



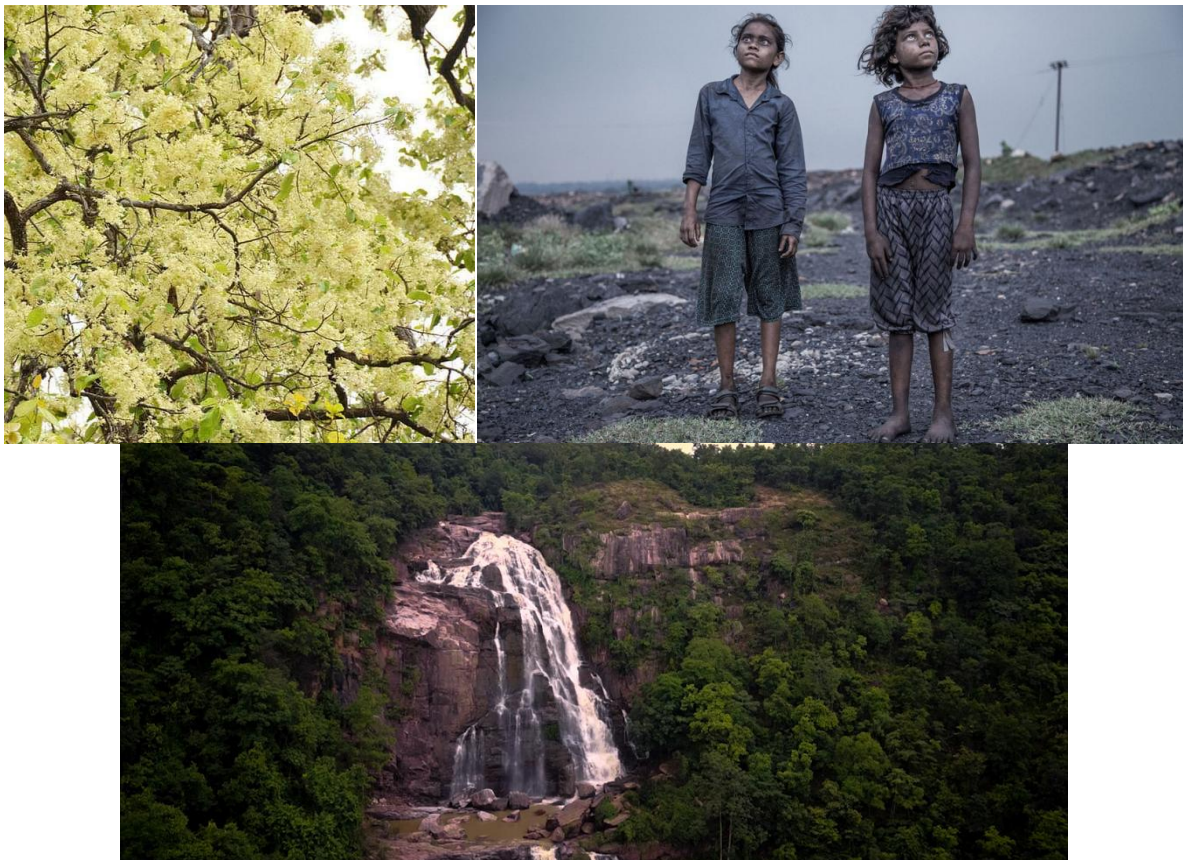
Jharkhand

The land of the Forest

Edited by Viren Lobo/ Sunil Dubey/ Tarun Kanti Bose/Hemant Das

On behalf of **IELA/JMKU/ ABMKSS**

(The Political Ecology of Forests, Rivers, Mining and the people of Jharkhand)



The Sal tree/ Supratim Bhattacharya: Curse of mining/Hundru Falls

Foreword

Jharkhand or the land of forests was the name given by the British in 1765. Ever since then there have been periodic struggles by the tribals against the tax system imposed on them. The Hool revolt by the Santhals between 1770 and 1785 and then by Sidhu and Kanu in 1855 forced the British to enact the Santhal Paraganas Tenancy Act in 1876. In 1782-1820 the Tamar revolt by Oraons and the Ulugulan led by Birsa Munda in 1899 led to the Chhota Nagpur Tenancy Act in 1908. There were revolts by other communities too. Dhal, Ramgarh, Paharia, Ho and Kol meant the region was almost always in strife with the British. In 1928, the demand for a separate State for Adivasis was placed by the Unnati Samaj which later got taken forward by Jaipal Singh and others in 1938. Post Independence too the demand for the separate State of Jharkhand was placed in 1955 but got rejected because tribals were a minority. Jharkhand finally achieved Statehood in 2000 but the very soon the people realised that in the name of development, the people were displaced.

Considering these glorious struggles by the people and the recognition of rights in some form by the British, the Jharkhand tribals did not participate actively in the demand for rights recognition under the Forest Rights Act 2006. However later many realised that it was a way of unifying the diverse struggles of the Jharkhand tribals against the three fold onslaught placed by urbanisation, mining and forest conservation in the name of the Tiger and Elephant. Severe repression through criminalisation of tribals due to alleged violations under the Forest Act 1927 and Forest Conservation Act 1980, have resulted in jail, denial of rights under FRA in many regions of the State. Despite a tribal party being in power in the State, custodial deaths, torture and wrongful incarceration continue.

