



BAUXITE MINING - IS IT A BOON OR BANE TO TRIBALS?

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Introduction

Production of bauxite in India (70%) is consumed in Alumina and Aluminium which is one of the most important non-ferrous metals in the modern industries. Andhra Pradesh is the second richest state having more bauxite follows the Odisha in India, but has not started production so far. Whereas, in Andhra Pradesh, is having reserves in Visakhapatnam and East Godavari districts accounting for 21.65% of total in India. The bauxite deposits located in Chinthapalli mandal of Visakhapatnam district and surroundings possess high quality. For using the bauxite to the commercial purpose it may be effect to the land that means particular to the forest. None can attach monetary value to the life-style of tribals. So the tribals were not support to the government for this activity. Accordingly, the government released a white paper on Bauxite Mining Stating that it would undertake mining activity only after receiving green signal from the tribal people.

National Scenario of Bauxite Industry Bauxite is an essential ore of Aluminium which is one of the most important non-ferrous metals used in the modern industry. It is also an essential ore for Refractory and Chemical industries. India produced 15.36 million tones of bauxite in 2012-13. The major bauxite producing states with their production is shown in Table-1.

Table -1 Major Bauxite Producing States in India

S. No	State	Bauxite Resources (Million tones)	Annual Production (Million tones)
1	Odisha	1810	5.46
2	Andhra Pradesh	615	Nil
3	Gujarat	237	3.02
4	Maharashtra	175	1.97
5	Chhattisgarh	171	1.82
6	Jharkhand	146	2.00
	Total	3154	14.25

Source: Indian Mineral Yearbook 2013 in January 2015

The States mentioned in the table contribute 92.7% of the total bauxite production of the country in 2012-13. It can also be observed from the table that



Andhra Pradesh is the second richest State in bauxite mineral following Odisha. However, Andhra Pradesh has not started Bauxite production so far.

It is to be noted that 70% of the bauxite produced in India is consumed in Alumina and Aluminium industries only. The rest of the bauxite is consumed in industries such as cement, refractoriness, chemicals and abrasives.

History of Development of Bauxite Mining in Andhra Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh is having vast reserves of Bauxite, about 600 Million Tonnes metallurgical grade (above 48% AL₂O₃) in Visakhapatnam and East Godavari Districts, accounting for 21.65% of total Bauxite reserves in India. Government of Andhra Pradesh (GoAP) through G.O.Ms.No.999, Industries & Commerce Department, dated. 25.10.1975 had reserved the entire Bauxite bearing areas for exclusive exploitation by Public Sector Undertakings. All these areas fall under Reserved Forest as well as notified tribal areas. Transfer of these areas to nontribals is prohibited as per Andhra Pradesh Land Transfers Regulations 1959. Based on the investigation of Geological Survey of India (GSI), Andhra Pradesh Mineral Development Corporation (APMDC) filed 25 mining lease applications for Bauxite covering 4775 Hect. In Visakhapatnam and East Godavari Districts during the year 1981 & 1991. Further the Government of Andhra Pradesh considered five Mining Lease applications in favour of M/s NALCO in East Godavari District.

The Hon'ble Supreme Court in Samatha Vs. State of Andhra Pradesh case in 1997 prohibits private companies from mining major mineral deposits located in areas covered under the V schedule of the Constitution, but the lease controversially found a way to overcome it by fronting the Andhra Pradesh Mineral Development Corporation, a public sector organization no longer existing as the legal owner of the mines. The APMDC would receive free mining machinery and transport assistance from AnRak and sell the bauxite at cut-rate to the latter.

Bauxite in Visakha Agency

Among the 11 Mandals in Paderu Division of Visakhapatnam Bauxite deposits are abundant in four Mandals namely Pedabayulu, Chintapalli, Koyyuru and Munchingiputtu. As per 2011 census, there are 2,21,587 people living in 951 villages besides 1359 hamlets, of which Tribals constitute 2,00,391 accounting for 90.43%. The Andhra Pradesh Government on 5th November 2015 had issued G.O.97 according permission to divert 1212 hectares of forest land in Chintapalli and Jerrila of Narsipatnam forest Division for lease for Bauxite mining in favour of the Andhra Pradesh Mineral Development Corporation. The condition laid down by the Government includes that the legal status of the forest land being diverted shall remain unchanged as well as the compensatory afforestation over non-forest land in the extent to the forest land being diverted shall be raised and maintained by the State forest department from the funds already provided by user agency.

