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Educational level and Health status changes of children of Salboni due to the land acquisition of Jindal Steel Works

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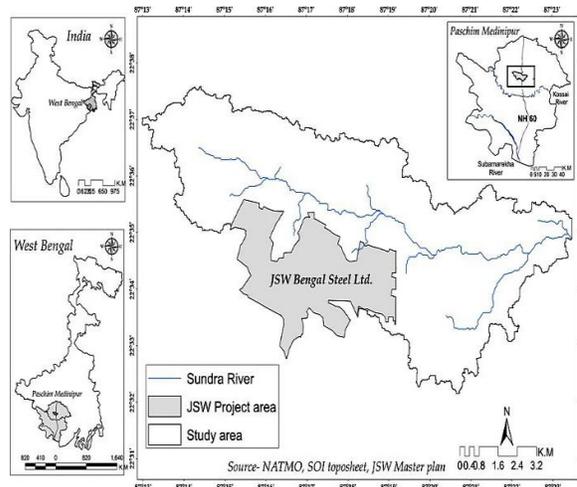
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Abstract

In 2007 the JSW stated their land acquisition for constructing a Steel plant in Salboni. For this reason they started the land acquisition around 4300 acres. From the peasants' point of view, secure access to land provides a valuable safety as a source of shelter, food and income in times of hardship, and a family's land can be the last available support in the instance of disaster. In the rural areas, land ownership can be a vital source of capital, which transfers as a permanent wealth to the next generation. It is also important for their identity as peasant. This study primarily seeks to understand how a private company acquired one of the largest lands of Asia directly and that was done almost without any consent of the land givers and how the acquisition changed children's educational and health status.

Key Words: Land acquisition, Salboni, JSW, involuntary rehabilitation, & resettlement, education, health



Map of JSW Bengal Steel Plant

Literature Review

Theoretical paradigms on land grabbing and social movements range from politics and identity (Jasper and Goodwin 1999; Koopmans 1999; Rochon 1998; Clemens 1997;), may succumb to the cross-disciplinary boundaries throughout the social sciences and humanities, (e.g., Aho 1990; Blanchard 1994; Blee 1991, 1996; Klatch 1987), from the policy dimension of political protest (Amenta 1998; Amenta, Dunleavy, and Bernstein 1994; Markoff 1997; Lipsky 1970; Piven and Cloward 1971; Desai 2001; Polletta 1997; Taylor 1996).

Objectives

The primary objectives of this study is to develop an understanding on the process and nature of the land acquisition and change of children's status in terms of health and education of Salboni as a consequence of the acquisition by the Jindal Company that leads to the recent peasant resistant movements opposing acquisition of agricultural land in West Bengal. This study seeks to develop a participatory ethnographic research on the following issues:

- a) To identify the process of the land acquisition of Salboni by Jindal. In terms of relationship between structural change and transformations in patterns of social conflict.
- b) To assess the role of cultural representations in social conflict; that leads to change of the educational and health status of local children.
- c) To identify the lag between promises and the fulfilment of the promises. That is responsible for degrading their economic condition.

Methodology

To fulfill the above mentioned objectives this research undertakes ethnographic study in the places where protests marked the social movement of Salboni at the time of acquisition. The study has identified different *layers/groups* associated with the movement of the land acquisition (like national and international players, political parties, rights groups, peasant groups etc.) and *translators* who facilitated collaboration between people in various layers. The researcher has purposively selected participants from the various layers. In doing so this researcher has kept in mind that maximum representation of participants should be come from the lowest layer. Semi-structured interviews and observations were conducted on these participants. Secondary data from all the sources like the government offices, Jindal etc. studied for this research. This study is primarily qualitative in nature (except for a few household data) with standard qualitative data analysis methods like content analysis.

Result

A complex combination of property rights and users' rights in our country results the situation in which those who cultivate the land do not own it, It also implies that land users will not have access to legal remedies, and receive adequate compensation, if they are evicted from the land they cultivate Large-scale acquisitions and leases are one of the key new trends that emerged out of the 2008 global food crisis

The Jindal and the West Bengal Government of the time started concentrating the total attention to initiate a steel factory at Salboni. But unfortunately such dream is still unrealized and everything is gone in vein. Steel plant is never to come. Mr. Sajjan Jindal, chief of the Jindal Company commented "No, the condition of coal is bad now. Iron ore is not available. The industrial plant acquired 4225 acres of land to set up a 10.0 mtpa (million ton per annum) integrated steel plant in the year of 2012. So the project of the factory is to be postponed. As a consequence, the project affected House Holds is in severe condition in terms of their livelihood, income and accessibility. Immediately after that villagers' agitation was started as out of the 4225 acres of land 294 was private land (Rayoti). The local people, (Committee for saving land, "*Bhumi Raksha Commitee*") said to Jindal, - "Start industry, or give our land back." In 2014, the existing JSW employee and local villagers, including land looser families started movement with placard, demanded immediate initiatives to start the proposed project work. The West Bengal State Government took initiatives to mediate the situation and tried to solve the problem. After long discussion in 2015, the JSW announced for a cement making unit through investment of INR 615 crores. The plant authority had capacity to employ only 200 people only.