The reason for this is not hard to find. With just 2.4% of the land area of this country, Jharkhand has 40% of the nations mineral resources, most of it located in the forest regions of the State. In fact rumour has it that the State of Jharkhand was finally created so as not to have to bribe politicians and bureaucrats sitting in Patna. Certainly the way governance has taken place in Jharkhand since its creation in 2000 provides credence to this rumour. The twin attack of mineral exploitation and need for forest conservation provides the government with handy tools and the wherewithal to deny tribals their rightful dues. The modifications to the Forest Conservation Rules despite assurances that the concerns under FRA will be duly taken care make this an even more serious matter.

The recent developments in renewable energy technology, promotion of the value of local foods and COVID 19 which resulted in large scale return migration of wage labourers point to a different way forward going from here. It now becomes immanently possible to give proper shape and direction to traditional wisdom, tempered by scientific knowledge which can help communities identify the principles involved in the historical observations they have related to man's relationship with the ecosystem and ecosystem services it provides. The need to reactivate gram sabhas, counter political pressure of vested interests also bring to the foreground the relevance and need for empowered women and children in this process as well. Current concerns related to survival have degraded these democratic processes as a result the leadership at present is fragmented and disorganised. How this can be reactivated by restoring faith in local self governance principles using the provisions of PESA, Biodiversity Act 2002 and FRA 2006 is what is currently being explored.

Background

Jharkhand Mazdoor Kisan Union (JMKU) was formed in 2017 at the instance of Akhil Bharatiya Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Samiti (ABMKSS), as part of their process to resist the Corridor form of development, where in the name of development the government sought the licence to freely acquire land and suspend the rights of local communities in the ‘interest’ of the larger welfare of the country. At the outset, JMKU raised the issue of the criminalisation of tribals and with it the denial of rights of communities under FRA. While organising tribals, fishers and labour under various Acts and provisions, JMKU not only highlighted the conditions of tribals, but also other struggling communities in Daltonganj Commissary comprising the Districts of Palamau, Latehar and Garwah in Jharkhand. JMKU became a part of AIFFRS (All India Forum For Rights Struggles) and intensified the struggles on these issues across the State of Jharkhand in collaboration with other organisations in the State. In 2018, as part of ABMKSS, it was instrumental in the formation of Adivasi Bharat Mahasabha created with a view to uniting tribals in their struggle for decentralised governance across the country.

The work of JMKU has been featured in the two reports written by Tarun Kanti Bose, the first as part of study conducted by AIFFRS to understand the status of implementation of FRA in Eleven States of the country. The second a study conducted by ABMKSS to define a road-map for five communities, namely tribals, small and traditional fishers, pastoralists, small and marginal farmers and wage labour originating from the village. This study titled ‘Marginalised but not Defeated’ while highlighting the conditions of these communities also provides a road-map for unification of these struggles at Federation, State and National levels. This study was the base to propose the creation of Adivasi Bharat Mahasabha (Unity Forum) in May 2022 as a space that provided recognition of local struggles and local groups at the forefront of these struggles.

In September 2022, members of ABM(UF) met at Udaipur and proposed a twin strategy to realise the principles of decentralised governance. The first involved dealing upfront with issues related to State repression and the criminalisation of adivasis by implicating them in false cases, being subject to torture and other atrocities by the State in collusion with vested interests. Considering the period from September to December to be preparatory in nature, to decide the approach, JMKU volunteered to conduct a Public Hearing in April to translate the approach on the ground.

As part of its ground preparations, JMKU has conducted a campaign among the Primitive Vulnerable Tribal Groups in Daltonganj Commissary. The campaign has highlighted the following;

- a. The non implementation of FRA in general and CFR in particular
- b. The deterioration of habitat conditions resulting in the need for external support for its revival.
- c. Even as lucrative packages are prepared for these communities, they are ridden with corruption making them inaccessible to local communities. The need to make them amenable to principles of local self governance also involves aspects related to the design of such packages and revival of traditional health and nutritional practices.

Dedication



Jaipal Singh Munda

<https://indianhistorycollective.com/jaipal-singh-munda-historyofindia-constituent-assembly-adviasirights/>

“The Most Democratic People on Earth” : An Adivasi Voice in the Constituent Assembly.

Jaipal Singh Munda was a sportsman, writer and Adivasi leader. Elected to the Constituent Assembly as an independent candidate, he was, in his time, one of the few voices speaking up on behalf of India’s tribal community. In the speeches, he makes the case for the community being the ‘original inhabitants’ of India who have been exploited and dispossessed by outsiders from time immemorial. He also brings to attention the lack of Adivasi representation in the Constituent Assembly, particularly in the Advisory Committee constituted under the Cabinet Mission Statement of May 16. While registering a protest against the historic mistreatment of a people, these speeches are also punctuated with indications of his faith in India’s new leadership and a hope for better treatment (and participation) in the nation it is to become.

Jaipal Singh Munda was a gifted man, intellectually and physically. As his speeches in the Constituent Assembly reveal, he was a passionate and articulate voice for Adivasi rights at a time when they had suffered centuries of exploitation, and had been kept away from the modern political process by the British.

