

Book Reviews

The real face of Gujarat By Sanat Mehta

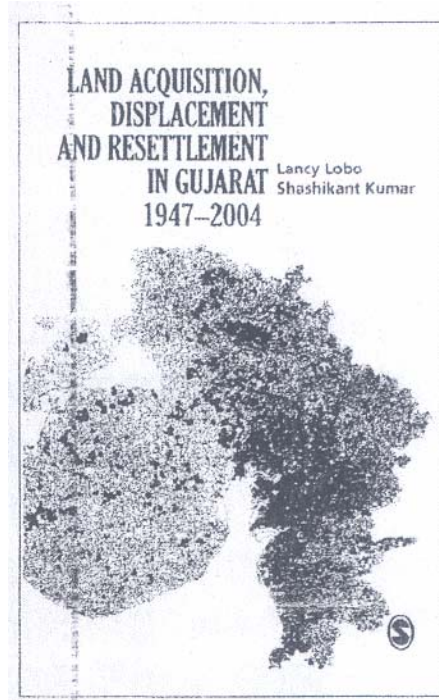
We claim that “we are 50 million Gujaratis.” But do we really know this Gujarat in its over all perspective? In geography, we learn about mountains, hills, rivers and forests of Gujarat. In history we learn and strive to understand the details of five thousand years old civilization and culture of Gujarat right from Dholavira and Lothal to Sabarmati Ashram of Gandhiji. Though we repeat the figure of population surveyed and published decade after decade, do we really know anything about this population, their lands, their families and their cattles etc?

The answer to the question is given by two researchers working at the Centre for Culture and Development situated at the outskirts of Baroda city in Gujarat. These researchers are Dr. Lancy Lobo SJ and Shashikant Kumar. In their book titled, *Land Acquisition, Displacement and Resettlement in Gujarat – 1947-2004*, which was published by Sage Publications, Delhi on the occasion of the “Golden Jubilee (Gujarat-Swarnim) of Gujarat.” The three hundred page-book gives us the details and the maps of the land acquisition for various developmental projects-like water resource, industries, mines, environment, transportation, urban development, and tourism development.

In order to get the concrete information the writers have collected around 80 thousand government (Gazette) notifications for land acquisition, under land acquisition act-1894, published in government gazettes during 57 years from 1947 to 2004. They have provided the decade wise details of land acquisition for various projects in various regions. They have contacted around 25 collectors’ offices and the offices of various projects of the State to get these information. They have succeeded in getting information under the provision of RTI Act and they have directly visited around 139 rehabilitation sites, where the uprooted families of project-affected people have been rehabilitated. Nothing is wrong in saying that this book is a unique attempt to show us the real face of Gujarat.

The study says that the State has acquired around 3.2 millions hectares of land for above-mentioned projects and displaced around 25 lakhs of people, during these 57 years. Thus around 5% of our total population has been displaced. The majority of them are poor people, the people from weaker sections of the society. The classification of the total land acquisition on the basis of the purposes of acquisition shows that around 60% of the land was acquired for the irrigation and water developmental purposes and around 23% for transportation and communication. Out of total 19638 villages of Gujarat,

around 40% villages have been more or less affected due to these projects. Now the large scale land acquisition required for SEZ and rapid industrialization will quicken the pace of this displacement.



As far as number of people displaced due to irrigation projects is concerned, Gujarat ranks first in India and the world. If we see the social classification of the displaced people, 32% are tribals and 22% are dalits. They have been hardly in a position to raise their voice by legal or other means for their compensation or rehabilitation.

After independence, many laws introduced during the British period have been amended. But the “Land Acquisition Act” of 1894 enacted by the British has not yet been amended. There is an unlimited provision in this law to acquire private of any other land for the public interest. On the other hand, there is no specific policy or law for the rehabilitation of oustees as well as project-affected people, who are losing their lands and houses.

In short, this book clearly brings out the fact that we failed to rehabilitate the displaced people who lost their land and houses and to give them proper compensation. In short this book will be a remarkable work for the celebration of Swarnim (Golden Jubilee) Gujarat.

This articles was published in all editions of Divya Bhaskar, a Gujarati daily

Book Reviews

LAND ACQUISITION, DISPLACEMENT AND RESETTLEMENT IN GUJARAT 1947-2004 by Lancy Lobo and Sashikant Kumar. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2009, pp. 304 including Bibliography, Annexures and Index. Price Rs. 895/-.

The book under review is perhaps the first ever comprehensive analysis of land acquisition for development projects and its impact on the people from 1947 to 2004 for an entire state of Gujarat. Earlier, Fernandes and Raj (1992) had attempted it only for tribal areas of Orissa. This study authored by a prominent sociologist and a planning consultant in urban and regional planning is certainly an outstanding contribution to this much-studied subject for its chronological, geographical and demographical sweep, detailed analysis and data based findings and recommendations. The analyses, field observations and statistics particularly focus on the marginalized sections - tribals, Dalits, backward castes, women and children - who are often left holding the dirty end of the 'development' stick.

