot of the forests and the influential coffee planters of Kodagu, their encroachment of the Nagarahole forests. Substantial portions of the forests were turned into coffee plantations. But, as pressure mounted from environmentalists and other nature lovers, the department conveniently identified adivasi as root cause for destruction which the department personnel themselves had actively perpetrated along with Kodagu's coffee planters and Mysore's tobacco growers.

Consequently, adivasi, who still continued their indigenous agricultural practices inside the forests, had their crops destroyed. They were hounded out of the forest. This, incidentally, was a part of the forest department's strategy at showing an increase in the National Park area and marginally compensating for all the encroachments by the Planters and Tobacco growers. Instances such as the destruction of the standing crops of Maralukolli adivasi by the forest personnel using tamed elephants in 1984 are dime a dozen. Brahmagiripura adivasi recall how the Maralukolli adivasi petrified by the brutal act, disintegrated to different areas, both in and out of the forests.

During the mid 80s, forest department intensified their assault on the adivasi rights and dignity. The department forcibly encroached on agricultural lands belonging to the adivasi since centuries at Nanachi, Balekovu, Gonigadde, Madenooru, Kumbarakatte, Ganagooru and Junglehadi, and converted nearly 500 acres into bamboo, teak and eucalyptus plantations. This process of alienating the adivasi from their traditional habitat continues with the department as recently as three years ago expanding the National Park area by nearly 5000 acres, encroaching on adivasi lands. Continuous efforts have also been made at severing the adivasi' links with the forests by digging up roads leading to the forests from certain adivasi hamlets and preventing the adivasi from entering the forests for their traditional festivals and rituals.

### CHAPTER FIVE

#### FAILURE OF THE WELFARE STATE

The Story of the Nagarahole adivasi is both a tale of the majority in a pluralistic society imposing its will on a segment which is neither vocal nor powerful and the State imposing its conservation concerns with scant regard either for their welfare or human rights. Neither the welfare state of the erstwhile Maharaja' of Mysore nor the democratic model of free India, has been in tune with the ground realities these indigenous people.

Since independence, the models conceived and thought to be good for the forest dwellers is largely motivated by the interests of the majority society and not the interests of the adivasi or their cultural



realities. The experience of the last 50 years establish that the plan priorities of mainstream society and their welfare models mean destruction of both the adivasi and their culture and their habitat, the Nagarahole forests.

Free India promised much for the adivasi with many constitutional guarantees. The declaration of adivasi as scheduled tribes under Article 342 of the Constitution recognized and granted them a special place in the Indian canvas. This meant a constitutional recognition of the need for providing special protection and rights for the adivasi, including protection of their human rights and granting special privileges vis-a-vis opportunities and avenues through Reservation benefits. Article 46 of the Constitution states that "the state shall promote, with special care, educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, in particular the scheduled tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation."

But, these constitutional guarantees have remained mere illusions for the Nagarahole adivasi. The categorization of adivasi with Scheduled Castes in a 'SC & ST' bracket for all policy formulations and administrative needs, results in nearly all special programmes of the State being modelled on the needs of the more dominant Scheduled Castes of village societies, except some forest related activities.

Simultaneously, the number of communities in the Scheduled Tribes list has increased since independence, with more and more communities being included in the list based on the vote bank politics of parties in power. Thereby, the benefits of reservation and such other special programmes does not reach these forest dwellers. The provisions of Article 46 thrown to winds, State turned a blind eye to the exploitation of the Nagarahole adivasi by the planters and tobacco growers even while legislating many forest laws, perpetrating state sponsored exploitation.

#### STATE IMPOSED WELFARE MEASURES:

Naturally, under the circumstances the priority of the State revolved around forceful eviction of the adivasi from their habitat and 'civilize' them through various welfare schemes such as providing modern education, giving them alien implements such as those which are used by the village societies and providing them with various traps of materialistic lifestyle without any thought towards preserving their pristine cultural identity or their LDL lifestyle.

When the State found that there was a resistance to these efforts from the adivasi, the Integrated Tribal Development Programme was launched countrywide in 1976. But, even the ITDP was not evolved based on the adivasi needs and reality and instead became a re packaged implementation of the earlier programmes through different agencies. Naturally, even the ITDP failed to deliver anything keeping with the current realities and did not even provide the adivasi with a model of even a protected commune within the forests with responsibilities of conservation being devolved to them.