Born as Pramod Pahan in the Khunti subdivision (now, district) of Ranchi, the same region as adivasi icon Birsa Munda, he acquired his new name when he was enrolled in St. Paul’s school, run by the SPG Mission of the Church of England. He excelled in school and his talent impressed a missionary, Canon Cosgrave, whom he accompanied to England. There, he graduated from St. John’s College, Oxford University in 1926 with an honours degree in

economics. During his time at university, he was also the President of the Oxford Indian Majlis, a debating society founded by Indian students.

A gifted hockey player, Munda was asked to captain the Indian Hockey team at the 1928 Olympics, while he was working as a probationer for the Indian Civil Service. He agreed, despite protests from the India Office, and subsequently resigned from his position after returning to India. While India actually went on to win the gold medal, Munda could not participate after the league matches due to a disagreement with the team's manager.

He took up various jobs, including one which took him to Ghana, before assuming the position of the President of the Adivasi Mahasabha in 1939, whose goal was to create “**pan-tribal solidarity to solve tribal problems.**” Under his leadership, the party also made the demand for a separate state with an adivasi majority population – Jharkhand.

The Mahasabha renamed itself the ‘Jharkhand Mahasabha’ after Independence and entered the electoral foray. It won 33 seats in the 1952 Bihar Assembly elections. However, its popularity eventually declined. In 1963, Jaipal Munda merged the party with the Indian National Congress, disappointed with its electoral trajectory and the rejection of the demand for Jharkhand by the States Reorganisation Commission in 1962.

Munda, by his own admission, was “rich” though only “according to Adivasi reckoning”. Further, as his travels took him far away from the country and, particularly, from his ‘land’, he was charged with being disconnected from the actual problems of adivasis. This charge was also levelled by another member of the Constituent Assembly working for the Adivasi cause, AV Thakkar. Unlike Munda, who was a vocal critic of the Congress and spoke against all ‘outsiders’ in unequivocal terms, Thakkar was a Gandhian and member of the Servants of India Society.

Jaipal Munda rejected Thakkar’s conciliatory approach, with its thrust towards the ‘social uplift’ of adivasis, in favour of articulating a powerful claim to the land and certain “prescriptive” rights by virtue of the Adivasi people being its “original inhabitants”. This is a common theme in all three speeches. He states that the oppression of the tribals has been carried out for 6,000 years by “intruders” – a term including not just the British, but all non-adivasi residents of India.

Another important theme in his speeches is the lack of tribal representation, particularly in the Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights, Minorities, Tribals and Excluded Areas. This committee was constituted in accordance with the Cabinet Mission’s Statement of May 16. Though Munda himself was indeed a member, he noted the lack of Adivasi women and the fact that Adivasi representation was widely disproportionate with respect to their actual population in the country.

His speeches highlight centuries of ill-treatment, the last of which was the British classification of Adivasi-majority areas as ‘Excluded’ or ‘Partially Excluded,’ which kept them away from the modern political process. He makes a powerful demand for affirmative action for his community, to correct historic disadvantages. Importantly, he is not shy about calling out the Assembly’s oversight (or, worse, hypocrisy) on this point. For instance, in the speech on the 27th of August, 1947, he asks why a policy has been announced for reserved Central government appointments for the Scheduled Castes, but not for the adivasis who are the “most needy”.

Even though his speeches articulate his anger against the treatment meted out to adivasis and the fact that a majority of Indians – not just the British – were responsible for it, he seems to desist from taking an altogether adversarial stance. For what also comes across is his strong faith in the Constituent Assembly and India's new leadership (particularly Jawaharlal Nehru, whom he names several times). He articulates his vision for India as a nation which will be reconstituted on an equitable and just framework.

It is tragic that his faith could not be vindicated in his lifetime. He did not live to see the creation of Jharkhand in 2000, as he passed away at the age of 63 in 1970. However, despite the delay in the achievement of this goal, his leadership proved instrumental in the early stages of the fight for Adivasi rights.

His interventions, often uncomfortable for a Constituent Assembly which was trying to project the idea of a 'unified nation,' constitute a powerful articulation of the Adivasi case.

It is not for nothing that Jaipal Singh Munda is referred to as 'Marang Gomke' (the Great Leader).

(Quotes, where unattributed, belong to Jaipal Singh Munda)



Ram Dayal Munda

<https://joharjournal.org/ram-dayal-munda/>

Dr. Ram Dayal Munda (1939-2011) was

a leading scholar, educationist, linguist, writer, translator, musician and tribal cultural activist. He was born on 23 August 1939 in Diuri village, Ranchi, Jharkhand, in a Munda Adivasi family. After completing his Masters in Anthropology from Ranchi University in 1963, he went for further studies to the University of Chicago, USA, and received his PhD degree from the same university. He taught briefly at the universities of Chicago, Minnesota, Ranchi, Australian National University and Syracuse, and was the Vice Chancellor of Ranchi University from 1986 to 1988. His literary works in Mundari, Hindi and Nagpuri languages included Hisir (1967), Seled (1967), Kuch Nae Nagpuri Git (1978), Eea Nawa Kaaniko (1980), among others. He also translated from Hindi, Sanskrit and English, with works such as Ocean of Laughter (1975), Kalyani (1976), Holy Man from Jamania (1977), Dhruwa Swamini (1979), Titli (1980), The Sun Charioteer (1981), Birsa Munda (2000), etc. His most notable scholarly works were Proto-Kherwarian Sound System (1967), Mundari Vyakaran (1979), Adi-Dharam (2000), Jharkhand Movement (with S. Basu Malik, 2000). Many of his papers were also published in reputed national and international journals.