The study has been presented through twelve chapters, detailed statistical data, summaries of various policy guidelines, and other documents issued by international institutions, etc., as annexures, a bibliography and index. The Foreword by Ghanshyam Shah also discusses the emergent issue connected with the new rehabilitation policy launched by the Government of India in 2006, particularly the aspects affecting the Scheduled Tribes. The text also presents salient observations through a number of boxes, maps and tables.

The first three chapters - 'Introduction', 'Regional Characteristics and Development Projects', and 'Trends in Land Acquisition and Families Affected' - present the Gujarat scenario, with a background of the national scenario, issues related to development, law on acquisition and displacements, followed by the over-all data in this regard, relating to the state. The regional and district-wise comparisons in respect of various indicators of development like poverty, education, etc. presented here are quite revealing. In fact, over the decades, the type of development and its spread has been far from uniform in all the four regions of the state - north, central, and south Gujarat, Saurashtra and Kachchh in spite of rapid urbanization and industrialization here. This situation called for the type of in-depth study the authors have presented. The objectives of the study and its scope have been set out in this perspective in the introductory chapter, along with its methodology.

A word about the methodology of the study, as it covers almost six decades of the characteristics of Gujarat in the areas of development, displacement and deprivation, through district and

taluka-specific projects, it has collected and made use of an enormous body of data - secondary and then primary - in three phases. Phase I was a study of all the available land acquisition notifications in Gujarat and its computer entry and analysis; Phase II of the study was a perusal of land acquisition documents and secondary information on various projects from a variety of sources; and in Phase III household information was collected through a schedule at sample sites of different projects belonging to various categories in different regions. Primary investigations into the project-wise/location-wise/household wise land acquisition displacement and deprivation process and changes before and after displacement. This picture was achieved through the primary survey and field observations and group discussions and extensive field evaluation of individual projects concerned in selected villages in project areas. The survey was taken up between November 2005 and March 2006. A total of 2184 households falling under a large number of projects grouped into 3-4 major categories - water resources, industries, non-hydel projects, mines and other developmental initiatives like transport, urban development, environment, HRD, tourism, etc. were surveyed.

A notably significant part of the methodology followed for the study is the effective and intensive use of the Right to Information Act, as:

Data on compensation was difficult to acquire until the promulgation of the Right To Information Act in October 2005. We were fortunate enough to be able to utilize the Act to collect informations for the Phase II of our study. Official data was essential for a comparison of land acquisition and compensation paid under various projects. After persistent efforts for information under the RTI, we received data from the selected districts and projects. The data was solicited in a common format, allowing us to process it in a planned analytical framework" (p. 26). Annexure 1 lists no less than 106 offices from where the secondary data, as above, was collected for periods ranging from 1968 to October 2006 as required in different districts. The methodological importance of the extensive use of this important law for collecting reliable secondary data has to be noted and appreciated as it demonstrates how the use of RTI Act can contribute to compliment and refine our research methodology. Thus far the use of this law has been almost confined to journalists and social activists.

The next three chapters present the scenario of land acquisition, setting up of project, rehabilitation situation, etc. in respect of two important sectors, viz. 'Water Resource Projects' and

'Industrial Projects' and also 'Other Projects'. The water resource projects in Gujarat were numerous and the study points out that 'it seems clear that their benefits have been greatly exaggerated and the negative impact on the oustees and project affected people are under estimated' (p. 67). During 1947-2004 these projects acquired more than 20 lakh hectares of land displacing 1.5 million people. Significantly, these included 'productive lands that are submerged or acquired which subsequently benefited the agricultural lands of developed regions' (p. 69). Project wise and region wise data presented here throw up these findings and the case studies document how tribals have experienced 'an immense impact on their livelihood'. However, with the completion of Sardar Sarovar Project the state has achieved the development of irrigation in 78% of its cropped area. In the case of industrial projects, the state has tremendously improved its position in Net Value Addition through manufacture. The oil related projects have, however, caused a declining availability of agricultural land and considerable damage to the environment.

Chapter 7 to 11 cover the situation related to 'Deprival by Development Project', 'Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Monetary Compensation', 'Background of the Displaced and Deprived Respondents', 'The Process of Displacement' and 'Consequences and Impact on People'. The data on deprival significantly points out that through the details of revenue lands acquired were available, information relating to forests lands transferred prior to 1982, other governments land provided to the projects and Common Property Resources (CPR) laws was difficult to obtain. However, through the RTI law some information relating to CPR could be obtained but large areas from CPR lands had been transferred to the forest department in early 1980s. Apart from such CPR lands, the SEZs in the State would also acquire vast areas of which CPR lands are likely to be around 60%. The emerging situation in this light is that the 'project deprivation of the state's tribal and Dalit families shows a 'negative impact on their development' (p. 157). Further, the field investigations of the deprived and displaced tribals in certain project areas revealed their acute deprivation levels and stagnation in the absences of land and suitable compensation, monetary compensation being based on the market value of land rather than the livelihood requirements of the affected people, and the law does not provide for any laws for land as compensation. This conclusion has been documented through data mostly obtained under RTI Act and presented in the next Chapter. The background of the displaced and deprived respondents (Chapter 9) reveals that the tribals are most affected by water resource projects in their livelihood. Specific data relating to changes in occupation has also been adduced to establish this point. Provision of employment as a measure of rehabilitation was extended to just 3% of the affected

household, and there were complaints of non-transparency in the determination of compensation, etc. by the project authorities. A better aspect of the in fact, 'project officials in the surveyed projects sites were found to be negligent, indifferent and un-cooperative' (p. 225) consequences of displacements has been that basic amenities for education, health, drinking water, etc. were found to have changed positively in 'almost all the villages surveyed'.

