

# BLOOD ON YOUR FEET!

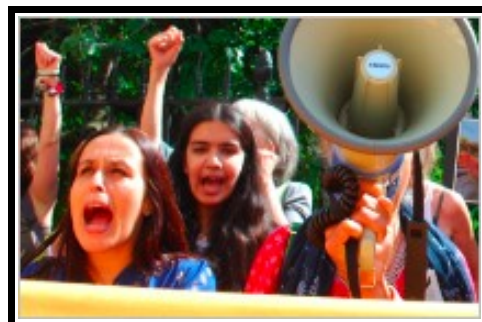
Vedanta executives forced to walk through red paint thrown by protesters at their London AGM..

More than 100 protesters from Foil Vedanta and other grassroots organisations crowded the entrance to Vedanta Resources' London AGM on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2012 shouting loud slogans and playing drums in an attempt to disrupt the meeting. Two activists dressed as Vedanta executives broke free from the crowd and poured buckets of red paint over the steps of the AGM symbolising the hundreds who have died either working at or opposing Vedanta's factories and mines. Shortly afterwards Anil Agarwal himself arrived in a blacked out car which was surrounded by protesters preventing him from entering the meeting. Other executives including Anil's daughter Priya Agarwal – mastermind of Vedanta's 'mining happiness' PR campaign – walked through the paint, trailing the symbolic blood into the AGM. The crowd chanted '*blood on your hands!*' and '*murderers!*' at the top of their voices, which could be heard inside the meeting, as scores of police arrived outside to protect the building from siege. Chants called out the names of the communities in India and Africa fighting Vedanta and declared solidarity with them, telling Vedanta that '*the whole world is watching!*'. Placards had solidarity messages from Trinidad and Zambia and demands to release Lingaraj Azad, a committed activist in Odisha who was being kept in jail for his involvement with struggle against Vedanta's Niyamgiri mine.



Inside the AGM the meeting was once again dominated by dissident shareholders who pointed out Vedanta's racism, major environmental and human rights violations and poor governance. One activist challenged the company on its opinion in its recent report *Vedanta's Perspective* that the Dongria Kond are not indigenous people but simply 'backward'. 'This is a racist remark which is unacceptable', he said. The report by Vedanta is an attempt to answer the criticisms against it by NGOs. Anil Agarwal replied that OBC (Other Backward Castes) was an Indian government term and then pointed to Vedanta board member and former deputy secretary of home affairs of India Naresh Chandra saying 'He runs the government'. Another shareholder tried to show the Vedanta board pictures of child labour being used in the Bodai Daldali mines in

Chhattisgarh and toxic mine waste floods in Goa. They refused to look at the pictures saying that they could have been taken anywhere and were not verified. Activists from the Save Goa Campaign accused the company of looting 50% of the drinking water in Goa and leaving a toxic wasteland after their mines. Anil Agarwal claimed they have already rehabilitated the mines, to which the activists replied that that happened to only one mine – twenty years ago. Another dissident shareholder from Survival International read out a quote from villagers in Niyamgiri, Odisha, claiming that they have never been consulted about the planned mine and that Vedanta '*speak to us only when we are arrested and beaten, They threaten to beat us up again if we talk about Vedanta to other villagers*'. The Vedanta board ignored these questions. Instead they claimed to have helped 3.1 million people across 1,000 villages with their community development programmes.



This year there was no NGO presence outside the AGM as there has been in previous years. Nonetheless the national newspapers still credited these NGO's with the demonstration, continuing the pattern of desk reporting, and denying visibility to the grassroots organisations who made it happen. Vedanta's share prices dropped significantly in reaction to the bad publicity caused by the demonstration.

**Foil Vedanta** is a London based independent grassroots group opposing British-Indian mining giant Vedanta Resources. Foil Vedanta targets the company in London where it is registered. It does this in solidarity and collaboration with people's movements fighting Vedanta at its many operations worldwide.

# RECENT NEWS ON VEDANTA

## Thousands rally against Vedanta's Iron Ore factory in Goa!



On 27<sup>th</sup> August (the day before Vedanta's AGM in London) thousands of villagers took to the streets in a whole day 'bandh' demanding an end to operations at Vedanta subsidiary Sesa Goa's illegal Amona pig iron plant. The plant had released clouds of black dust pollution, which swamped local houses over a 1.5km area a few days before. The protesters blocked the road which connects Bicholim with the capital city of Panaji.

In early October the Supreme Court banned all mining activity in Goa after receiving the Shah Commission's report into illegal mining in the state which revealed the massive scale of illegal mining and the major damage to the forests, rivers and wildlife. Sesa Goa's mining was reduced by 86% as a result of this ban, costing them dearly, but it is expected that some mining will resume at the end of November. They, and other big mining companies, will be using all their power (and their many friends in government) to prevent further bans in Odisha where the Shah Commission is now investigating.

### Vedanta – a company in financial trouble

With \$10 billion debt Vedanta cannot afford to lose any income. But their failure to mine Niyamgiri (and the closure of the Lanjigarh refinery), the Karnataka Iron Ore mining ban and the global financial situation are dramatically reducing their profit and pushing share prices down. In November 2012 the lack of local bauxite had already cost VAL Rs 3000 crore in losses. Credit rating agencies have recently downgraded Vedanta to a BB 'junk' rating - a very bad investment for shareholders. In desperation Anil Agarwal has been selling his family's shares in the company – reducing their share from 63% to 50% ownership in an attempt to raise the price.

### Corruption and political party donations

In October 2012 the Electoral Commission of India announced that it would be investigating Vedanta's political donations of about Rs 28 crore in the last three years, split between the Congress and BJP parties. This is in violation of Indian law which prevents political parties receiving donations from foreign companies like British registered Vedanta.

Vedanta are also being investigated for corruption in allocation of coal licenses as part of the giant coal scam exposed by the CAG report in August.

**Vedanta in Africa.** Vedanta is moving into Africa where it hopes to get even cheaper slave labour and pay even lower royalties for its looted minerals. In Zambia they own the giant Konkola Copper Mines, which released so much pollution in 2006 that they turned the major Kafue River green. They further polluted the river in 2010, poisoning drinking water for 20,000 people and leaving the river totally dead. They were fined \$2 million for this in 2011. Workers there have protested poor conditions and foreign labour being used instead of local workers. A number of workers have died in the mines and factories in recent years.

Vedanta have also recently bought mines in Liberia, Namibia and South Africa. We await news on these.

### Vedanta's Odisha steel project fails!

Vedanta signed an MoU with the Odisha government via its subsidiary Sterlite Iron and Steel Company in 2004 to build a five million tonne per annum steel plant in Keonjhar district. The company had already been given permission to acquire 1,805.85 acres of land from seven villages at Polasponga when it was discovered that this land was part of an ayacut (water catchment) area. The state government has now stopped the project and offered the company an alternative site in Sundergarh district.

**Keep Vedanta out of your community before it's too late! People's action works!  
Get connected and know each other's strengths! Together we are many and they are few!  
Don't let them get away with murder, exploitation, pollution and corruption..**