Dr. Munda also promoted tribal music and dance by putting together a troupe of performers known as the South Asian Folk Performers which won acclaim at several cultural festivals in India and abroad. For his contributions to Indian Adivasi literature, music and dance, Dr. Munda was honoured with the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 2007 and the Padma Shree in 2010. He died in Ranchi, on 30 September 2011.

The Pain of Development (Vikas Ka Dard)

I have become a jackal
On the run
Towards the city
Before dying.
I feel as if
A gigantic saal tree fell on me
As someone was sawing it
For use in the development of the country.

Now more speedily
Will this work be done.
Development experts
And mighty nations of the world
Will support my country.
How does it matter that
My country is neck-deep in debt?
We shall borrow money to
Repay interest on the
Money already taken.
They say, 'Eat well, even if
Good food is bought with
Loan already taken.'

For how long will I have to
Bear the pain of development
Or is it that I will be done to death
Before attaining development?

(Yudhrat Aam Aadmi, 2001, 62. Translated from the Hindi by Mridula Rashmi Kindo)

The Return (Vapsi)

That day Bandhan had felt good.
After months of confusion and uncertainty
He had decided
To return to his old village home;
When the train had whistled to depart,
He had felt a strange shiver down his spine.
Working for the past ten years in the tea gardens of Assam
Had shrunk to a few moments;
His eyes could now see
An entirely different village
That engulfed him in its magical shadow.

The red soil on the path leading to his village
Would have become metalled now;
Below the tamarind tree and next to the dance-arena
Would have come up a school
And amidst the beats of drums,
The shouts of children
Would be presenting a new spectacle;
Besides, the people too would have assumed unfamiliar ways.

And what would that exorcist Rando Guru
Be doing now?
It is certain that his rituals
Would have lost effect
Beside the hospital medicines and injections;
But what about grandmother's weaving of the mats?
Perhaps one would still be hearing in the dead of night
The occasional barking of dogs in the village....

And then he woke up from his reverie.
He saw in front of him
A loneliness that made his heart skip a beat;
Not that he was alone,
For there was no dearth of folks in the village;
People were walking to and fro;
The air was filled with a sense of urgency.

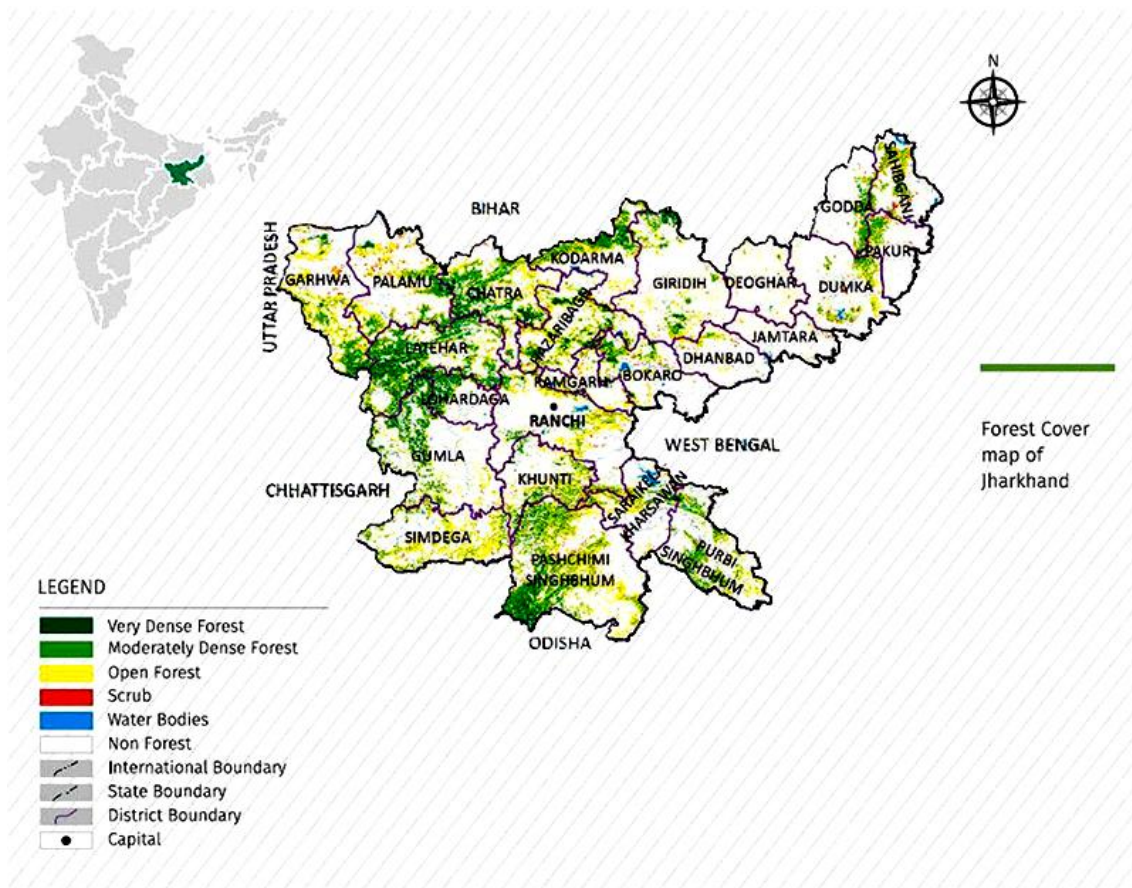
Bandhan kept trying to recognize every face
But in return each face looked at him
As if he was the question mark.
Bandhan found in front of him
A motionless time separating
The moments of then from now.