The last chapter 'Development-induced Displacement. Policy Issues' discusses the policy issues in Gujarat in light of the model of eight interlinked potential risks intrinsic to displacement as developed by Michael C Cernia of the World Bank. Briefly the issues are:

- (i) In Gujarat 2.5 million people or 5% the state's population have been displaced or affected and more will follow. Therefore, the state needs to balance the land utilization for the agricultural as well as industrial uses.
- (ii) There has been a gradual shift in the pattern of land utilization which is leading to powerlessness of the weaker sections. The policy on R&R should take into account long term fallout of this trend.
- (iii) The regional/sub-regional imbalances should be minimized through R&R policy. Similarly, the condition of the social groups most affected and gender related problems have to be taken care of.
- (iv) The inadequacy of compensation needs to be remedied.
- (v) The land acquisition law has to be made more liberal and sensitive to all such issues, and this may also involve looking into certain basic legal concepts which are supportive of this law which need to be modified. This approach which also 'smacks of the *terra nullius* (literally no one's land or unoccupied land) resulting into expropriation of tribal lands' has to be modified to *be* supportive of tribal customary laws.

The chapter deals with a suggested policy framework for the state emphasizing the need for urgency in adopting a changed policy. The interlinked risks in Cernia's model include 'joblessness' and remarks that such a risk is high in both urban and rural displacements for those employed in enterprises, services or agriculture and 'creating new jobs is difficult and requires substantial investments' Obviously, the case of specific groups like tribals, Dalits, and women is likely to be still more difficult in this regard. However, the issues raised and discussed by the authors of this excellent analytical study while mentioning the high deprivation of such social groups including women simply make broad suggestions that the 'policy should consider the R&R specific to the different social groups

affected' (p. 235) or 'displaced to affected people should have the first preference of the benefits accruing due to the project' (p. 240) and incorporation of a people-centric approach in the policy is necessary. Since the study is also empirical its authors could have gone into the potential avenues for creating alternative avenues for employment through, for example, the type of skills that can be created among the affected people by the state or private enterprises. In the present scenario of globalization, privatization and industrialization such efforts seem unescapable for these social groups, and even the tribals can hardly continue to sustain themselves on achieve sustainable rehabilitation development entirely on the traditional means of livelihood and economy. An appreciative mention has been made of 'significant changes in its R&R package' by the irrigation department but its approach or benefits have not been detailed. Some more attention to this aspect would certainly have made this study for more useful for the civil society, NGOs and government functionaries. None the less it is an extremely well presented, in-depth transprehensive study of the Gujarat scenario which is must read for all these interested in development processes and their consequences.

H. S. Saksena
Ethnographic & Folk Culture Society
Lucknow

The Eastern Anthropologist 62:4 (2009)

BOOK REVIEWS

LAND ACQUISITION, DISPLACEMENT AND RESETTLEMENT IN GUJARAT: 1947-2004 by Lancy Lobo & Shashikant Kumar, Sage, New Delhi, 2009, pp. 304, Rs. 895/- Hardbound.

Action-oriented knowledge requires relevant data. Organisations such as the Anthropological and Archaeological Survey[s] of India, NSSO and Census of India have been building massive data archives to help advance the frontiers of knowledge and action. It is indeed very shocking as to why we have data archives, data banks and data bases of some and not of other fields or areas having life and death consequences for the most vulnerable sections of our society. This raises a deep suspicion about some latent social and economic biases at play. How can effective policies be made at regional or national level in the absence of authentic and dependable hard data sets?

Lobo & Kumar argue that we are living in an age of rapid urbanisation, industrialisation and ever changing scenario of technological advances. Today, development has become a *mahamantra*. We are gripped by the virus of infinite consumerism, having serious bearing on finite resources of the earth. Growth of the towns, cities, metro and mega cities, industries, mining, infrastructure, tourism, defence, water projects, canal networks, transport and communications have put the land under unprecedented pressure and have rendered it scarce. The state-regulated processes of acquiring land have uprooted its owners and occupants since generations. Exact status of these twin processes of land acquisition, on the one hand, and displacement, on the other, is yet to be adequately estimated and known. The authors state that there are no centrally, archived authentic data sets on this vital aspect, especially in ".....an age of sophisticated and advanced information technologies, statistical and managerial skills and research resources". They have rightly inferred that this data deficit and neglect is nothing but a case of patently callous mindset of policy makers and development planners towards the splaced victims.