Thus, the various welfare schemes meant for the adivasi is in effect an imposition of the State. With no efforts being made either at micro planning or to study and understand the adivasi needs, the Nagarahole adivasi is forced to accept education, health, housing and other inputs planned and perceived to be their needs by the Delhi or Bangalore planners though totally alien.

#### EDUCATION

Consequently, the curriculum of education to the adivasi is the same as that of the children of mainstream societies. That this is alien to the adivasi child as it does not incorporate either the adivasi value systems or language is brushed aside by the State. Till the 60s even these teaching institutions were located based on the needs of village societies. This meant that the adivasi child had a narrow access to the education facilities made available.



In these schools, the adivasi child suffered racial discrimination and humiliations from children of village societies. Many left their schools with education appearing irrelevant and emotionally traumatic. In the process, he is cheated the opportunity to evolve a consciousness to combat outside pressures and guard his values, owing to lack of education.

The adivasi resistance to education through integration with the mainstream societies, owing to the divergent socio economic status of the village communities and related discrimination, dawned on the State during the 70s. The result is 'Ashram Shale', an adivasi residential school model, making an effort at taking primary education to the doorsteps of these forest dwellers by developing a model combining both education, again as perceived by the mainstream society without incorporating the tribal ethos, and child health, through nutritious food programmes.

Seven such tribal residential schools inside Nagarahole, seek to cater to the forest dwellers by imparting education using curriculum no different from the other government run schools in the rest of Karnataka. Meant exclusively for the adivasi children, these schools hold the promise of treating the children as boarders provided with nutritious food, clean cloths and such other necessities to maintain personal hygiene. These schools are manned by a warden, cook and teachers who are provided residential quarters near the schools.

This model is widely accepted by the social scientists as a laudable endeavour. But, the success of the model among the Nagarahole adivasi is only marginal. Only 50 percent of the children attend these schools and the drop out rates are extremely high. The model is a failure as a residential school as neither the children nor the teachers and other staff reside at the school. The nutritious food is merely remained a dream with scandals of diversion of commodities and black marketing of the same having become a regular affair. Imparting education at these schools is more of a play acting with these children who attend these schools turning out to be only 'signature' literates at the end of their primary education.

Thereby, at least two generation of the Nagarahole adivasi is not been empowered to enjoy the benefits of special guarantees incorporated in the Nation's Constitution like Reservation et al, both in education and employment. The advent of Non Governmental Organizations during the 80s, intervening for the adivasi and their habitat, in a severe indictment of the State & its machinery, helped at least a handful enjoy the benefits.

#### HEALTH:

The Nagarahole adivasi has minimum access to State's health systems. A lone Primary Health Center, established in late 70s continue to cater to the 4,000 strong adivasi population inside the Nagarahole. A mobile tribal health unit was provided just as recently as Seven years ago. These forest dwellers have no access to the emergency health systems of neighbouring villages and towns. The State has not made any effort at providing health systems in keeping with the adivasi life and their habitat. Efforts have also not been made to integrate the highly evolved herbal medicine systems of these adivasi with the modern medicine systems.

The State has failed to recognize the dependence of the Nagarahole adivasi on the State's health systems, which is predominantly based on modern medicine systems. The adivasi herbal medicine system is rich for forest related and other aliments. Yet, sustained pressures on these forest dwellers apart from violent dislocations from their habitat from time to time has put the clock back on its evolution. The lack of state patronage also adversely affected these systems, increasing the adivasi dependence on the State's health system.



Consequently, the mortality rate among the adivasi was on a high and till the late 80s when NGOs intervened to provide emergency services and necessary reach to these forest dwellers. The State's immunisation programmes reached the adivasi only during the 80s, with the NGO activities animating the State agencies.

The failure of the State to provide adequate health support systems in keeping with the needs of the adivasi has resulted in many hunger deaths in Nagarahole. The high rate of malnutrition among these forest dwellers owing to the State policies preventing them from subsisting adequately on the forest produce is reflected in the record number of epilepsy patients. Bone diseases and hampered faculties also stand out. A down swing in the population of these indigenous communities was clear till the 80s before the NGO and other support groups intervened to halt a process which was akin to efforts aimed at deliberate extermination of a race.

The lone PHC inside Nagarahole is an example of a truant health center with irregular doctors and inadequate medical supplies. The adivasi who visits the Center only when his condition is in an advanced state do not find the cure, as the Center is ill equipped to meet the situation. This is a reflection of failure of the State in creating systems in keeping with the value systems of the adivasi, which is based on an immense faith in the spirits of Nagarahole. Further, if a health unit is at a distance of more than 5 kms, he is discouraged to go.