Then, he had run away leaving the village behind;
Now, the village has run away
Leaving him behind!

(Yudhrat Aam Aadmi, 2001, 63-64. Translated from the Hindi by Mridula Rashmi Kindo)

Part I

Forests of Jharkhand



Forest Map of Jharkhand¹

¹ https://forest.jharkhand.gov.in/Reports_2017/forestcovermap.aspx

Forests:

Relevance of NTFPs for livelihood:

<https://jhamfcofed.com/about/index.htm>

Jharkhand is endowed with rich forest wealth. Out of a total geographical area of the country, Jharkhand accounts for 3.4% of the total forest cover of the country and ranks 10th among all states. There are many important Non wood forest Products (NWFP) found in the forests eg. Tendu leaves or Bid leaves , Sal Seed, Harra , Mahua flower, Imli (Tamarind), Van Tulsi etc.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment estimates that up to 96% of the value of forests is derived from Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) or Minor Forest Products (MFP) and services (MEA 2005). More than 5,000 commercial forest products are non-timber products, including pharmaceuticals and food.

Significance of the forest for forest dependent communities:

https://jhamfcofed.com/w_jham/index.htm

Forest as source of livelihood for poor people in Jharkhand : Around 29% of the area in Jharkhand is under forest cover as against 23% in India as a whole. Jharkhand accounts for 3.4% of the total forest cover of the country and ranks 10th among all states. Forests have contributed about 1.3% of the State's GSDP in 2005-06 which is less than half of what used to be in 2001-02. Jharkhand's poverty ratio was 44% as against the national average of 26% in 2000. The rural poverty though was highest among all states at 49%. Of the 49% rural poverty, 75% are people who live either inside or on the periphery of the forests. The survival of these 75% poverty stricken people depends a whole lot on the forests resources as forests are their main source of livelihood. This is more so during the lean season. The extremely poor rural people gather wood from the forests and carry them to the urban areas where they sell them at distress prices.

Promise and potential of FRA

As per the promise and Potential report brought out in 2016, the area under traditional village boundaries where FRA should automatically be applicable is 21,19,095.9 hectares. However till March 2022, only 1,04,066.86 hectares were recognised under FRA ie only 4.91% of the potential area has been recognised. The details given on the official site regarding FRA indicate little or no claims rejected and none pending. The situation on the ground is however different as details available with JMKU show. JMKU case studies presented to the Tribal Minister indicate that non recognition of claims relates to criminalisation of the local population for alleged violations under Forest Act 1927 and Forest Conservation Act 1980. In short it means that people have no rights under FRA in these regions.