The World Bank's estimate shows some 10 million people world over are displaced every year. Data from the studies in eight states show that some 60 million persons are displaced directly or have become project affected people during 1947-2000. These studies report that the official figures on displacement are underestimated. The sociology of the displaced is more distressing. Some 30 per cent displaced are tribal, although they form only 8 per cent of the national population. Displaced Dalits form 22.4 per cent against their being 14 per cent of the country's

total population. Other rural backward classes and castes constitute the bulk of the displaced population.

The core objectives are: (i) to estimate the exact quantum of land acquired by the State through Land Acquisition Act from 1947-2004, and (ii) to trace the processes and analyse their impact on families affected or/and displaced by the development projects. The specific aims are: to enumerate and estimate the displaced families; to create data base on development projects and displacements caused in Gujarat in different sub-regions; to obtain a comparative idea of differential terms of references regarding DP/PAPs of various development projects; to study the impact of displacement and deprivation on affected persons/communities in terms of time and space; to profile effects of displacement; and, to make policy suggestions to remedy the situation of the DP/PAPs.

The study employed a three-phase methodology. First, they collected data on total land acquired in nearly 60 years by sieving through some 80,000 Government of Gujarat published Gazette Notifications for creating a region and time-wise data base. This is a methodological feat and an empirical marvel, as land and compensation data are usually a researcher's nightmare. The authors made extensive use of the Right to Information Act for collecting data on compensation from 25 Collectorates and land acquisition offices. Secondly, they collected data on village-wise land acquisition and compensation; the quantum of government land transferred for various uses in the district, talukas and villages; and forest land transferred for various uses by Forest Circles. Finally, household information was collected through the schedule at sample sites under different projects of different categories in different regions. The survey was done by field observations, group discussions and primary investigation. The primary survey covered 139 sites across the state and interviewed 2184 households. The conclusions drawn from the primary survey became the basis for evaluating individual projects.

The study is presented in 12 chapters, 61 Tables, 7 maps/figures, 18 boxes and 21 Annexures. Ghanshyam Shah's Foreword summarises the argument of the book well. The first chapter discusses the meaning of development, status of displacement in India, rehabilitation issues and the plan of the study. Regional characteristics and development projects in Gujarat are profiled in the second chapter. Land acquisition and displacement trends over time and space are mapped and revealed subsequently. Chapters 4, 5 & 6 narrate various kinds of displacement and deprivation by

different projects. The next two chapters present data on the total land acquired, families displaced and affected and compensation paid. Chapters 9, 10 & 11 profile the background of DP/ PAPs; highlight the painful process of uprooting or shifting and the impact of displacement. The study concludes by summarising the findings and discusses policy issues and suggests actions.

Lobo & Kumar deserve rich appreciation for arduously generating a goldmine of data sets on this subject and then incisively analyzing them. They wish the NGOs, advocacy groups, policy planners, rehabilitation administration, research institutes, media and the legislators use their study for advocacy of a humane policy on rehabilitation of the displaced persons and families. The book is an excellent addition and it will have a long shelf life.

Priyavadan M. Patel
M. S. University of Baroda

Social Action, Vol. 59, Oct-Dec. 2009

Book Reviews

Land Acquisition, Displace and Resettlement in Gujarat, 1917-2004. By Lancy Lobo and Shashikant Kumar, Sage, 2009, Rs. 895.

Varsha Ganguly*

Land acquisition, displacement and rehabilitation and resettlement seem to be links in the chain of development-except that the third link is often deemed dispensable. Our knowledge of these links falls short in one respect: there is a dearth of reliable data in India about land acquired, number of people displaced or adversely affected by development projects and the extent of relief and rehabilitation. Even the National policy on Rehabilitation and Resettlement recognized this lacuna.

Lancy Lobo and Shashikant Kumar's study therefore plugs a gap. It is a comprehensive study on the "three links of development" in a state often projected as the poster child of post-liberalization India.

The authors do not see development as a value-free term. They begin by asking: "whose development is being spoken of" They engage with questions pertaining to caste, class, gender and regional inequality. Lobo and Kumar's study covers 60 years and survey various development projects, including, water-related, transport and communication, industries, forest conservation, urbanization, road and building, defence and tourism. It is also important to credit the Right To Information Act (RTI) for a lot of this rigour. Lobo and Kumar gathered information through RTI petitions from 25 collectorates in Gujarat.

Much information was also gleaned through group discussions at 139 resettlement sites. The authors talked to people from more than 2,000 households displaced by projects. But they have over-looked people who have benefited for various projects.

It's clear the authors' sympathies are loaded towards the displaced. They comment: "Monetary compensation is largely dependent of the valuation by state agencies is dependent on the capacity, negotiation skills and the urgency of the project. Some farmers have been lucky enough to receive better monetary compensation in the case of industrial projects, while others have suffered."

