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# Campaign against Vedanta

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**On the 28th of July a large group of activists campaigning against mining corporation Vedanta, <http://wri-irg.org/node/8070>** gather outside their AGM to protest against the wrong doing of Vedanta, especially to demand the withdraw of Vedanta from the Nyamgiri mountain in Orissa, India. Mountain that is sacred for the Dongria Kondh tribe.

Vedanta has long been criticised by activists for its cavalier attitude to environmental protection, worker safety and other issues at its operations in Africa and India, and every AGM since it was listed on the London Stock Exchange has been punctuated by protests. But as the Indian government comes close to issuing its final verdict on the mine, the protests have become noisier and more impassioned. Vedanta argues that it's not infringing human rights and that it's bringing wealth to the region.

Nyamgiri is regarded as a god by the Dongria Kondh tribe that lives on it, so for them and their supporters, tearing the peak of the mountain apart for bauxite would be sacrilege. In their effort to spike this argument, this year the company rolled out the top manager at the company's nearby bauxite refinery, Mukesh Kumar, who claimed that the tribe no longer worship the mountain and welcome the mine's arrival. Music to shareholders' ears – but was it true? You could only pronounce with confidence on the question if you were yourself a Dongria Kondha, or at least on pretty familiar terms with the tribe. Did Mukesh Kumar pass muster? This was the point seized on by Samarendra Das, an Indian research scholar and activist from Orissa, who rose from his seat inside the AGM session to ask Mr Kumar a simple question: by what name do the Dongria Kondh refer to Nyamgiri, their holy mountain? The silence was deafening – until filled by the boos and catcalls of the activist-shareholders at the meeting, which from that point onwards went down hill.

<http://divergences.be/sites/divergences.be/local/cache-vignettes/L400xH240/Dongria-Kondh-tribe-membe-006-07649.jpg>

The AGM went into a spin after Samarendra stood up & shouted at the Lanjigarh refinery director, unmasking his lie that Niyam Dongar isn't sacred.... After this, the first formal question was posed by Lib Dem MP Martin Horwood about why the CO hadn't engaged with the OECD investigation into its malpractice, why they hadn't let the shareholders know about the report [which is damning], and whether the directors would engage with the all-party MPs committee on indigenous rights, which he chairs. One the Directors, Naresh Chandra [India's ex-home Secretary & ex-ambassador to US] made the revealing comment "we went to the top of OECD in Paris who said there's no requirement to engage with the OECD enquiry". As for the invite to engage with British MPs or answer any aspect of these questions - the directors didn't seem to even understand the questions or realise there was a British MP in front of them!! They made fools of themselves in every way, & this unmasking happened in so many ways over a 2 hour period during the AGM.

Whether this will make a difference we have yet to see. India's environment minister is trying hard to prevent mining & has made a press statement that they will not be allowed to mine Niyamgiri, but there are massive power struggles behind the scenes.

The last final development against Vedanta was the findings of a Green Panel in India that considered Vedanta's mines illegal. The findings of the four-member N C Saxena committee, which on the 16th of August recommended that the company not be allowed to mine in the hills that are the abode of the Dongaria Kondh and Kutia Kondh tribes in Orissa. The panel was set up by the Indian ministry of environment and forests to investigate if the state government and the aluminium giant had complied with the Forest Rights Act and Forest Conservation Act while

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mining for bauxite. But the committee, even as it recommended that the mining project be disallowed, stopped short of asking for prosecution of the officials involved in what seems to be a blatant fraud that went unchecked for years.

Survival International <http://www.survivalinternational.org/>

Article in

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/6321872.cms?prtpage=1#ixzz0wnqAfPIH>