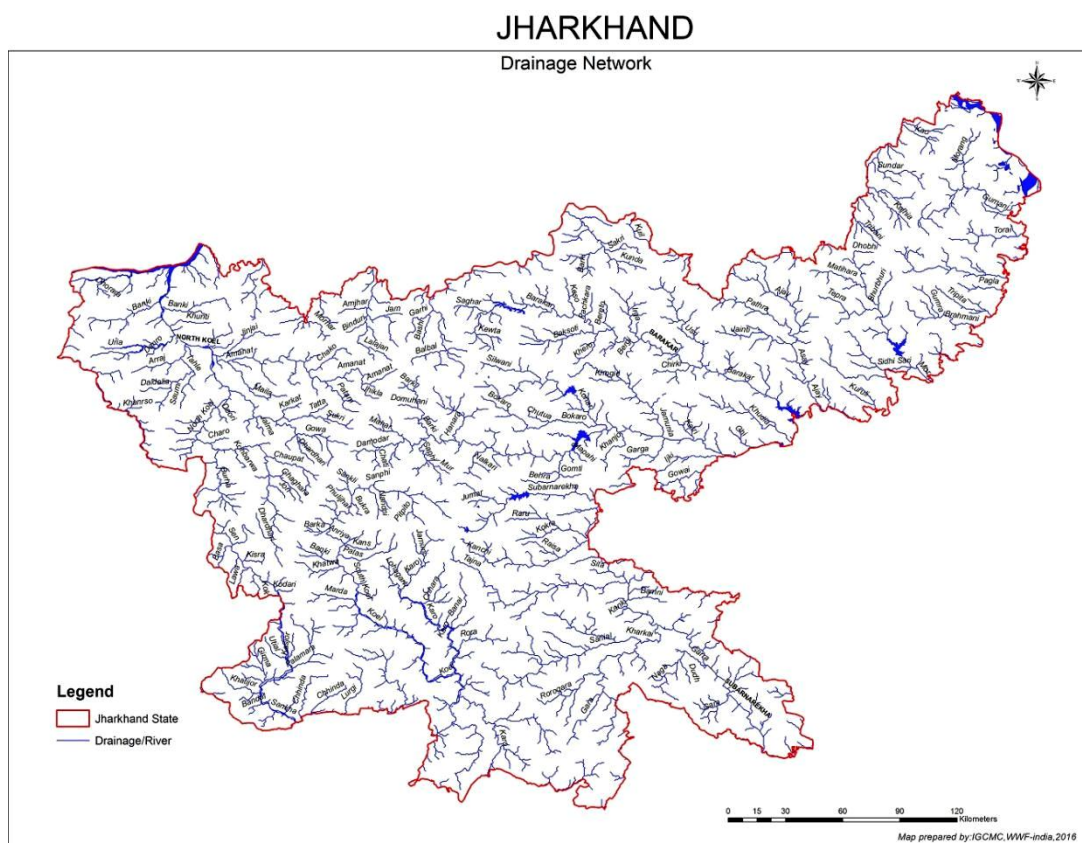
Man/Animal Conflict

<https://nativepicture.com/gram-sabha-local-community-governance-preserves-the-forests-of-jharkhand/>

Environmental disruption has encroached on wildlife corridors, specifically of elephants, hampering their seasonal movement. Their largeness has created an impact that cannot be ignored. To avoid the large pits created by mining, elephants are moving into local villages, causing an increase in human-elephant conflict. Homes, fields, and livelihoods are being destroyed by the distressed creatures. Locals of the villages in Jharkhand describe positive relationships between elephants and villagers as recently as 15 years ago. In the past, elephants did not cause the frequent damage the villages see today. In Jharkhand alone, there have been over three hundred human deaths reported from elephant conflict. Now, the herds frequently upset villages at the very time of crop harvests, increasing the loss of livelihoods and instilling fear.

Part II

Water Resources of Jharkhand



Drainage map of Jharkhand

<https://indiariversblog.wordpress.com/2017/05/16/jharkhand-rivers-profile/>

Pollution of Jharkhand Rivers

The large scale mining operations going on in the region have adversely affected groundwater table in many areas with the result that yield of water from the wells of adjoining villages has drastically reduced. Further, effluents discharged from mine sites have seriously polluted the streams and under groundwater of the area. Acid mine drainage, liquid effluents from coal handling plants, colliery workshops and mine sites and suspended solids from coal washeries have caused serious water pollution in the region, adversely affecting fish and aquatic life.

Table showing selected Polluted River Stretches in Jharkhand

S.no.	River name	Stretch Identified.	Towns Identified.	Approx length of the stretch (in Km)
1	Bokaro	Bilyotara To Jarandi	Bilyotra, Gumia	8
2	Damodar	Phusro Road Bdg To Turio	Phusro, Bhandaridah, Dhanbad	12
3	Jumar	Kanke Dam To Kadal	Ranchi, Morabadi	10
4	Karo	Lohojimi To Balagoda	Balagoda, Lohojimi	16
5	North Koel	Basiadam To Rehla	Ranchi, Daltonganj	6
6	Koel	Daltonganj To Rehla	Kandi, Bistrampur, Majhiaon	25
7	Sankh	Kongserabasar To Bolba	Kusumdegi, Machhkata	10
8	Subarnarekha	Hatia Dam To Jamshedpur	Ranchi, Namkum.	120