The study should open discussions on the principles of public purpose. The principle is always invoked to acquire land, but the statistics ferreted out by Lobo and Kumar show the principle works against dalits, tribals, the poor and women.

* *Varsha Ganguly is the director of Behavioural Science Centre in Ahmedabad.*

Down to Earth, June 1-15, 2009, p. 62

BOOK REVIEWS

Development-induced Displacement in Gujarat **AMITA SHAH**

(Land Acquisition, Displacement and Resettlement in Gujarat: 1947-2004 by Lancy Lobo and Shashikant Kumar (New Delhi: Sage Publications), 1009; pp 114, Rs 895.)

In large agricultural economies where land plays a critical role in shaping the socio-economic and cultural well-being of people, their displacement due to land alienation becomes a complex issue not amenable to any easy analysis. The subject of development-induced displacement, therefore, keeps bouncing back in academic debates, policy discussions, and at times, in the form of protests by project "affected" communities.

It is, however, ironical that an issue influencing millions of poor and marginalised people often remains neglected even in terms of getting to know its broad affects, let alone addressing the matters of redressal and justice against a range of losses. Indeed, neglect of even preparing an inventory of the displaced and project- affected people (DPS/PAPS) suggests an act of gross marginalisation of those who pay the price for development that often, though not always, has growth-inducing impact on an economy.

It is in this context that the book by Lancy Lobo and Shashikant Kumar makes a significant contribution, breaking the enduring silence of convenience by the State as well as the gainers of development, on the one hand, and on the other, of those voiceless millions who lose their land, livelihood, life and identity in the process of displacement.

Estimates of Gujarat DPs/PAPs

This is a book that presents for the first time systematic information and database on development-induced displacement in Gujarat, a state which has vigorously pursued policies of rapid industrialisation since its formation in 1960. The exercise involves a mammoth work of scanning nearly 80,000 gazette notifications in different districts of the state, while also looking into the land acquisition processes and discussing with state officials and legal experts.

One of its important features is the primary data collected from households affected by infrastructural projects at selected sites in the state. The estimates of the DPS/PAPS have been presented against the backdrop of a larger picture of displacement in India and its various other states in Chapter 1, followed by a broad description of historical pattern of development across regions within Gujarat.

As against the estimated number of nearly 60 million DPS/PAPS in India over the past 50 years, Gujarat accounts for nearly 2.5 million such persons. This amounts to around 5% of the state's population. However, the numbers of DPS/PAPS at best are good estimates as suggested by the information available from the scattered sources. The extent of displacement in Gujarat indicates that about 50,000 families (or 2.5 million persons) have been displaced from about 19.6 million hectares of land constituting around 20% of the state's geographical area. Of these, displacement of 9,400 families from 9,800 hectares of land had already taken place before the 1950s, whereas about 87,000 ha of land had been acquired during 1981-90. The pace seems to have continued since then. Not surprisingly, close to 60% of the total acquired land and displaced families were on account of water resources projects, whereas 23% of the land and 33% of the families were affected by projects related to transport and communication. This leaves, among others, the projects related to industries and urban development, respectively with 5.7% and 4.38% of the total land acquired (Table 3.1).

Need of a Careful Scrutiny

While this is crucial information and nearly absent in the discourse on land acquisition and displacement in the state, the figures presented in Chapter 3 and elsewhere in the book need careful scrutiny to help readers grasp the magnitude of the problem. A few observations may illustrate this point.

For instance, the national level estimates of about 60 million DPS/PAPS (on p 8) do not match with the figures presented in Table 1.2 (p 9), where the number for selected states adds up to 157 million. The same holds true for Gujarat. Similarly, against an estimated number of 2.5 million DPS/PAPS families in Gujarat (p 8 and p 56), the source-wise details presented in Table 3.1 (pp 54-55) add up to 4.07 million in Table 1.2 (p 9). Lastly, the estimate of 3.5 million hectares of area under land acquisition constituting close to 20% of the geographical area needs scrutiny in light of the official statistics on land-use.

In any case, the estimated land under acquisition (presented in Table 3.1) is 3.1 million hectares. Also, the estimated number of families seems to have been worked out on the assumption that "one plot acquired is equal to one family dependent on that" (footnote to Table 3.1). The validity of this assumption calls for examination, especially when it has been used for generating the estimate of DPS/PAPS - the central thrust of the exercise. While these aspects require a much careful treatment, they nevertheless highlight the difficulties associated with gathering such information for a meaningful discourse on a critical issue such as this.

Gains and Losses

In the later part, the authors deal with processes of land acquisition and their impact on the DPS/PAPS, drawing mainly from case studies. Much of the discussion reinstates frequent omissions, and at times, blatant violations of even the minimal protection expected to be provided under the otherwise flawed laws on land acquisition and resettlement and rehabilitation in most states in the country. Having examined the consequences of displacement, particularly in the past two decades, the authors have, as several others, observed a mixed scenario of the impact of land acquisition and compensation mechanisms adopted in the state.