The Mobile Health Unit is not in working condition half the year. And when it is condition, it seldom reaches either the colonies which have no other transport access or meet the requirement of the adivasi who is in dire need of medical attention. The Unit is more regularly involved in implementing Family Planning programmes on an indigenous population which is barely managing to survive diverse pressures on its very existence.

### HOUSING

The State's efforts at providing housing is a patent example of urban planning for a adivasi society. The State brought in alien structures into Nagarahole during the late Sixties to replace the community conclave of hutments of the adivasi. The structures brought into Nagarahole were matchbox constructions without the elements of being allowed even a peek. These dark holes were also of poor quality and was modelled without even the rudimentary understanding of adivasi ethos of community life. Such houses built in a straight line reached Five percent of the adivasi families.

Instead of providing alternative houses which was modelled and constructed in keeping with the adivasi needs, these houses turned the 'beneficiary' hadis into slums. The structures were rejected by the adivasi with most using these structures as stores for their meagre belongings. The adivasi family put up traditional thatched hutments attached to the walls of these structures for their use. The structures also affected the community hygiene of a traditional adivasi hadi and stood out glaringly to the topography of Nagarahole.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE ADIVASI ASPIRATIONS

The Nagarahole adivasi thus sandwiched between the designs of the State backed by the strong lobby of environmentalists and the ever increasing pressures of the forests from the outside societies aspire for due recognition of their cultural identity and their role in conservation efforts and want any development model to revolve around their habitat and its sustainability. In keeping with these aspirations, the adivasi-model revolves around three different strata of the Nagarahole namely (a) forests which are dwelling habitats of the adivasi (b) forests which are conserved and protected by the adivasi and (c) the sacred forests of the adivasi.



The first category comprises of 9,000 acres of forests outside the core area around the forests for meeting the habitat requirements of 1,800 adivasi families with provisions for adivasi to carry out their time tested sustainable agricultural practices. These forests would act as social fences against exploitation of the forest wealth by the agents of the consumptive societies. The location of the adivasi haadis in this area has been identified based on the adivasi traditions and 'sthala purnas' passed on over the centuries. This comprises of Six 'jammas' in Virajpet (Kodagu) sector namely Nanachi (980 acres, 196 jenu Kuruba families), Gonigadde (1,184 acres, 237 Jenu Kuruba families), Bommadu (860 acres, 163 Jenu kuruba/yerava families), Kaantur (495 acres, 99 jenu kuruba families), Madenoor (645 acres, 129 jenu kuruba families) and Aayirhossali (1630 acres, 326 panjari yerava/ jenu kuruba families); three 'jammas' in Kakanakote region (3,250 acres, 650 jenu kuruba/betta kuruba/ yerava families). The second category comprises forests with a radius of 12.5 acres around each adivasi haadi which would be under direct conservation efforts of the adivasi with rights over minor forest produce and medicinal plants. This is forest land to the extent of 22,500 acres.

The third category comprises the rests of the forest cover which would be barred from access to anybody and would be conserved together by the adivasi and the State for preserving the bio diversity.

#### CONSERVATION STRATEGY:

(a) The Nagarahole forests must be under the direct supervision of the adivasi, in tune with their indigenous identity and with due recognition and powers to their conservation idioms with the guarantee that there would be no forced re location of any of these adivasi families from their habitat.

(b) All conservation strategies must be in consultation with the adivasi and with their prior approval, in keeping with the time tested indigenous knowledge and expertise in their possession.

(c) There should be no commercial exploitation of Nagarahole either for timber or for wildlife, including consumptive tourism. Tourism, if a must, should be in the adivasi idiom with visitors staying in adivasi haadis and living their lifestyle in harmony with the forests. The Nagarahole must cease to be haunts for pleasurable past times.

(d) The Nagarahole must be managed by a Steering Committee comprising Jamna Sabha yajmans, representatives of the State, environment groups, adivasi organizations and experts in different spheres and concerned individuals.

(e) Various works such as building of roads and concrete structures inside the Nagarahole must stop with immediate effect. The adivasi reject any development initiative which destroys the canvas of the wild. The adivasi families which have been forcefully re-located to the fringe forest areas must be vested with the right to enter the forests for performing their traditional duties and observing their festivals, apart from enjoying their minor forest produce. These families include 600 families in 12 haadis in Virajpet sector and 800 families in 34 haadis in Hunsur sector.