A report by Dr. Nitish Priyadarshi

Part III

Energy sector in Jharkhand



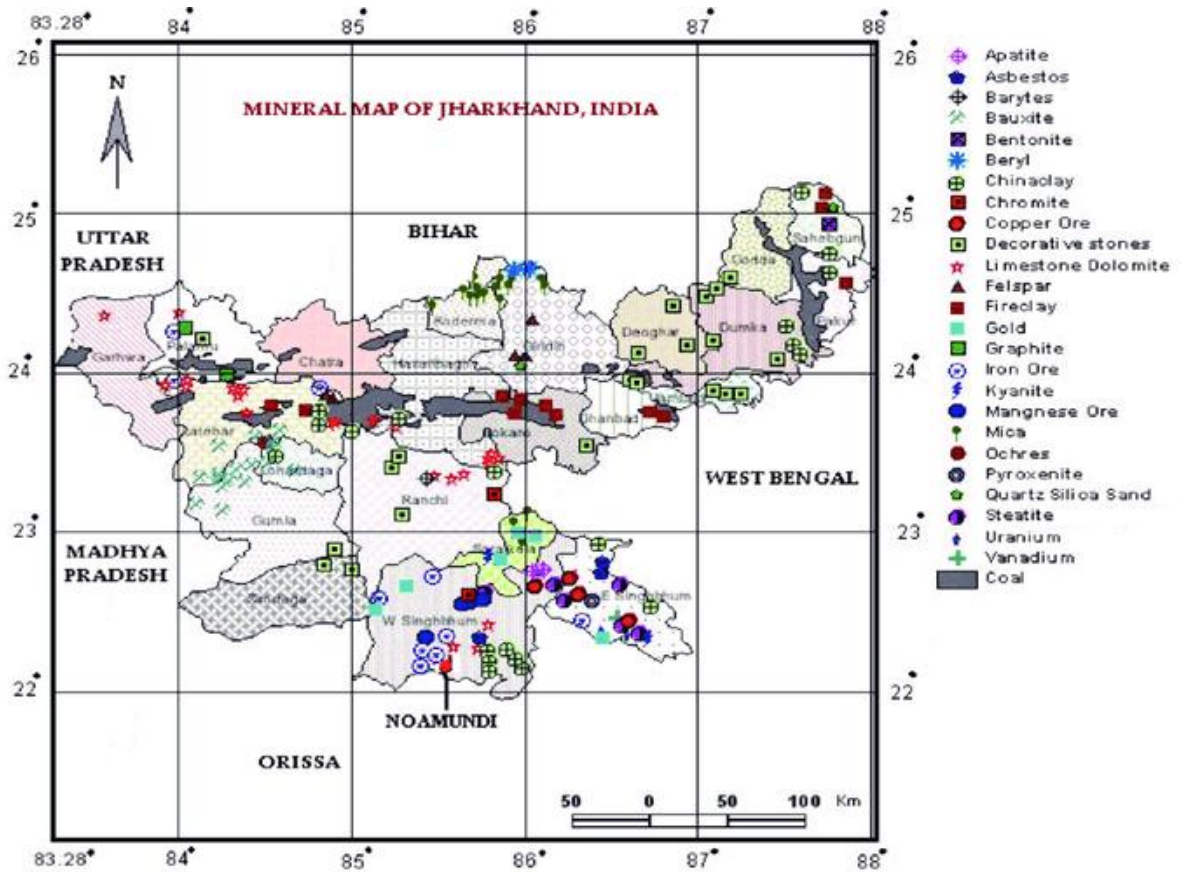
In 2022 Jharkhand had a total installed power generation capacity of 2.735 MW most of it from coal. Despite being the second largest producer of coal, there is a shortfall in electricity production in Jharkhand as most of the coal is exported out of the State. The State experiences constant power cuts as coal companies refuse supply to the State Electricity Board until all dues are paid up. In terms of renewable energy production as well, Jharkhand is lagging behind even the targets it has set for itself. There are major concerns with the policy of phasing out thermal electricity production due to a large section of the population being dependent on it for employment and ancillary forms of livelihood.

On the hand the relationship of coal companies with villages in which coal is being mined is not very good. Issues related to displacement, depletion of water sources, dust pollution, fires and deforestation are burning issues with a number of activists/ local community members have even given up their lives resisting anti people measures. Coal companies have been known to arrange for temporary facilities related to water and electricity in the vicinity of coal mines, dismantling such provisions when the coal is exhausted.

It is therefore unexplainable as to why a clear policy linking livelihoods to the local ecosystem services and local value addition cannot be drawn up given the rich biodiversity resources in the region on which a majority of the poor and marginalised communities depend.

