

A Study on Issues and Challenges of Land Acquisition: With Special Reference to Women in Meerut District of Uttar Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

India is a developing country where continuous efforts are being made for industrialization and infrastructure development. Many capital investment projects have been taken up here for infrastructure development, which requires large parts of undeveloped land. The government fulfilled this requirement by the process of land Acquisition. The process of land acquisition has both positive and negative effects on the land owners and the women of their families. This paper studied the effects of land acquisition related to women empowerment in the Meerut District of Uttar Pradesh. This study has shown the property rights and distribution among women of land owners' families, whose family lost their land in the process of land acquisition.

Keywords-- Land Acquisition, Women, Meerut, Property Rights

I. INTRODUCTION

India, an enveloping nation, is actively working towards industrialization and improving its infrastructure. Numerous capital investment projects are underway to support infrastructure development, necessitating the acquisition of large tracts of undeveloped land. The government has addressed this need through the process of land acquisition. This process has significant impacts, both positive and negative, on landowners and the women in their families. Examining the far-reaching consequences of land acquisition on the equitable distribution of property among women in India - a complex and urgent issue that necessitates thorough analysis, understanding, and proactive measures.

In this paper, I conducted a field-based study on land acquisition issues related to women and their property rights. The fieldwork for the study was conducted from January 2018 to June 2020.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Land acquisition in India, particularly in rural areas, is a complex process that affects various socio-economic groups differently. Women, who already face significant challenges in accessing and controlling land, are especially vulnerable to the adverse effects of land acquisition. This review aims to explore the key issues and challenges surrounding land acquisition in India, with a specific focus on how it impacts women in the Meerut district of Uttar Pradesh. The review examines existing literature on land acquisition laws, gendered implications of displacement, and the socio-economic consequences for women.

1. Land Acquisition Laws and Policies in India

Land acquisition in India has historically been governed by colonial-era laws, most notably the Land Acquisition Act of 1894. This act, however, has been widely criticized for being draconian, as it allowed the government to acquire private land for public purposes with minimal consultation and compensation (Vij, 2017). The introduction of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation, and Resettlement Act, 2013 (commonly referred to as the LARR Act), marked a significant policy shift. This new law mandated greater transparency, fair compensation, and rehabilitation of affected families (Sampat, 2015).

Despite these legislative reforms, the implementation of land acquisition laws remains problematic. Studies by Choudhury (2018) indicate that delays in compensation and insufficient rehabilitation measures have caused widespread dissatisfaction among displaced communities. Additionally, land acquisition laws often do not account for gendered experiences, leaving women further marginalized in land transactions (Basu, 2018).

2. The Gendered Impact of Land Acquisition

Women in India face significant socio-cultural barriers to owning land, and this issue is even more pronounced during land acquisition processes. Agarwal (1994) argues that land ownership is central to economic

empowerment, especially for rural women. However, women in India, particularly in Uttar Pradesh, often lack formal land titles due to customary practices and patriarchal norms, which grant land rights primarily to men. Consequently, when land is acquired for development projects, women are disproportionately affected as they are often excluded from compensation schemes (Deininger, Goyal, & Nagarajan, 2010).

A study by Rao (2017) highlighted that women tend to bear the burden of displacement more acutely than men, facing loss of livelihood, increased domestic responsibilities, and social exclusion. In many cases, displaced women are not recognized as primary earners or landholders, and thus, they are denied compensation, exacerbating their economic vulnerability.

3. Land Acquisition in Uttar Pradesh: Specific Challenges

Uttar Pradesh is one of the most populous states in India and has seen significant land acquisition for infrastructure, industrial, and urban expansion projects. The state's reliance on agriculture makes land a valuable resource, and the loss of agricultural land through acquisition has led to widespread protests (Singh, 2019).

Meerut, a district in Uttar Pradesh, has experienced rapid urbanization, and the accompanying land acquisition has displaced many rural families. Studies conducted in the region reveal that women, who often depend on land for subsistence farming and livestock rearing, suffer disproportionately when their families' land is acquired (Sharma & Kumar, 2020). Moreover, due to the lack of formal land ownership, many women are excluded from compensation and rehabilitation packages (Sharma et al., 2020).

4. Socio-Economic Consequences for Women

The socio-economic impact of land acquisition on women is multifaceted. Women in agrarian societies like Meerut typically contribute to the family's income through agricultural labor. When land is acquired, not only do they lose this primary source of livelihood, but their economic role within the household is also undermined. A study by Patnaik and Das (2017) emphasized that the displacement of women from their agricultural land often leads to loss of financial independence, forcing them to rely on male family members.

Furthermore, land acquisition often leads to increased domestic violence and insecurity for women. According to

Mohanty (2019), when families are displaced, women face higher levels of domestic violence, insecurity, and exploitation, as traditional support structures disintegrate. In the case of Meerut, rural women who are displaced tend to migrate to urban areas, where they often end up working in low-wage, unregulated sectors, further compounding their vulnerability (Kumar & Singh, 2020).

5. Policy Recommendations and Future Research

The existing literature calls for more gender-sensitive approaches to land acquisition. Agarwal (2010) argues that policy reforms must ensure joint ownership of land by both men and women in rural households, especially during the compensation process. Further, Das and Mishra (2018) suggest that rehabilitation packages should include specific provisions for women's economic opportunities, such as skill development and employment opportunities, to mitigate the negative impacts of displacement.