(f) Vigorous efforts must be made to curtail 'fence eating the crop' with necessary vigil on the agencies of the State and adivasi and the state agencies should work hand in hand in keeping out the smugglers and the poachers. Forest contractors should be banned.

(g) All disbursement of payments for conservation efforts including fighting forest fires et al must



be through the management committee and should not be vested solely with forest department personnel.

(h) The state should initiate special efforts at imparting specific training to the adivasi in order to blend traditional wisdom with acceptable modern conservation strategies with the ultimate aim of the adivasi himself assuming positions such as Conservators and above. As an interim strategy, the state should recognize adivasi yajamans in the necessary manner by according them honorary titles with equal powers as the agencies of the State.

(I) Movement of all vehicles except to meet conservation requirements and emergencies must be banned inside the forests. These vehicles must be solar powered to reduce noise and environmental pollution. All approach roads passing through the forests must be diverted outside the forests on a war footing.

(j) All concrete structures within 10 km radius of the forests should be demolished and strict regulations must be enforced for any structure which comes up in future.

(k) All research activities must have the unanimous approval of the managing committee and the managing committee should be the final authority for clearing any research project. The committee should also have the right to withdraw its permission for any research project if and when it is found to be anti conservation.

(l) Adivasi rapid action forces must be deployed in strategic locations with necessary mobility and communication networks. The State should stand with the adivasi in fighting the pressures on the forests from the village societies.

(m) The adivasi reject all externally funded conservation efforts as long as these efforts are funded in the form of loans. The adivasi stand is that all such conservation efforts must first secure the approval of the adivasi and the high power management committee and any funds should be in the form of grants which are not to be repaid or have any strings attached in the form of patenting and such others.

### MANAGEMENT STRATEGY:

Currently, Nagarhole is being managed by the State agencies without any scope for active participation of the adivasi. The dangers of such efforts have been enlisted earlier with the teak plantation and the eucalyptus misadventure standing out as glaring examples. It is also clear that without a community effort and participation of all, the forests given the intense pressures on it will not last beyond the next two decades of the 21st century. The adivasi gravely disturbed by such a serious situation, propose the following management module.

The British model of wildlife management which still in vogue even 50 years of independence has the Nagarhole segmented into Seven ranges under two conservation circles, one territorial and another wildlife. These ranges and their range officers have over the decades merely made it a pastime to attack the adivasi for all the denudation and destruction of the forests. This is not established by facts.

On the contrary the facts establish that there is large scale encroachment of the forests by the powerful planters of Kodagu, that most of these forest officers are rich beyond their normal means, that a strong timber lobby still pry on these forests with the connivance of the agents of the state and that wildlife meat is available for the planters at their fancies. On the adivasi part, the only fact that exists is that a handful of adivasi have been coerced into wielding the guns provided by the planters under threat given the feudal sensibilities of these planters and powerful farmers who continue to address the adivasi in derogatory terms as 'hey, kuruba' (meaning infidels in their parlance and not recognition of an ethnic identity).



The indigenous model for management of the forests, under such circumstances, to be implemented by the adivasi is a three tier system comprising (a) Haadi Sabha (b) Nagarahole Jamma Sabha and (d) Steering Committee. These management systems include (a) Forest Conservation Committee and (b) Arbitration Committee at each Haadi and Jamma level.

(a) The Haadi Sabha comprises of all adivasi elders and women of each adivasi haadi, who have attained 18 years of age. All programmes will be planned and implemented in each haadi by the haadi sabha which will also have the responsibility of supervising these programmes. All conservation efforts and utilization and distribution of minor forest produce in the forests which are in the ambit of each haadi will be as per the guidelines established by the haadi sabha. The forest conservation committee at the haadi will be a committee established by the haadi sabha and it will have the responsibility of preventing all disruptive activities on the forests apart from implementing and supervising conservation exercises. The Arbitration Committee would also be brought into existence by the haadi sabha and this committee would be the final authority in settling any disputes and the punitive measures declared by this committee on erring members of the haadi will be final. The traditional yejaman of the haadi will be the chairman of the haadi sabha and the arbitration committee. The chairman of the conservation Committee will be appointed by the haadi sabha, which will meet once a week. The conservation committee shall meet once in fifteen days and arbitration committee whenever there is a dispute.

