

Do We Also Have the Democratic Rights?

By Gladson Dungdung
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On July 5, 2011, the Adivasis of Munda Khutkatti areas – Khunti, Murhu and Arki blocks of Khunti district gathered in Kachary Maidan of Khunti situated at a distance of 31 kilometres from the state capital of Jharkhand. In fact, the Khunti district administration had given them permission to hold a rally and mass meeting against the police atrocities. However, when the villagers started arriving to Kachary Maidan, Manoj Kaushik the Superintendent of police (Khunti) also reached to the venue and questioned Birsa Munda the leader of “Mundari Khutkati Ewam Bhuihari Parishad,” “Why you have brought so many people to protest against the police?” Birsa responded, “Villagers are facing police atrocities therefore they have come to express their pains and sufferings to the Deputy Commissioner”. The SP went back to his office after hearing Birsa’s response.

Meanwhile, the inspector of Khunti police station P.K. Mishra also started inquiring about the programme and the riot controller vehicle along with paramilitary forces reached to the venue. The police of Khunti, Arki, Murhu, Rania, Torpa and Karra police stations were already present in the venue. It seems that there was supposed to be an encounter between the police and the Maoists. As usual they assume it as a Rally and Mass Meeting of the Maoists. In fact, the police and administration consider all the rallies, mass meetings and protests organized against the police atrocities are as the programmes of the Maoists. Simultaneously, they had started their operations of stopping people in the entry points of Khunti. They stopped 3 buses at Arki and 2 buses and 3 Jeeps at Murhu block. However, 30 vehicles (Busses and Jeeps) could able to reach to the venue and many people came by bicycles and by foot as well. There were more than 5000 people in the ground including more than 100 victims of police atrocities.



The Rally and Mass Meeting was organized by the “Mundari Khutkati Ewam Bhuihari Parishad”, which is a traditional organization of the Adivasis and it has legal validity as far the laws of 5th Scheduled Area are concerned. It was 1 O’clock in the afternoon. The villagers started walking towards Khunti town by raising slogans against the police atrocities. They were shouting, “Police Atyachar Band Karo” (Stop police atrocities), “Nirdosho ko Jail se riha karo” (release the innocent from the prison) and “Maowadiyo ke name per

Gramino ko pratarit Karna band karo” (stop torturing the villagers in the name of Maoists). These people had decided to raise their voices when the police and paramilitary forces crossed their limit of perpetrating atrocities against the villagers. Needless to say, that the police torture has become part and parcel of their lives.

I had also gone to participate in the Rally and Mass meeting. After hearing slogans against the police, the Police Inspector of Khunti police station Mr. P.K. Mishra and his guards stopped the villagers saying that they should not shout slogans against the police. “Why don’t you organize Rally against the Maoists, when they kill our police forces,” P. K. Mishra questioned. In response, the villagers said that they have come to raise their voices and they are against of both the parties who perpetrate violence against the villagers. They are made sandwich by both the parties. However, P.K. Mishra didn’t hear the villagers and asked them to stop raising slogans against the police. The villagers continued their rally but the police stopped them three times. The police wanted to block the Rally and asked the villagers to go back to their villages. The villagers were not ready to do so. Since I was part of the Rally therefore I intervened on the matter and told the Inspector P.K. Mishra that he should not seize the democratic rights of the villagers.

Meanwhile, I introduced myself as a Human Rights Activist and also a member of the “Assessment and Monitoring Authority” under the Planning Commission of India and showed him my visiting card. He was looking like a wounded lion. He snatched and threw my card on the ground, humiliated me and threatened me saying, “shut up! If you don’t stop, I’ll tear down you and dry up”. “I don’t bother about losing my job,” he added. Meanwhile, four bodyguards of the Inspect got down from the vehicle and abused and started beating me but when the crowd intervened, they stopped. After sometime, the rally resumed and backed to the Kachahari Maidan and mass meeting was started. The villagers started sharing their plight one after another.

