

This Land is Mine: Adivasi Resistance in Kerala and Chhattisgarh (India) Against Corporations and Governments

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Starting with the 2003 brutal attack by the police on Adivasis in Muthanga in the Wayanad district of Kerala, this paper examines the response of Adivasis of Kerala and Chhattisgarh against onslaughts on tribal lands that are rich in minerals and other natural resources. Although classified as “scheduled tribes,” India’s indigenous communities are ethnically and culturally distinct and different from each other. The term “Adivasi” cannot be used to describe tribal groups of North-Eastern India, and is mostly used to refer to communities living in forest or hill regions. If there is a common factor that unites Adivasis, as historian Ramachandra Guha notes, it is their social, political, and economic disadvantage. Despite Legislative and Constitutional measures to safeguard the rights of Adivasis, policies instituted by various governments over the years have only served to disenfranchise and impoverish these communities. In the last two decades of neo-liberal economic reforms, we have witnessed India’s rise as a grazing ground for capitalist activities, and if Adivasis are part of the “India - a global economic power” narrative, it is because they are living on lands that are required for commercial forestry, mining, and dams. It is their land and Adivasi groups are not giving up without a fight. My paper focuses on this resistance movement, and explores the history of betrayals, conflicts, and struggles in the tribal districts in Kerala and Chhattisgarh, particularly as it relates to mining.