(b) The forests will have Nine Jamma Sabhas which will meet once every month. These Sabhas will have three representatives from each haadi sabha comprising the Yejaman, the chairman of the conservation committee and a lady representative. The Yejaman of the Jamma Sabha will be an unanimous choice by the representatives of the Sabha and the Steering Committee will arbitrate on the nominees for Jamma Sabha Yejaman from the list submitted by the Jamma Sabha in the event of there being no unanimity among the Jamma Sabha members. The Jamma Sabha will be the final appellate authority for resolving any dispute which is carried over from the haadi sabha and decisions shall be arrived at with full participation of the Jamma Sabha members with the Yejaman announcing the decision only with the mandate of the majority. The Jamma Sabha shall also co ordinate implementation of various programmes and shall lay the directions as per the requirements decided by the haadi sabha and if necessary, guidelines of the Steering Committee. The Jamma Sabha shall also be responsible for co-ordinating with forest department personnel as and when necessary and laying the broad outlines of requirements and functioning of the various bodies in the Jamma based on the decisions taken by the haadi sabhas.

(c) The overall management of the forests will be vested with a Steering Committee, comprising the Yejamans of the Nine Jammās; the forest department officers from DCF to CF and beyond; Environmental expert as identified by the adivasi and forest department; representatives of the NGOs involved in adivasi struggle in the region as identified by the adivasi; representatives of NGOs involved in environmental issues as identified by the adivasi, the forest department and the local administration; a representative from the concerned district administrations; Adivasi experts from the academic circuit as identified by Adivasi and NGOs working among Adivasi; Local MLAs whose constituency encompasses the forest; Local MPs; and three other representatives from other professions who are knowledgeable about the forest and the adivasi.

The Committee has not exceed more than 35 members and shall meet once three months. The Committee will be jointly chaired by an adivasi representative and a representative of the forest department. The meetings shall be convened compulsorily once in three months by the Government representative and as and when Ten members of the Committee jointly represent for a meeting. The adivasi Co-Chairperson will be nominated by the Jamma Yajamans. The Steering Committee Chairperson will be nominated from among all the Steering Committee members. The Secretary of the Committee who shall convene the meetings shall be a representative of the forest department.



The Committee has finalized the guidelines for management of the forests and the protection of adivasi culture based on the opinions expressed by the members of the Committee. The Committee shall also be responsible for mobilizing and channelising funds towards conservation and adivasi welfare.

The Committee shall also have the powers to decide on stringent punitive measures against all those involved in anti conservation activities and exploiting and infringing on the human rights and forest rights of the adivasi. The Committee shall also have the powers to nominate a Jamma Sabha Chairperson from among the list of nominees submitted by the Jamma Sabha in the event of the Sabha failing to make an unanimous choice. The Committee shall liaison with the Government and voice the micro planning inputs and ensure that the plans of the government are in keeping with the conservation needs and adivasi aspirations. The Committee shall ensure that there is no forcible eviction of adivasi from the forests and arbitrate on the actions of the forest personnel as and when cases are foisted on the adivasi without any basis. The Committee shall also be the final authority in appointment of lower level field personnel for conservation needs and adivasi welfare.

#### ADIVASI DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

(a) The adivasi economy shall be based on sustainable cultivation practices which has been followed over the centuries by these forest dwellers in the form of medicinal plants and forest produce such as gooseberries, honey, tubers, roots and shoots. The adivasi shall enjoy the rights over inter cropping without affecting the forest canvas around his haadi and without using any modern machinery or chemical fertilizers. Horticultural produce shall also form a back bone of the adivasi economy and food habits. The adivasi shall have the rights over small prey which shall be listed out by the Steering Committee in consultation with the Jamma Sabhas based on seasonal observations.

(b) The adivasi haadis shall be established by the adivasi in keeping with their traditions and merging with the topography of the forests without any destruction of the forest cover. The adivasi shall be given assistance for putting up their traditional dwelling structures using dead wood and dry leaves. If the State is keen on providing them with community electricity, the adivasi opt for solar electrification for lighting purposes and reject high tension wires passing over the forest endangering the wildlife. The adivasi shall also be given assistance for cleaning up traditional water holes in the forests which have long gone unkempt, affecting both the wildlife and the adivasi.

(c) The adivasi children shall be educated in their mother tongue with Kannada being an optional language at the primary level. The curriculum shall be framed with the help of adivasi yejamans, adivasi experts and educationists, based on the inherent conservation idiom of the adivasi. After due education, the adivasi shall be given preference in agencies involved in forest conservation and preservation of indigenous cultures. Each Jamma shall have a high school and collegiate education shall be given outside the forests with special facilities and institutions being established by the Steering Committee in the adjoining villages and towns. An Ashram Shale based on decisions taken by the haadi sabha shall be established in a adivasi hutment for every five haadis in order to ensure nutrition inputs to children. The adivasi rejects construction of roads leading to the haadis and want only path ways to approach different haadis. Educated adivasi shall be given preference while appointing teaching for the primary and high school education by the Steering Committee.