Immediately after releasing the above G.O., there was staunch opposition by the tribals for fear of losing their habitat. A resolution to this effect was also passed



in various Gram Sabhas held at different times. Various political parties have also voiced their support to the cause. The opposition parties too have opposed the move of the Government. It is ironical to note that in a cabinet meeting held at Vijayawada on 16th November 2015, Forest Minister B.Gopal Krishna Reddy told cabinet that neither he nor the chief Minister was informed before issuing the above G.O. Realising the strong opposition from the tribals and the opposition parties, as well as the likely political impact it might have on the Govt image, the Cabinet felt that it would be better if the GO was kept in abeyance. Accordingly, the Govt, released a White Paper on Bauxite Mining Stating that it would undertake mining activity only after receiving green signal from the tribal people. In response to it the tribals are questioning the Government that when we expressed our dissent in various official meetings, against Bauxite mining, whose consent still Govt needs for Bauxite mining?

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandra Babu Naidu, as the leader of the opposition fought against bauxite mining and even wrote letters to the Governor to stall the project initiated by the then Chief Minister Dr. Y.S.Rajasekhara Reddy. He also demanded a CBI enquiry on the above mining. Moreover, Mr. Ch. Ayyannapatrudu, the former TDP Minister and the present TDP Minister for Panchayat Raj took hunger strike protesting against bauxite mining at that point of time. It is common for all political parties in our country of late to play two different roles one when it is in power and another when it is not, which is not in the true interests of the nation. It is ridiculous that the same party when comes into power is now favoring mining of bauxite.

The Central Minister for Mining in UPA Govt., specifically advised the Andhra Pradesh State Government to take into account the recommendations of Tribal Advisory Council established under the V Schedule of Constitution of India. Mr. P. Balaraju, the then Forest Minister of A.P. and also Chairman of the above Council passed resolution against mining. It is surprising to note that the White Paper released by the AP Government on 24-11-2015 is intentionally silent of this fact. Former Hon'ble Central Minister of Tribal Affairs Sri Kishore Chandra Deo, had made reference to the Hon'ble Prime Minister on 01-04-2010 requesting him to issue instructions to all concerned not to allow mining of Bauxite in Visakhapatnam District. The matter was examined by Ministry of Mines, Government of India in consultation with Dept. of Legal Affairs and finally opined that the bauxite mine lease is issued to APMDC which entered into agreement to supply bauxite with a private company does not amount to violation of rules in vogue.

The tribals in the Visakha Agency area did not allow the Kala Committee appointed by the Govt. of India in 2011, which reflects the severity of the problem. Realising the situation, the Committee recommended Gramasabha or the Panchayat at appropriate level located with 10 km radius of the mining area should be consulted and also approval of the AP Tribal Advisory Council be taken. The Committee also pointed out that mining not only affects the living-eco-diversity of the tribals, but also



amounts to violation of PISA Act which is intended to protect the interests of these people.

It can be said that bauxite mining is both a boon as well as a bane to the tribals. Though it is a bane to them, they should turn it to a boon in their own interests. By bauxite mining, they can demand a fair share from the Government out of the revenue realised from mining. The Govt. should utilize 25% such proceeds for their upliftment. It is not proper if the tribals remain undeveloped for years together. Instead of continuing their lives in the forests, where civilization is absent, they should leave such places and join the mainstream for better living. There has been no change at all in their habits, income sources and living even after 68 years of our independence. Introduction of developmental schemes should not be intensified by the Government in towns where development already took place but in areas and regions where development is conspicuous by its absence.

If a country to be developed, all types or people as well as all regions should equally be developed. Otherwise development will cripple, and top-sided. These people should not be ignored in the development process. There appears a glaring and a lot of divide between standard of living of urban people or rural people and tribal people. The latter are still semi-naked. Illiteracy as well as ill-health, primitive life styles and superstitions are common among them even now. As long as they stay in forests or on the top of the hills, they will not prosper. There are abundant deposits of minerals in these forests and they should be made as partners and beneficiaries in these minerals put to use. In 2014, the CAG estimated the bauxite value lying in these forests as Rs. 11,500 crores and if the tribals are given one-fourth share it comes to nearly Rs. 3000 crores which can be used for their over-all upliftment. Educating the tribals on these lines is very essential and the Govt. should take steps accordingly with open, whole -hearted mind. Two alternatives must be placed before them to make this workable.

