

Burning Mines: Translation

Super:

Dhanbad - the Coal Mine Capital

112 Mines

Fire, burning for a century

Jharia, a region in Dhanbad district of Jharkhand

103 years ago, a mine caught fire

Now it has spread dangerously.

About a people living on top of a bonfire...

Chandavati:

We are totally in a "Fire Area"

Super:

Land roasted by mine fires

Anchor:

This subterranean fire is seen in two areas of Dhanbad District - Jharia and Katras. The fire was found first in 1916, during the British rule. The reason for this fire is still unknown.

Super:

JHARIA

Biggest Coal Deposits of the country

450 square kilometres

Jharia - a volcano

Mine fires first spotted in 1916

The mine fires are spread over 250 square kilometres

Mine fire - A Time Bomb

67 coal fields are on fire

Five lakh people live over these coal fields

At times the temperature reaches 700 degrees

Emissions contain Hazardous gases - Sulphur dioxide and Carbon Monoxide

The mines are owned Bharat Coking Coal

A public sector enterprise

On one edge of the burning coal fields of Jharia...

Anchor:

It is a dangerous place. It is scorching heat. An explosion can happen any moment. The rocks are red-hot. The ground is breaking apart and deep cracks are forming.

Suresh Prasad Gupta, Mine Workers' Union:

During the time when the Mining Tycoons had collieries running here, the fire was ignored. In summer, the vegetation burns and gradually it spread into the coal. Once it starts burning, with the wind, it spreads very fast. The cause can be said to be negligence of the management going on from the early years and that is why the fire developed. The first fire was near Bania where it has been suppressed by piling soil. As the air is blocked it is spreading slowly there. That was the position in this region in the beginning.

Dr. Natroopi Agrawal, Jharia:

Most of the patients here have diseases related to this. Most patients are slum dwellers from the coal fields. 60% of our cases are coal mine related.

Super:

Villages situated over the mines

Dharia, Dhanbad

Anchor:

This is a village near the Dharia mines. Around 40 families live here. This is the condition of every house in this village. Any moment they can collapse. The mine is controlled by BCCL. BCCL has warned that people should not stay here. But they haven't told where these villagers should go.

Writing on the wall:

Caution - fire and tumult prone area

Staying here is dangerous

Dhaneswar Bunia:

Fire is erupting in the house. When the fire erupted, BCCL was informed. But they have given it to private contractors who say that the fire will go on increasing. Our house is in flames. Yes, sir, the fire has reached our houses. We are burning in the fire. Nobody cares.

Anchor:

This is Vijay's house in Dharia village. This is the bedroom. Steam and smoke come from under the floor. The floor is very hot. There are many such houses here, with burning floor.

Goria Devi:

During hot months we sit outside. When the heat subsides in the night, we go in. During day it is difficult.

Channa Devi:

Rocks and soil used to fall upon us. After we complained to the management, they decreased the force of the blasts. Earlier they used to blast very strongly.

Dhaneswar Bunia:

With the private contractors' entry the fire has become stronger. The coal is exposed to air because of open mining and the fire has increased. With fire and smoke, it has become very hot. Children's health is deteriorating.

Dr. Natroopi Agrawal:

The basic reason is coal dust. Particles smaller than 5 microns get into the body through nose and get deposited in the lungs. This is the main reason for all respiratory diseases like Asthma, TB and Pneumoconiosis which affects respiration and so it affects other body systems too. Children have respiratory illnesses due to Carbon Monoxide. As the slum dwellers near the collieries have no proper shelter, their exposure is high. Sometimes entire families in closed rooms have died due to Carbon Monoxide. Dust particles smaller than 5 microns go directly into the lungs. It affects the eyes too. When in contact with body, they cause skin diseases too.

Super:

Kujama, Dhanbad

Anchor:

This is a village called Kujama. Around 100 families live here. This is steam coming from underground. This happens after a rain. During summer one can't stand here. These poor people are living above furnaces. See there, the ground is on fire...

Chandavati Malakar:

Now this has been covered with soil. The cattle's hooves get trapped in this. See the hoof marks of cattle. How can people live here? See there is fire in these houses and people live there. How will they live? There are small children. If you step in the house, your feet will get burned. We live in the

"fire area". We live on the mouth of a Volcano. In this vast area when fire will fall no one can predict. BCCL is taking no responsibility. Children are also around. See, the earth has cracked there. The cow slipped into the pit this deep. Many children come to play in this ground. This area is full of fire-traps. BCCL ignores all this and goes on with their work. Jyothi, a girl was to write her 10th class exam on that day. She went to the field to defecate. It was flat land and she fell into a deep crack. She cried out for help. People came running. she disappeared into the earth.

Ganga Devi:

Those who can go will go. The politicians rehabilitate their favourites. Shall the rest of us die? We will die, but they will have to answer sometime. Only their apathy has led to this situation

Super:

Jharkhand is the biggest coal producing state of India

80,716 million tonnes Indian industrialists started mining in the 1930s

The mine fires became intense from those times

Unscientific mining is the reason for the fire spreading

Instead of the less hazardous underground mining, BCCL operates open mines

Fire mishaps are found less in some underground mines run by private companies

Accidents:

1965 - Accident in Dhorri Mine, Dhanbad, 268 deaths

2017 - Indira Chowk, Jharia, 2 deaths

Suresh Prasad Gupta, Mine Workers' Union:

It is not that fire cannot be controlled. The Tatas have controlled fire in their collieries. They have built tanks to store water in the fire hazard areas. Those lands are under cultivation now. Tata's project to control fire is a model for us. But it won't be easy to do it in the vast areas under BCCL. That is the condition.

Super:

Traditional underground mines

Hazardous open mines

Suresh Prasad Gupta, Mine Workers' Union:

The coal fire has to be stopped. Otherwise it is a big waste of national resources. And the fire is increasing day by day. It is estimated that it is spreading 5 centimetres per day. It has to be stopped and people should be rehabilitated, I think.

Dr. Natroopi Agrawal:

Earlier it used to be underground mines. Particularly, Tata's mines are run more systematically. That was less harmful. But now it is all outsourced and open mining is going on. They don't follow health standards. Their only concern is to make more and more money. To increase profits, they don't do watering to reduce dust during transportation. The trucks are not covered with tarpaulins as mandated. This has led to a tenfold increase in incidence of diseases.

Anchor:

BCCL is one of the monopolies of mineral wealth in Jharkhand. Their revenues are in Billions. The contradiction is that it is a public sector company that makes the lives of thousands of people miserable.

Super:

1973 - Mines were nationalised

2015 - NDA government implemented privatisation

2018 - Privatisation is complete, mine fires became more fierce