(d) The adivasi health system is invariably based on both the traditional systems and modern medical practices owing to irreversible process of history. While the adivasi need encouragement for sustaining its indigenous medicinal practices which are based on herbs and other forest produce, the adivasi also need access to modern medical practices for treating ailments which have reached the adivasi from the village societies. Hence, apart from bringing the existing health apparatus under the Steering Committee for better supervision, the adivasi shall have a PHC for each Jamma. Each Jamma Sabha Chairman shall also be given wireless communication systems managed by the forest department to call for mobile medical help in the case of emergencies.



## CONCLUSION

The adivasi struggle at Nagarahole forests presents the saga of a continuous struggle by the indigenous forest tribes like Jenu Kuruba, Betta Kuruba and Yerava for protection of their habitat and their cultural identity amidst grave threats to both from the State and the organized communities. Though these tribes stand out as uncorrupted examples for living in harmony with nature and sustaining their habitat, they have over the decades faced severe threats of forcible re location and organized efforts of the mainstream societies in painting them as the sole threats to a pristine nature cover.

Apart from the cultural shocks which these adivasi suffered during the pre independence era with rampant felling of the forests and encroachments literally reducing a large majority of them into subservience before the village societies, the post independence era brought to them the age of forced re locations. The 80s saw many such adivasi groups being forced out of the forests and most of these adivasi groups especially the Yeravas have been reduced to labourers at the mercy of rich coffee planters of Kodagu.

The advent of NGO groups such as CORD, DEED and Fedina Vikas around this time to take up the cause of these dying adivasi groups has now resulted in the adivasi standing strong and resisting pressures to which they gave in during the previous decades. The spread of awareness regarding their rights in this adivasi belt of Virajpet in Kodagu district and Periyapatna, Hunsur and H D Kote in Mysore district have borne fruit during the late 90s with the resistance to the Taj Resorts at Murkal in gross violation of the existing laws standing out as a prime example. Despite severe pressures from the Government and its agencies, with the moneybags of the Taj Group doing the talking, the adivasi stood firm and finally took the Taj to the portals of Karnataka High Court.

The adivasi felt their real power as a organized group when they declared a Nagarahole Bundh on Dec. 29, 1996 and succeeded like never before. The Nagarahole Bundh was the historic first in post independent India when the adivasi asserted their supremacy over their traditional domain in no uncertain manner. This success had a sugar coating a month later when the Karnataka High Court in January 1997 gave a verdict in favour of the adivasi, exposing the State and its agencies. The matter is now, ironically, pending before the Supreme Court with the State holding the brief on behalf of the Taj.

And since then, there has been no looking back for the Nagarahole adivasi. The legislation of Bhurui Committee recommendations by the Parliament giving mandate for tribal self rule saw the Nagarahole adivasi celebrating the Haadi Republic Day on January 26, '97. It was a day when even the State's agencies stood mute spectators in awe. The Nagarahole adivasi followed this with a forceful rejection of the India Eco Development Project of the World Bank for Nagarahole booing the WB delegation away in Feb. '97. This has resulted in the WB and the Union Government giving the entire project a new dimension taking the adivasi sensibilities into account.

Now, the adivasi have taken it up themselves to declare self rule in their haadis with the State dragging its feet in implementing the Tribal Panchayat Raj Extension Act of 196 based on Bhuria Committee recommendations. The State's agencies can enter such haadis only with the permission of the Yejaman.

The Peoples' Plan is a document borne out of these struggles and precedes even the Bhuria legislation. Yes, the Nagarahole adivasi have come a long way from the dying kurubas exploited by the State and village societies and emerged into a strong fighting force clear about their needs and capabilities.

\*\*\*\*\*ENDS\*\*\*\*\*



CONVENOR  
DISTRICT COMMITTEE  
BUDAKATTU KRISHIKARA SANGHA  
COORG DISTRICT.

011 4619393

MS. JESSICA MOTT  
MR. SAM TANKRAJ  
WORLD BANK.

Dear Mr. Jessica Mott and Mr. Sam Tankaraj,

We came to know that you are World Bank's representatives and are responsible for sanctioning money to Nagarahole Eco-Development Project. We are surprised that you are about to sanction money to this project which will negate Nagarahole Adivasis their right to life.