Since the launching of so-called anti-Naxal Operations known as “Operation Green Hunt” in the areas, the innocent villagers have been facing police atrocities. On August 5, 2010, the police and paramilitary forces went to Birbanki village of Arki block and started abusing and beating the villagers. They also scattered belongings and caught two innocent villagers – Daud Samad and Lukin Munda alleging them as feeding the Maoists. Both are well known social workers of the region. Similarly, on October 30, 2010 the police and paramilitary forces caught three girl students of Narang village – Jasmani Soy, Magdali Purty and Juliyana Purty (age between 15-16) and put them in Jail for more than 45 days alleging them as members of the CPI-Maoist. They were set free from the prison but no policeman was punished for detaining the innocent girls.

Again on 27 November, 2010, the police and paramilitary forces entered in Basudih village of Arki block and tied up villagers and beaten them severely. The police arrested innocent villager Soma Marsal Purty and put him in the Jail after branding him as a Maoist. Similarly, on June 4, 2011 the police went to Bankira village of Arki, while coming back the police arrested Johan Hansa and Karma Singh Munda of Kuita village and put them in the Jail. On June 5, 2011, the police went to Itihasa village and bet Sanika Munda, Laka Munda and Durga Munda severely alleging them as sheltering the Maoists in the village without any proof.

The police and paramilitary forces also torture the villagers during the prayers. On June 5, 2011, the villagers of Sareyad village of Arki block were having Sunday Mass in the village church. The police and paramilitary forces captured the Church and targeted villagers from the windows of the Church and shouted, “Shoot them”. After hearing the police there was a chaos in the Church and few villagers came out of the Church. The police and paramilitary forces bet them severely. Thereafter, they asked the villagers to prepare food for them. They ate and also bet severely to the person who cooked food for them.

Similarly, on June 5, 2011, the villagers of Kudunba of Arki block had gathered for prayer at Bankira at 8 O’clock in the morning. The police rounded them and asked them to sit separately – men one side and women on the other side. Thereafter, they bet the men severely and tied up hands of 25 men behind their back with the ropes, which the villagers use to tie-up their cattle. They also caught four girls – Seteng Nag, Hanna Nag, Mariam Kandir and Jaiwanti Nag. The police took 25 men and 4 girls to the forest in the name of search operations. The villagers were kept in the forest for 2 days without food and water. Finally, 2 persons – Mansid Nag and Masih Nag were put in the Jail alleging them as the Maoists. Mansid Nag works as a tailor and Masih Nag is a para-teacher and also works as a traditional medicine practitioner.

Amidst, a delegation met the Deputy Commissioner of Khunti Mr. Rakesh Kumar and a memorandum was submitted to him. Surprisingly, he said, “I’m hearing about the police atrocities first time”. “I know about the laws of 5th Scheduled Area and will take action,” he assured. The Dy. Superintendent of Police (Khunti) Mr. Anil Shanker was in a hurry to send the villagers back to their villages, he asked me several times, “Please send the villagers to their villages”. When the villagers were sharing their pain, suffering and sorrow in the mass meeting, a chopper of the Border Security Force (BSF) suddenly appeared in the vicinity and flew two rounds over the Kachary Maidan and returned to Ranchi. Perhaps, the top copes of Jharkhand were inside the Chopper, had come to see the Maoists in the mass meeting. Since inception of the state, the police have killed 550 people and arrested 4090 villagers in Jharkhand in allegation of being the Maoists. However, the police failed to prove the allegations.

Of course, there is a tendency in the police and administration that anyone who raises voice against the police atrocity is either a Maoist or their supporter. The most pertinent questions are do the villagers have democratic rights? Do we really live in a democratic country? And do we also have the democratic rights like other people of this country enjoy? Where should people go to plea for protection of their democratic rights? While talking to individuals, many villagers said that they are against of the Maoists however, if the police atrocities didn’t stop, then they can also take up the guns if the power only comes from the barrel of guns. I believe that this is the last warning for the Indian state. Therefore, instead of shutting down the democracy, the Indian state must hear the pains, sufferings and sorrows of the people and deliver justice to them.

Gladson Dungdung is a Human Rights Activist and Writer. He can be reached at:

gladsonhractivist@gmail.com
Jharkhandmirror.org