The locals of Salboni were sold the dream that a Tatanagar like development would be possible there. Regarding the matter the Government of West Bengal spent lot of time. But unfortunately the local peasants were not brought into the discussion regarding the rate of the lands neither with the Government nor with the Jindal authority. So the rate was fixed primarily by the West Bengal Government and the Jindal.

Before the acquisition Jindal promised to the land losers and the villagers that they would provide the following facility for them-

- A. They would give 50% share of total cost of the land of the land owner in Jindal steel company.
- B. They would construct the roads in between the villages.
- C. They would provide permanent job to the land losers in the company
- D. They would construct multi speciality hospital in this area.
- E. They would provide domestic animal
- F. They would help to construct houses of the villagers.
- G. They would provide electricity facility
- H. They would make play ground for the villagers
- I. They would provide drinking water to the villagers.
- J. They would train to the local youth and would give job them in this company.

After 7 years of land acquisition the steel project had postponed. In spite of the promises the Jindal Company had given only 3 play grounds, provides some medicines from their small hospitals, Constructed 1 tube well in these villages, provides some medical camps in these villages, trained to some youth for football player. Gaps between their promises and keeping their promises had made frustrated to the villagers.

As a result of the land acquisition of Jindal in Salboni so many labours had lost their job, around 700 families lost their lands. Around 14 villages depended on the land directly or indirectly. The people of the villages used to get Rs. 2000/- to 3000/- per month as a beneficiary of the forest , collect food from the forest in free of cost, collect honey from the forest for selling or for consuming, collect wood in free of cost for selling and the fuel, manage to get job in the land mainly as a agricultural labour, used the land as a grazing land, collect wood in free of cost for construction of their own houses, hunt many animals for consuming or for selling, farmers produce agricultural goods for daily needs and for selling.. Primary occupations of villagers were daily labour and agriculture in the land and gathering wood from the jungle of the land.

After acquisition of the land the labours lost their job, farmers lost their lands; changed their occupation, villagers lost the source of income from beneficiary of the jungle, lost the source of income from gathering of wood, lost the source of huge income from pastoralism as they were grazing their animals in the land. Road connection among the villages for obtaining job easily was stopped for surrounding the lands by concrete wall. Most of the villagers used to domesticate 20-30 cows or buffalos or goats for selling the animals and they used to graze them in the land before the land acquisition, but now they domesticate 2 to 3 only.

After losing the job of the labours from the land the labours went out of the villages for searching the job. They went to various cities and other remote villages where job of agriculture or other job is available. Some of the labours went to other state of India in search of job. But as most of the labours were illiterate or less educated, they could not found any permanent job or job of moderate salary. The land owners became daily labours.

In this time the labours or the land losers who lost the lands or job had strived to sustain their family. As the large amount of land was acquired by the Jindal, price of the nearest land was increased. So, the land losers could not buy the nearest agricultural land for agriculture. New arena for the joblessness people was not created.

Level of income of most of the villagers was decreased. The families could not support to their children by physically or economically as most of the parents used to spare their time outside their village in search of income. The insufficient income of the families could not provide money for education as well as proper food of their children. At least two years the schools of the villages were closed for conflict of the land acquisition and admission of the new born child was delayed for two to three years. A portion of the school going children had stopped their education for searching job. Private tuitions were stopped for long time as the guardians could not provide money. Local students could not go outside of their locality for tuition or for higher education as the conflict between the Maoists and Harmards were going on in this area after acquisition the land. Securities of the girl children were decreased. Sports and outdoor games of the local children were stopped.

On the other hand due to food insecurity and shortage of income, job insecurity of the villagers' health status of the children has been deteriorated. After acquisition the land as land owners has lost their land, labours have lost their job, local source of food has been stopped, and communication system among the villages has been disturbed, so food insecurity of the villagers is inevitable. Quality of food of the villagers has been deteriorated. They used to eat only rice and vegetables collected from local field or pulses. Children could not get proper nutrition. Owing to insufficient income of the parents of the children they could not get medicine. As the most of the parents of the children spent their time in their in search of income money, they did not give time to their children. Children were reared without their parents. Their aged guardians or neighbours used to rear them. As a result they were not taken care properly. In some cases mother used to take their child at their work place with their guardian. Mother used to watch the child and feed them.

Conclusion: Land acquisition and involuntary resettlement –rehabilitation pushes the affected people to vulnerable, farmers become marginalized. Children and women were the most affected persons due to any land acquisition. Safety, economic condition, education, health were deteriorated in a result of land acquisition.

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