While the 2013 LARR Act includes provisions for gender equality in theory, its implementation remains weak. Future research should focus on the long-term socio-economic effects of land acquisition on women, particularly in regions like Meerut, where traditional gender roles are strongly enforced. Additionally, studies could explore the effectiveness of current rehabilitation policies and suggest new frameworks that better address the needs of displaced women.

III. RESEARCH AREA AND METHODOLOGY

The Meerut District, an important district in Uttar Pradesh, has seen significant land acquisition by the Meerut Development Authority (MDA) since 1980. For a research study, 100 women from families who have lost land will be selected using purposive sampling to participate in a questionnaire.

IV. OBJECTIVE

- To study the issues and challenges of land acquisition faced by women in Meerut district
- To study the property rights of the women whose land is acquired by MDA.

Table 1: Issues about land acquisition and property rights related to women

S.NO.	Issues about land acquisition and property rights	No of women = 100		
		Yes	No	Total
1	Before land acquisition equal participation of agricultural work	56 (56%)	44 (44%)	100 (100%)
2	After land acquisition equal share of compensation money	0 (0%)	100 (100%)	100 (100%)
3	seeking opinion before land acquisition	0 (0%)	100 (100%)	100 (100%)
4	Right to objection for land acquisition	0 (0%)	100 (100%)	100 (100%)

Source- field survey

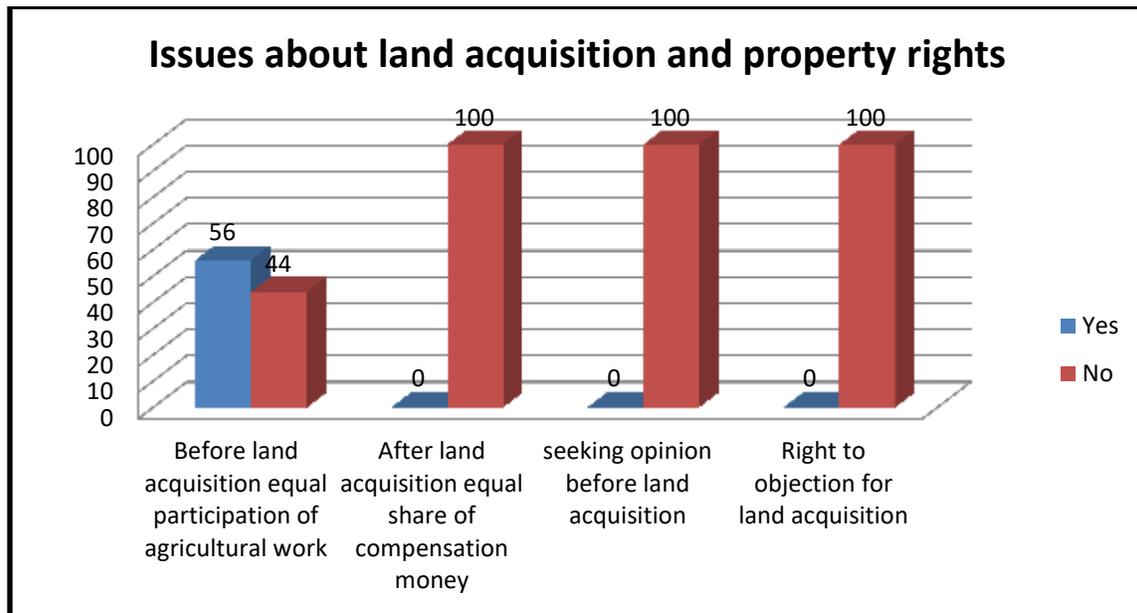


Figure 1: Issues about land acquisition and property rights

Table Number 1 presents data concerning the impact of land acquisition on women's ownership rights. Before the land acquisition, 56% of women worked on the land alongside their husbands, sharing equal responsibilities. Additionally, 44% of women did not engage in fieldwork due to the parda system but were involved in activities such as rearing cattle, milking, and post-harvest tasks. These tasks included drying and storing crops like mustard, moonji, and pulses. The women's contribution to the land's production was equivalent to that of the landowners, as 56% of women worked alongside men in maintaining the land's fertility and irrigation. They shared an equal workload with men in farming activities. Notably,

100% of the women stated that they were not consulted during or after the land acquisition, and they did not receive any share of the compensation.

Furthermore, all women reported that the entire compensation amount was awarded to the landowners, who were primarily male, with no consideration for the women's involvement in the affected land. Despite being part of the affected families, the women were excluded from receiving any compensation, reflecting the adverse impact of land acquisition on women's rights to equal ownership and participation in agricultural activities.

V. FINDINGS

1. The research paper's primary finding highlights that land acquisition significantly impacted women belonging to land-owning families.
2. Specifically, it affected the property rights of women from these families. Furthermore, the study revealed that women were not provided with the opportunity to file objections before land acquisition.
3. Despite being not recognized as landowners on paper, women did not receive any share of the compensation amount.

VI. CONCLUSION & SUGGESTIONS

From the observation of this study following suggestions are made -

1. The government should have a proper policy framework and awareness policy for land acquisition.
2. An adequate schedule be given by the government to the landowners and their families for the acquisition process.
3. The process of land acquisition affects the lives of the land losers and other men and women of their families therefore, the government should make policies and rules related to the acquisition in mind, the problems faced in the livelihood of the family, who lost the land.
4. The government should also give the right to the women of the landowner's family to object to the land acquisition process.

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