The volume, however, falls short in analyzing the implications of the types of projects that have displaced people from their homes and lands. This is important, especially in the light of the fact that as many as 90% of the displaced families have suffered due to projects related to irrigation, and transport and communication. Such projects are likely to have a positive direct and indirect spill on overall rural economies, including a segment of the poor households, though somewhere else in the state. The fact, however, remains that those who gain and those who lose are often different sets of people. Hence, their gains and losses do not cancel out. A similar scenario may prevail with respect to development of roads and transportation. A critical issue, increasingly gaining ground in the public domain is whether those who lose out in the processes of development have been consulted at all. And, what kind of space they ought to be entitled to while deciding the future management of natural resources, which are integral to their socio-economic and cultural existence. A somewhat more nuanced analysis of this aspect, therefore, would have added value to the otherwise such an information-rich study.

Resettlement policies

The policies discussed towards the end more or less echo the contemporary discourse on both the Land Acquisition Act and also the resettlement and rehabilitation policies at the national and state levels. In this sense, the book makes a timely and significant contribution to the otherwise poor and weak debates on displacement and development and provides a basis for evolving an appropriate framework for decision-making and transparency to be placed in the public domain.

To an extent, the authors agree with the compelling need for diversion of land in the wake of ongoing transformation in the socio-economic-cultural arena, and yet, question the relevance, legitimacy and very important, the nexus through which the State as a protector, provider and promoter of development seems to be operating.

Amita Shah (amitagidr@gmail.com) is with the Gujarat Institute of Development Research Ahmedabad.

Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XLV, No. 25, June 19, 2010.

Book Reviews

Gujarat laid bare

A critical study of development and displacement in Gujarat

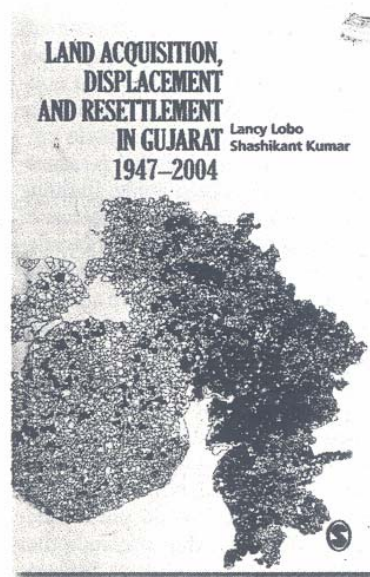
BY LAWRENCE SURENDRA

When Bharatiya Janata Party president Nitin Gadkari was asked by a television channel to comment on the summons issued to Chief Minister Narendra Modi by the Special Investigation Team looking into the Gujarat riots of 2002, he rose in defence of Modi by saying that the minorities in the State had the highest per capita income compared with any other region in the world. Cynics would probably say that the per capita income was bound to rise further if the populations of the minority communities were reduced through periodic pogroms.

Gujarat has been in the news, one could say, for all the wrong reasons. The genocidal events of 2002, which is perceived to have been masterminded by Modi himself, have badly scarred the State's image. However, Modi and his cheerleaders, including some industry Captains, have claimed that Gujarat under his watch has become the foremost "developmentalist State" in the country. Much of Modi's claims to glory are also intended to bury his absolute disregard for the due process of law and the basic principles enshrined in the Constitution.

For the sake of Gujarat's development and that of the country, it is necessary to take a closer look at the State to ascertain whether the claims about high rates of growth are borne by facts. A look further back in time rather than the period of Modi's chief ministership is necessary in order to place the State in the larger context of India's development objectives.

First of all, in 1980, exactly 20 years after its creation and long before the Modi dispensation came on the scene and the Tata-Ambani-Mittal industrial hype involving Gujarat began, Gujarat was among the three fastest-growing States. Since then it has more or less occupied that position. Apart from its long history of mercantilism, Gujarat, like Punjab, is one of the few States with a long history of migration to foreign countries. The remittances from abroad further fuelled trade and mercantilism and resulted in rural prosperity to some degree.



Land Acquisition, Displacement and Resettlement in Gujarat, 1947-2004 by Lancy Lobo and Shashikant Kumar; Sage Publications, New Delhi; pages 3,003, Rs.895 (hardback).

On the other hand, it is also a part of Gujarat's reality that the bulk of the State's people, 77 per cent of whom constitute Other Backward Classes, Dalits and Adivasis, live in severe conditions of the impoverishment and marginalisation. The conditions of the latter two groups are particularly bad. At the same time, communal riots, which have broken out periodically since 1969, have often served the purpose of consolidating the OBCs on the one hand and oppressing the Dalits, the deprived Muslim minority and the poor Parsi landowners on the other.

Communal riots were among the strategies of the rising industrial capital in Gujarat over the decades. Behind the facade of the high economic growth, there are other, more critical, development indices that show the real story of "development and growth" in Gujarat.

