

Jharkhand Government Engulfed in the Fight to Save the Mountain

The Dhajwa Pahad Bachao agitation began over two months ago, in the Pandu block of Palamau district. This agitation, under the leadership of Dhajwa Pahad Bachao Jan Sangharsh Samiti, the struggle to save the mountain is going on since 18 November 2021 with the support of nearby villages through continuous picketing, demonstrations and meetings. The Ranchi-based construction company – Shivalaya Construction Co Pvt. Ltd – has got the lease of stone mining of this mountain, director's name is Suraj Singh. He is also a close relative of the local big leader of Rashtriya Janata Dal. It is to be known that RJD is part of the Jharkhand government. It is to be known that Shivalaya Construction Co. Pvt. Ltd has come to Palamu Division to build a four-lane road. That road will go from Padwa Mode of Palamu district towards Bihar via Hariharganj and will go towards UP border via Garhwa district. This company needs a lot of stones for this road construction. Therefore, in addition to the Dhajwa mountain, there is a preparation to lease eight more mountains of Palamu division, in which one mountain is of Latehar and seven mountains are of Palamu district. Forests, reservoirs and rivers are closely related to these mountains. In Palamu, there is less rainfall and if the mountains disappear like this, then the rainfall will be affected even more. Due to mining on the mountain, the surrounding fields and reservoirs will be polluted, agriculture will also be affected. Jharkhand has lost many mountains and forests to date due to illegal mining, whereas today it is a global responsibility to save the environment. The Shivalaya company is said to have been called by a minister from Jharkhand, who already has a big business of crusher machine, and is the leader of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha.

Based on the information received through RTI, Suraj Singh has been given the lease of 5.08 acres from police station number 559, account number 174, plot number 1046 for mining. Villagers say that approval for the lease has been taken based on fake Gram Sabha. Along with this, the villagers got plot number 1046 measured by the circle office, from this they came to know that instead of mining on plot number 1046, mining is being done on plot number 1048, which is illegal. Despite the complaint, no case was registered against the company. Villagers say that the meeting of Gram Sabha was never convened for the lease. Therefore, there is a demand of the villagers that the approval of the fake lease should be cancelled and mining should be stopped immediately.

It is known that in the Raghubar Das government of BJP, a land bank of about 20 lakh acres was handover secretly to acquired land to corporate companies. At the same time, the Raghubar government had issued a decree that now the Gairmajrui land will not be rejected in the name of any farmer, as well as what has already been done will be deemed cancelled.

Now the Hemant government is also preparing to convert illegal mining into legal mining following the footsteps of the Raghubar government. Plot number 1046 has a mountain on a total of 14 acres, in which 4 acres of land is Gairmajrui which is registered in the name of farmers, but only 2 acres of land is present with the farmers and the remaining 2 acres of land is shown as plot number 1048 instead of 1046. Though the farmers do not have Kewala, they are in possession of the lands. Now the effort is being made that after cancelling the filing of these four acres of land, it be named after landlord Girendra Lal and then to be leased to Suraj Singh. The funny thing is that in the Raghubar government, the filing of the farmers was cancelled, but their DGP and other officers along with some landlords also kept getting the filing of Gairmajrui land in their names.

Under the leadership of Dhajwa Pahar Bachao Jan Sangharsh Samiti, the villagers were peacefully staging a sit-in in support of their demands from November 18 to December 18. On 19 December, the goons of the police and the sensor suddenly ransacked the picket site and along with abusing, threw the collected grains for the food of the villagers. Blankets, lights, loudspeakers, etc. were forcibly taken away. A flag of faith that had been flying for a long time on top of Dhajwa mountain, was also broken and thrown down by the goons. Whereas on December 16, the Sub Division Officer and the Circle Officer (Tehsildar) had assured the agitators sitting on the dharna that a case would be filed against the illegal miners. But far from the matter of trial, the director along with his goons is making threats by reaching the picket site and abusing the villagers sitting on the dharna. Despite the complaint, no action was taken against the sensor Suraj Singh and the criminal element accompanying him. So far no action has been taken by the administration against the involvement of the officer of Pandu police station in this illegal process. Rather, the Pandu police station in charge has registered a false case against the agitators. After this incident, the form of the movement has been changed from 19th December. Now the villagers are continuing their agitation by going on hunger strike at the site of the picket in numbers of 20-20.

In the midst of this movement, a demand letter has been handed over to the Deputy Commissioner through a dharna at the office of the Deputy Commissioner. Along with this, during the winter session, there has been a sit-in and demonstration in front of the assembly. But the government is silent. Whereas on the PIL of the petitioner Vinod Raon, the division bench of Chief Justice Dr. Ravi Ranjan and Justice Sujit Narayan Prasad expressed displeasure with the government's reply during the hearing and said that the formation of Jharkhand is for the protection of environment forest, and dignity of Jharkhand, but from the reply of the government, it seems that it is not worried about the identity of Jharkhand. Despite this remark, there does not seem to be any effect on the Jharkhand government and administration. It appears that the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha minister and RJD close associate Suraj Singh has more weight than the High Court's observation for the Jharkhand government, which has brought the Shivalaya company here to make it four-lane. After the High Court, the Eastern Zone Branch of the National Green Tribunal, Kolkata, Justice Shri B. Amit Salekar and Judicial Member Shri Shawal Dasgupta, in the case of mining of Dhajwa mountain, on the initiative of Human Rights Activist Advocate Anoop Kumar Agrawal, on February 3, issued an order that Palamu

district Deputy Commissioner should investigate in his capacity and file a reply within 3 weeks and if it is illegal then cancel it.

Meanwhile, the scope of the movement is increasing. On January 22, a large number of women were present at the protest site and formed their front and resolved to intensify the movement. There are frequent gatherings in the nearby village and the collection of food grains and money is also going on to help the mass movement by the public. This movement is getting support from various political organizations, social organizations, and many prominent people of society. Palamu has also been a witness to the movement led by several Marxist Leninist organizations that emerged out of the poverty-starvation and bonded liberation movement, as well as the Naxalbari armed peasant rebellion. Even today many revolutionary organizations are running their political program in the Palamu division. For the last 2 years, an organization called Jan Sangram Morcha, CPI (M-L) Red Star, and Hull Jharkhand Kranti Dal (affiliated with All India Khet Mazdoor Kisan Sabha) have been fighting continuously on farmers and other democratic issues in the Palamu division. These joint organizations have also contributed significantly in the movement to save the Dhajwa mountain. These joint organizations tried to make every program of the countrywide farmer movement which was going on the border of Delhi continuously for 1 year, successful in the Palamu division. Today, in support of Dhajwa Pahar Bachao Jan Sangharsh Samiti, many other political, social organizations have come out in addition to the above joint organizations. In which CPI (M-L) Liberation, MulNivasi Sangh, Dihari Mazdoor Union, Bharatiya Samajwadi Party, ST-SC Minority Ekta Manch, Yuva Pal Mahasangh, PPI and Phoolan Devi Vichar Manch are prominently involved.

This struggle to save the mountain is slowly unmasking the Jharkhand government, which was wearing the mask of a benefactor of Poor, Adivasi and Dalit. It remains to be seen whether the Jharkhand government bows in front of the mountain or not?