



## Research Article

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## After Effect of Land Acquisition in Children of Singur, West Bengal: An Anthropological Appraisal

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**Abstract:** 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 consent of the land givers. This study also focuses on the acquisition of land has changed children's educational and health status.

**Keywords:** Land Acquisition, Singur, Involuntary Rehabilitation, and Resettlement.

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## INTRODUCTION

Land acquisition is an inevitable subject for a developing country. It is required for development by constructing road, building, township factory etc. Tata group proceeded for constructing a Nano factory. That is why they acquired near about 1000 acres of land in Singur of West Bengal. But most of the land was agricultural land. The land losers did not give their consent for their land.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical paradigms on land grabbing and social movements range from politics and identity (Jasper & Goodwin 2003; 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).

### Objectives

The primary objectives of this study was to develop an understanding on the process and nature of the land acquisition and resulting changes of children's status in terms of health and education in Singur as a consequence of the acquisition by the Tata Company that resulted into the recent peasant resistant movement opposing this acquisition of agricultural land in West Bengal. This study sought to develop a participatory ethnographic research on the following issues

- To uncover the manner by which land was acquired of the land acquisition of Singur by Tata. To

understand the relationship between structural changes and transformations in patterns of this social conflict.

- To assess the cultural transformation because of resulting representations in social conflict; to change in leading the educational and health status of local children.

## METHODOLOGY

To fulfill the above mentioned objectives this research undertook ethnographic study at those localities where protests marked the social movement of Singur at the time of acquisition. The study has identified different *layers/groups* associated with this movement of the land acquisition (such as national and international players, political parties, rights groups, peasant groups etc.) and *translators* who facilitated collaboration between people of those various layers various layers. For this study participants were selected from various layers. Maximum representations of participants were taken from the lowest layer. Semi-structured interviews and observations were conducted on these participants.

Secondary data from all the sources like the government offices, Tata etc. were studied for this research. This study was primarily qualitative in nature with standard qualitative data analysis methods like content analysis.

## DISCUSSION

The Tata and the West Bengal Government of the time started concentrating their total attention to initiate a car factory at Singur. They invest \$2,500 crores. But unfortunately this dream is still unrealized and everything was gone in vain. This car plant was never to come. Mr. Ratan Tata, chief of the Tata Company commented "The Tatas finally decided to move out of Singur on 3 October 2008". So the project of the factory was postponed. As a consequence, the project affected households were in severe condition in terms of their livelihood, income and accessibility. Immediately after that villagers agitation was started as out of the 997 acres of land most of it was private land (Rayoti). The local people, (Committee for saving land, "*Bhumi Raksha Committee*") said to Tata, - local villagers, including land looser families started movement with placard, demanded immediate initiatives to start the return back the land of unwilling land losers. The locals of Singur 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 Tata authority. So the price was fixed primarily by the West Bengal Government and the Tata.

Before the acquisition Tata promised to the land losers and the villagers that they would train the local youths and would give this jobs them in this company.

After 2 years of land acquisition the steel project had postponed. In spite of the promises the Tata 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 to these villages, trained to some these 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 by Tata in Singur many labours had lost their job and around 1000 families lost their lands. Around 5000 villagers depended on the land directly or indirectly. The people of the villages used to, manage to get jobs in the land mainly as agricultural labours, they used the land as a grazing and farmers produced agricultural goods for daily needs and for trade. Primary occupations of these villagers were daily labour and farming in the land and gathering wood from the jungle of the land.

After acquisition of the land those labours lost their jobs, farmers lost their lands; changed their occupation while villagers lost the source of income. They lost the source of huge income from pastoralism as they were grazing their animals in the lands. Road

connection and communication between the villages were disrupted by 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 lands before the land acquisition, but now they domesticate 2 to 3 domestic animals only.

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

Meanwhile the labours or the land losers who lost their lands or jobs had strived to sustain their family. As a large amount of lands were acquired by the Tata, price of the nearby land was increased. So, the land losers could not buy other nearby agricultural land for agriculture. New arena for those jobless people was not created.

Level of income of most of the villagers thus decreased. The families could not support their children 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 or for proper food of their children. At least two for years the schools of the villages were closed because of their conflict of the land acquisition and admission of the children for their education was delayed for two to three years. A portion of the school going children had stopped their education for searching jobs. 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 was going on in this area after acquisition the land. Securities for the girl Childs were decreased. Sports and outdoor games of the local children were stopped.

On the other hand due to shortage of income and food insecurity and, job insecurity affected the villagers' health status especially of the children, overall, 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 mainly rice and vegetables collected from local field. 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 spent their time looking for

income, they did not have time for their children. Children grew up without their parental guidance. Their aged guardians or neighbours used to rear them. As a result they were not properly taken care. In some cases mother used to take their child at their work place. Mother used to watch the child and feed them.

It was concluded that involuntary and resettlement and rehabilitation due to land acquisition –pushed the affected people to vulnerable, farmers become marginalized. Children are the most affected people due to this land acquisition. Their safety, economic condition, health were deteriorated in a result of land acquisition.

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