The dancer and activist Mallika Sarabhai, in a recent open letter to the actor Amitabh Bachchan, who accepted Modi's invitation to be the brand ambassador for Gujarat, asks, "Did you know that our poor are getting poorer? That while the all-India reduction in poverty between '93 and 2005 is 8.5 per cent, in Gujarat it is a mere 2.8 per cent? That we have entire farmer families committing suicide, not just the male head of the household?"

She goes on to state: "With our CM, hailed as the CEO of Gujarat, we have once again achieved number one status - in indebtedness. In 2001, the State debt was Rs.14,000 crore. This was before the State became a multi-national company. Today it stands at Rs.1,05,000 crore.

And to service this debt, we pay a whopping Rs.7,000 crore a year. Meanwhile, our spending on education is down, no new public hospitals for the poor are being built, fishermen are going abegging as the seas turn turgid with effluents, more mothers die at [child] birth per thousand than in the rest of India.... One rape a day, 17 cases of violence against women, and, over the last 10 years, 8,802 suicides and 18,152 'accidental' deaths of women are officially reported."

In order to unravel the nature of development and to know how economic growth takes place and who it benefits, researchers have to remove painstakingly the layers of propaganda and lay bare the facts and figures. Creative approaches are needed to dig out the facts and analyse the data. Lancy Lobo and Shashikant Kumar have done just that in *Land Acquisition, Displacement and Resettlement in Gujarat* - a rigorous work which is not only rich in quality but is a minefield of ideas in terms of methodology, empirical research and the tools used.

The ostensible purpose of all development and economic growth in a developing economy is claimed to be the removal of poverty, employment creation, and income generation, and not just generation and accumulation of wealth by a small percentage of the population. If that is the case, why is it that development causes such large - scale displacement and impoverishment of people?

The authors, in this published study, originally titled "Development induced displacement", have logically chosen the process of land acquisition, displacement and resettlement to study the process of development in Gujarat in great detail.

Referring to development-induced displacement, the social scientist Dr. Ghanshyam Shah, in his 'foreword' to the book, says, "We do not have precise authenticated information...regarding land acquired and families displaced under various development projects. Such a state of affairs continues to exist despite the hyper 'knowledge world' having sophisticated fourth-generation advanced information technology, statistical and managerial skills, and numerous surveys for future planning. This speaks of a casual and callous mindset of policymakers, planners and private investors towards those who are displaced."

The Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and the damage they are causing to local communities and livelihoods form part of this mindset. It is in the face of such "forced development" in the name of SEZs that works such as the one under review are important models for similar studies to be undertaken across the country.

The work of Lancy Lobo and Shashikant Kumar covers almost 60 years and since no secondary data were available within any of the government departments of Gujarat, they laboriously scanned 80,000 gazette notifications and coded and recoded the information in order to maintain uniformity in presenting the measurements of land in their study. In doing so, the authors created a database of revenue land, region-wise and decade-wise. They state that "40 per cent of the 18,638 villages of Gujarat are affected" and that "Special Economic Zones will aggravate the problem".

The SEZs, particularly in the case of Gujarat, the authors point out, are acquiring more land than they require. Comparing the 15 million persons displaced during the traumatic Partition days of 1947 with the 60 million displaced after 1947, they conclude that awareness on the subject of displacement is weak, possibly because those displaced are the poorest of the poor and mostly tribal people or Adivasis.

DETAILED APPROACH

The authors provide a detailed approach to the study and the methodology used, which is unique in terms of land-related field studies and should serve as a useful model for similar detailed studies that will be required in other States. The work analyses not only the displacement in terms of different types of projects but also the trends in land acquisition and the families affected. The authors look at the consequences and the impact of these on the people and conclude the study by addressing a series of important policy issues.

Here are some samples. Gujarat's sex ratio continuously declined from 942 in 1981 to 934 in 1991 to 921 in 2001. More interestingly or rather tragically, in the 0-6 age group the sex ratio declined steeply, reaching a ratio of 600 females to 1,000 males. Even more significant is the fact that the decline accelerated during the liberalisation decade -1991-2001.

In agriculture, Gujarat's production of cereals and other food grains in the industrialised phase of 1991-2001 declined to nearly half of what it was in 1990. In the past two decades, Gujarat has been losing agricultural land at a faster rate than it did between 1960 and 1980.

In the context of the Narmada Valley Project and what it is supposed to achieve, it is significant to note, according to the authors, that "even after 60 per cent of Gujarat's irrigation potential has been utilised, the State claims in its socio-economic report that the output of the agriculture sector in Gujarat has been largely dependent on the south-west monsoon".

In her open letter, Mallika Sarabhai says: "In the 49 years since it [the Narmada project] was started, and in spite of the &.29,000 crore spent on it, only 29 per cent of the work is complete. That the construction is so poor that over the last nine years there have been 308 breaches, ruining lakhs of farmers whose fields were flooded, ruining the poorest salt farmers whose salt was washed away. Whereas in 1999, some 4,743 of Gujarat's villages were without drinking water, within two years that figure had gone up to 11,390 villages."