We too need the forest. Our life depends on it. But such a life supportive forest has been seen by the Government and the Forest Department only as a source of revenue through logging and auctioning wood and timber. The trees and great many parts of the forest we depended for fruits, tubers, honey, etc., are cut and cleared by them.

We know that the directive principles of your Bank says that to sanction money to any project first of all it should be guaranteed that the implementation of the project doesn't violate the human rights of the indigenous people.

That in the preparation of the project these people should be involved and consulted and that their opinions be respected.

And the development project which the forest department has prepared and which is going to be funded by you has never been made available for our observation. The forest department has never cared to translate it to our language.

So the present Eco-Development Project is prepared without caring for our traditional rights, without discussing with us. It aims only at our displacement. It neglect our role in the development of the projects. At present the department officials are constantly misbehaving with us, ill-treating us and oppressing us to push us out of the forest.

We too believe that forests should be saved, all its flora and fauna be protected and tribal life be prospered. But the method and means of achieving it should be in coherence with our feeling and emotions. It should never violate our rights. So in this direction only an Eco-Development Project be prepared.



Hoping for your favourable response and immediate action,

Yours sincerely,

1. Mr. Somanna, Convener,  
Girijana Jilla Smithy,  
Mysore District.

*Dear Sir*

2. Mr. J.P. Raju,  
Co-Convener,  
Karnataka Rajya Moolanivasi Budakattu Janara Vedike,  
Karnataka.

*J.P. Raju*

3. Mr. Nanjundiah,  
Secretary General,  
FEDINA-VIKASA,  
H.D. Kote, Karnataka.

*Nanjundiah*

4. Mr. S. Sreekant,  
Secretary,  
DEED, H.D. Koto Road,  
Hunsur, Karnataka.

*S. Sreekant*  
(S. Sreekant)

5. Mr. Venkatesh Padakanaya,  
Convener,  
Tribal Joint Action Committee,  
Karnataka.F

*V. Padakanaya*

6. Mr. Vittal Nanachi,  
Member, District Tribal Committee,  
N. Begur P.O., Bramhagiri,  
H.D. Kote, Karnataka.

*V. Nanachi*

7. Mr. V.S. Roy David,  
Director,  
CORD, Kushalnagar Po,  
N. Kodagu 571234.  
KARNATAKA.

*V. S. Roy David*

copy to:

1. The Prime Minister, Government of India.
2. Minister of Forests, Government of India.
3. The Chief Minister, Karnataka State.
4. The Forest Minister, Karnataka State.
5. The President, World Bank.
6. The Press.



Ms Jessica Mott  
Mr Sam Tankaraj  
World Bank

Greetings from CORD, the Coorg Organization for Rural Development.

- 1 I trust you already have on record our objection to the ecodevelopment plan, and the analysis of the violations of the bank operational directives.
- 2 We bring to your notice once again that we have not been consulted, nor have the points raised been addressed in the preparation of the plan.

For instance, The forest department, even at your meeting on 1 June 1996, sticks to its position that the law does not permit human inhabitation within National Parks, while your directives

- a. [15 a and 15 c] are clear that legal protection for ensuring the customary rights of the people should be in place before the plan is approved.
- b. there should be informed participation
- c. where adverse impacts are unavoidable and adequate mitigation plans have not been developed, the Bank will not appraise projects until suitable plans are developed by the borrower and reviewed by the Bank.

We also fail to understand how the plan could even reach this stage when your own documents catalogue in painful detail how it conflicts with your policy [see Ecodevelopment in Nagarhole, India -- a critique by Anita Cheria; presented at your consultation in Washington on 1 April 1996], and after the Government of India, thru its forest department has made it abundantly clear that evictions will take place since according to the law human habitation is not permitted in National Parks at the meeting in New Delhi on 1 June 1996.

We find no evidence that any of these criteria have been fulfilled.

- 3 Despite this, the project seems all set to be sanctioned. We once again reiterate our opposition to the plan in its present form.
- 4 Your own documents state that there exists a 'confrontational' and 'generally antagonistic' relationship




between the forest department and the adivasi and that in future is likely to 'continue to [be] strain[ed]'. Yet it depends on just this section to decide on the future of the adivasi. It might be legal, but it certainly is illegitimate.

- 5 We cannot and will not be part of a plan that is essentially anti-people in nature. Moreover, it would seem that we are to be consulted on and asked to be executors of the micro-plan. In all fairness you will appreciate that we would not like to be 'contractors' and execute a plan we are not part of in either its policy development nor formulation.