Part IV

Minerals



Mineral Map of Jharkhand: Amiva Patel

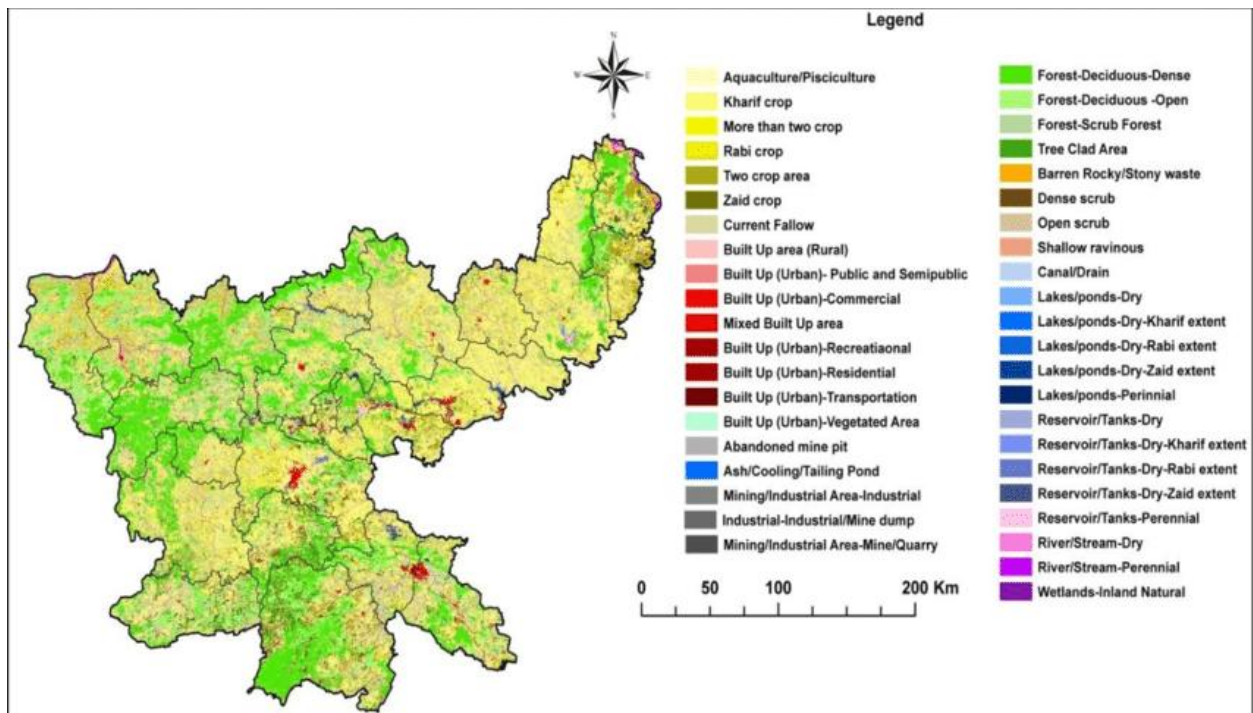
MINERAL RESOURCES

<https://www.jharkhand.gov.in/home/AboutMinerals#:~:text=The%20state%20stretches%20over%2079%2C714,total%20mineral%20resources%20of%20India.>

Jharkhand is a blessed land with the natural gift of immense mineral potential and other natural resources. Jharkhand state enjoys a strong position on the mineral map of the country. No region in the world is gifted with such a vast mineralization in such a close vicinity as is there in Jharkhand. The state has potential deposits of energy, ferrous, non-ferrous, fertilizer, industrial, refractory, atomic, strategic, precious and semi-precious groups of minerals. The state stretches over 79,714 square kilometer geographical areas with 29.61% forest area and owns about 40% of total mineral resources of India. The State Occupies 1st position in coal reserves, 2nd position in Iron, 3rd position in Copper ore reserve, 7th position in Bauxite reserve and is the sole producer of prime coking coal. Presently Jharkhand state is annually producing about 160 million tonnes of various types of minerals worth Rs 15,000 crore and generating mineral revenue to the tune of about Rs 3,500 crore. The deposits of Coal, Iron ore, Bauxite, Uranium, Limestone, Dolomite, Pyroxenite, Quartz and Quartzite available in sufficient quantity. The deposits of China Clay, Fireclay, Magnetite, Graphite, Kyanite, Feldspar, Mica & Decorative Stones are available in plenty. The deposits of Andalusite, Manganese, Chromite, Beryl, Talc, Gold, Bentonite are available in small quantity.

Part V

Agriculture in Jharkhand



Land Use Land Cover Map of Jharkhand: Neeraj Sharma

Issues related to Agriculture:

Only 22% of the land (17.63 lakh hectares) in Jharkhand is devoted to agriculture of which 83% (14.63 lakh hectares) is rainfed. However 78% of the total workforce lives in the village and 75% depend on agriculture. With 77.83% of the land being either forest (29.3%), fallows (25.4%) , not available for cultivation (17.1%), or other uncultivated land like pastures (6.0%), the relevance of the commons in general and forests in particular to the life support systems of the people cannot be undermined.

<https://www.outlookindia.com/outlooktraveller/explore/story/71460/cuisine-as-an-integral-part-of-adivasi-culture-and-identity-in-jharkhand>

Adivasi communities, in addition to their rich social and cultural traditions, practice immensely diverse food practices which are based on locally available resources and techniques. Such Adivasi food systems have been instrumental in maintaining the sovereignty and self-reliance of these communities. They have taken many varieties of vegetables and tubers, wild or grown, to enrich their diet, as also to meet their requirements of calcium, iron, minerals and vitamins. Studies reveal that Adivasi food provides a high level of immunity from disease and deformities.

The realm of medicinal plants and herbal products is even vaster. According to the All India Coordinated Research Project on Ethnobiology, tribal communities are acquainted with the use of over 9,000 species of plants including food plants, while specifically for the purpose of healing they know the use of around 7,500 species of plants.

<https://joharjournal.org/tribal-cuisine-of-jharkhand/>

Fish is relished by tribals particularly during the monsoon season. The preparation of fish that is caught in ponds and rivers in the villages is very simple, with little or no spice. Hence, the taste is earthy and flavourful. In the case of meat, too, they prefer to cook with very little spices. Fish such as *budnu*, *murgai*, *getu*, *pothi*, *girsa*, *jiyes*, *mugri*, *tengna*, *perwa*, *kusma*, *pathalchatta*, *jhila kutri* etc. that are found in ponds and rivers, are cooked with very mild spices. All varieties of fish are also dried and stored to be cooked into curry later. Fish and bird meat are also barbequed by sealing them inside leaves with pieces of twigs. The tribals mostly rear cattle, goats, pigs, hens, pigeons and rabbits which are also consumed as food.

Part VI

Case Study of Daltonganj Commissary

This section is being done as a stand alone for now. Since a participatory approach is envisaged, the report is only indicative of the direction that will be taken. Separately the need to take on Board the NBSAP document on Jharkhand coordinated by Kalpvriksh has been identified.