First, the tribals who are evacuated as a result of mining should be provided spacious pakka houses with modern amenities in plain areas and they must be given employment on permanent basis by providing training in the fields and skills in which they are adept and interested in. Second, if they want to live in forests or on hills, they must be shifted to the nearby tribal habitats and provide employment on the above lines. If possible, in both the cases, the displaced must be provided monthly pension to ensure assured income for generations to come in perpetuity in the form of agricultural. By these arrangements both Govt. and tribals get benefited. There should be legal protection to these measures. The Govt. can utilize the bauxite for developmental purpose too. The tribals can also lead a better life on a par with city dwellers with the upliftment provided by the Govt. Unfortunately, the White Paper released by the AP Govt. is silent on all these issues.

Now let us see the other side of the coin. It is the large and numerable spaces of valuable trees such as mango, soap nut, cashew tamarind, custard apple, jack and timber rosewood, teak etc., which will disappear once mining actively is commenced



in this area. The tribals used to sell the forest produce from these trees in the shandies for their livelihood. They lose this regular income by mining activity. Moreover, these forests yield different medicinal roots, leaves and fruits for curing different types of diseases. The tribals used to sell these items to GCC, a Govt of A.P undertaking established for the upliftment of tribals. The moment mining activity started the tribals will be deprived of this income too. Apart from these the contiguous rivers, hills, streams, will disappear resulting in environmental degradation. Above all, the tribals will lose their constitutionally guaranteed properties such as lands, and houses and they have to migrate to a new place. All these people living in the villages and hamlets living in the surrounding areas will become homeless. Even now there are evacuees from Chattishghad and Orissa who are working as manual laborers in Vizag as a result of bauxite mining in their states, living in hapless condition, deprived of their age old abodes.

Bauxite is not a costly ore, the price of which is less than sand. But aluminium which uses bauxite as main raw material is a costly product. A tonne of aluminium costs more than Rs. 60,000. Crude bauxite has no foreign market whereas there is a great demand for aluminium in the foreign market. By using bauxite our country can produce more quantity of aluminium and earn foreign exchange besides minimizing the trade gap.

Conclusion

A.P. as stated already, is the second richest State in bauxite resources with 615 million tonnes. The bauxite deposits located in Chintapalli mandal of Visakhapatnam district and surroundings possess high quality. None can attach monetary value to the life-style of tribals. Mother forest is their dearest deity. Even after 18 months of ruling party in power, the State Govt. has not so far constituted Tribal Advisory Council which is a statutory body. There is therefore an urgent need to constitute the above council, a statutory body which is solely empowered to take decision on taking up any activity in the V schedule areas. Moreover any activity to be taken up in the agency area has to be first cleared by Gramasabhas and based on their recommendations, the Tribal Advisory Council has to pass the resolution, which is then sent to the Governor who alone is empowered to decide the matter. Right now, it is not possible to convince the local tribals without support of the local leaders. The incumbent Government should go by the law, which states a project in a scheduled area to be withdrawn if the local tribals oppose it and do not realize the benefits that accrue to them. The State Government can have new tribal towns with residential schools exclusively for their children apart from assuring decent living conditions. This is the only way out for the State without scaring them of their living life conditions. The Govt./ITDA can appeal, convince, cajole and rope in the Tribals our Girijan or Adivasi Segments of our national life.

They are too willing to have better civilized life conditions on a par with others in our society. The valid proof is all the APTW Residential Schools and Junior Colleges are full of youngsters. They were conceived, designed and opened by



the TDP/NTR regime right from 1985 till to date. This is soft pedaling way of winning hearts of the tribals and turning a bane into a boon.

All political parties, devoid of cheap vote bank politics, must co-operative with the Govt. in power for transforming the life styles of our Adivasi brothers and sisters. Late Gopala Krishna Gokhale had sown seeds to this way of thinking as early as 1910-1915.

This, and thus only can be a boon to the Govt. in power and tribal segments of the areas concerned. It puts a stop to the migrant labour problem of these areas too. Hurts none concerned. Let wise, patriotic councils prevail on the Govt. in power and civil society in general. One of the whole, it can be concluded that the socio-economic profile of the tribals living in Paderu Division of Visakhapatnam Agency are better compared to their counterparts in other districts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Of late, the tribals in some mandals, especially Aruku mandal started coffee plantations which yield more revenue to them. There is also much awareness for education among the tribals and a majority of tribal parents are sending their children even girl children to schools. Now several confrontation between the tribals and Govt. of Andhra Pradesh has been taking place with regard to bauxite mining and all opposition parties are supporting the tribals on this issue. If such a mining is inevitable, the government should earmark at least one fourth of revenue realized from the sale of bauxite for their overall upliftment.

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