Our role in the present plan would seem to push us into active opposition. To paraphrase the father of our nation, there comes a time when it becomes the duty of citizens to actively oppose the illegal acts of their government.

- 6 Despite recording our objections with you, there seems to be no will to address them. We are thus forced to go to a more public forum. Even at this late stage we would urge you to start a genuine dialogue with the people, who have a plan to develop their homelands, and suspend the project till then.
- 7 In the meanwhile, please send to the following a full set of plan documents, and keep us informed of any further developments. Provision should be made for adequate time and other resources to translate and share the plan with the adivasi. Only then, if they do give their informed consent, should the project be given the go ahead.

CORD, Post box 23, Kushalnagar, Karnataka, India 571234  
DEED, Hunsur, Mysore District, Karnataka, India 571105  
VIKASA, H D Kote, Mysore District, Karnataka, India 571114  
ICDSS/TJAC, Near Al amin college, Kalya gate extension,  
Margadi, Karnataka, India 563120  
FEVORD-K, 44 New Bamboo Bazaar Road, Cantonment,  
Bangalore, Karnataka, India 560 051

  
V S Roy David,  
Secretary

CORD

Bangalore

5 June 1996

cc DEED, Hunsur and Vikasa, H D Kote

CORD, Post Box 23, 119/1 4th Block, Kushalnagar, Kodagu District,  
Karnataka, India 571234.  
phone and fax: +91 8276 74487.



ನಾಗರಹೋಳೆ ಬುಡಕಟ್ಟು ಹಕ್ಕು ಸ್ಥಾಪನ ಸಮಿತಿ  
**NAGARAHOLE BUDAKATTU HAKKU  
STAPANA SAMITHI**

Gadde hadi, Nagarhole P.O, South Kodagu, Karnataka, S.INDIA, Pin-571 250

Date : 06-08-97

To,  
The Chairman,  
Review Panel World Bank Projects,  
WORLD BANK,  
1818 H, Street N.W.  
Washington D.C.20433,  
U.S.A.

TELEFAX : (202) 477-6391

Dear sir,

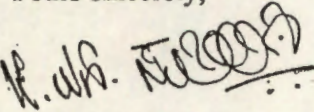
Sub: Request to review Nagarhole Eco Development Plan, stop funding immediately, your intervention urged.

We the members of NAGARHOLE BUDAKATTU HAKKU STAPANA SAMITHI (Nagarhole Tribals Rights Restoration Committee) herewith record our protest against the proposed Nagarhole Eco Development plan & tribal rehabilitation supported by World Bank and implemented through Karnataka Forest Department which is against the wishes, aspirations and the tribal laws of the land.

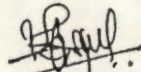
Inspite of our repeated protests World Bank seems to be determined to Fund this project through Karnataka Forest Department to evict the Adivasis from their home land in the name of rehabilitation, protection, management and eco tourism, It is further convincing for us through the statements issued by none other than the Karnataka Forest Minister Mr.Nagamarpalli which reads that the the World Bank has released Rs. 30 crore for the rehabilitation of Nagarhole tribals. This will further contribute to cultural marginalisation of adivasis and it amounts to Human rights violation. This is also against the World Bank directives which is a clear contradiction of World Banks lending principles.

We therefore demand your intervention at once and review the project, stop unproductive and destructive funding. If the World Bank is really interested let it look into the people's plan and laws relating to local Self Governance. We hope you will do the needful and contribute to social justice.

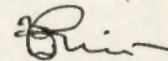
Yours sincerely,



Mr.J.L.Subramani  
Convenor (NBHSS)



Mr.J.K.Babu  
Convenor (BKS)



Mr.J.T.Rajappa  
Convenor (ASR)

Copy to:

- 1) Mr. Pruce Rich EDF. Washington DC, U.S.A
- 2) Mr.S.R.Hiremat, SPS, Dharwad. INDIA

BKS  
NBHSS  
Nagarhole  
P.O



STAPANA SAMITHI  
NAGARAHOLE BUDAKATTU HAKKI

Office of the Secretary, Nagarahole Wildlife Sanctuary, Bangalore, India

Dear Sir,

1. I am pleased to inform you that the Government of Karnataka has decided to grant the request for the establishment of a Wildlife Sanctuary in the area of Nagarahole.

2. The Government has also decided to grant the request for the establishment of a Wildlife Sanctuary in the area of Nagarahole.

3. The Government has also decided to grant the request for the establishment of a Wildlife Sanctuary in the area of Nagarahole.

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