Gujarat holds a mirror to the kind of development that is without the corollary of accountability and just governance and shows what kind of nightmares can await the country if the majority of its poor and impoverished citizens are treated as if they are second-class citizens in an apartheid state.

Lancy Lobo and Shashikant Kumar, through their painstaking effort and deep commitment to the powerless and impoverished people, show us, as Ghanshyam Shah points out, "how the problems caused by development could be tackled in a just way, making the current model of development less painful to the affected".

***Frontline*, April 23, 2010, p.81**

Book Reviews

Lancy Lobo and Shashikant Kumar: Land acquisition, displacement and resettlement in Gujarat, 1947-2004, New Delhi: SAGE Publications India, 2009, xxiii + 304 pp., Rs 895 (hb). ISBN 978-81-7829-938-9..

The volume under review is part of an all-India study on compilations of data on development-induced displacement in different states. Displacement induced by economic growth and rehabilitation has been a serious concern for all developing countries, and more so in India. Every year, according to the World Bank estimates, dams, highways, ports, power projects, urban improvements, mines, pipelines, petrochemical plants, and other such industrial development projects globally displace about 10 million people. In India alone, during the last five decades, involuntary resettlement is estimated to have affected about 50 million people, particularly, tribal and rural. With the liberalisation of the economy more and more private fund is flowing into large-scale infrastructure development in India, and hence more people are continuously getting displaced. Three-fourths of those displaced in India still face an uncertain future. However, till date, no authentic data is available on the displaced people under numerous public and private developmental projects.

Traditionally, little thought went into addressing the factors that limit the benefits available to project-affected families, making a series of rehabilitation action plans unsustainable in the long run. The vast literature generated over recent decades on displacement, resettlement and rehabilitation issues in the country has largely focused on recording the detrimental social, cultural, and economic consequences development projects have had on the lives of local project-affected families. This literature has been useful in identifying systemic problems underpinning resettlement and rehabilitation. Worldwide, resettlement experience shows that the single most factor damaging the quality and outcomes of resettlement is the absence in many countries, including India, of policy and legal frameworks that define the rights and entitlements of people affected by development-related, state-imposed displacements. The existing law gives very little opportunity to the affected party to challenge the process of acquisition or even to demand fair compensation and rehabilitation.

The authors of this volume have painstakingly gathered data from various research centres, universities, government departments/project authorities, ministries and government gazettes on all the developmental projects in Gujarat and analyzed the impact of displacement and deprivation on various strata of society. The information presented covers 139 sites and 1,937 households from

different parts of the state over a period of 60 years (from 1947 to 2004). The study also included a sample survey of project-affected households, with special reference to tribal people, dalits, and Other Backward Castes to learn the conditions of the displaced people in the new locations.

The authors - one an active sociologist and the other an expert in the field of urban and regional planning (under the guidance Walter Fernandes, a senior subject expert) - see development-induced displacement, resettlement and rehabilitation not just from the academic point of view. They address the issue of public policies related to land acquisition, resettlement, and rehabilitation as well. They also touch upon the trends in land acquisition and transfer in the state by referring to the Government of Gujarat Special Economic Zone Act, 2004. They suggest that there is an urgent need to create a people-centric developmental model, where people who have given up their land and their livelihoods could be made the immediate beneficiaries of the project. It is a model that recognises rehabilitation and resettlement with the active participation of affected persons, rather than as an externally imposed requirement. It should also ensure that the actual Rehabilitation Action Plan would be developed and implemented with an active collaboration of all the principal stakeholders, that is, the government, the project authority/company and the affected community through an open dialogue and a transparent two-way communication process.

Of late, growing public concern over the long-term consequences for project-affected people is resulting in greater public scrutiny of the rehabilitation and resettlement process, particularly for large development projects. Whether as a result of increased public scrutiny on the social responsibility of corporate houses, or a pragmatic recognition of the time and cost overrun implications of a badly conceived rehabilitation strategy, an increasing number of industrial ventures as well as several state governments have been paying greater attention to developing a more robust rehabilitation strategy for project-affected families, and have committed to spending substantial sums of money on the rehabilitation process. Many states in India now have a forward-looking Resettlement and Rehabilitation (R&R) Policy in place (for example, Orissa R&R Policy, 2006; Jharkhand R&R Policy, 2008; Arunachal Pradesh R&R Policy, 2008). It is also worth mentioning here that there are two important Bills pending before Parliament: Bill No. 98 of 2007 - The Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill, 2007, and Bill No. 97 of 2007 - The Land Acquisition (Amendment) Bill, 2007. Once these Bills are passed by Parliament and notified in the gazette, the displaced persons would be empowered to demand their resettlement and rehabilitation as per its provisions and seek its enforcement in the court if the government fails to meet its commitment.

This book is a welcome addition to the existing literature on land acquisition, displacement, and rehabilitation.

Sakarama Somayaji
**Relocation and Rehabilitation, Social Transformation Division,
The Energy and Resources Institute (IERI), New Delhi
sakamna@teri.res.in**

Sociological Bulletin, 59 (1), January-April 2010