

# Effect of Land Acquisition on Social Structure: An Ethnographic Study of a Village in Paschim Medinipur District, West Bengal

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**ABSTRACT:** In India, displacement of human population took place in ancient and medieval periods but its intensity and spread increased during the colonial period. The all-embracing nature of the colonial state power found one of its successful expressions through the enactment of the Land Acquisition Act in 1894. However, in 2013 that is after 120 years, the Government of India has enacted in the Parliament a new Land Acquisition Act named *Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 2013*. The new Land Acquisition Act has specific provisions for carrying out social impact assessment before the acquisition of land by competent specialists. In our study, we have undertaken a micro-level field based anthropological study among a group of peasant families who have lost their cultivable land for the establishment of a heavy industry, in the village Gokulpur under Kharagpur-I block, in Paschim Medinipur district, West Bengal, India, during 1991-92. In this study, we have discussed about changing of social structure of the land loser families, primarily from the event of land acquisition caused by the loss of agricultural land owing by governmental land acquisition for the establishment of this industry. This paper also plays attention to the social relations of the land loser with their non- land loser neighbours.

## INTRODUCTION

In the discussion of social sciences, social structure is the patterned social arrangements in society that are both emergent from and determinant of the actions of the individuals. On the macro scale, social structure is the system of socio-economic stratification (e.g., the class structure), social institutions, or, other patterned relations between large social groups. On the micro scale, it is the structure of social network ties between individuals or organizations, while on the micro scale, it can be the way of norms shape the behavior of actors within the social system (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, 2000).

Social structure may be seen to influence many important social systems including the economic

system, legal system, political system, cultural system and others. Family, religion, law, economy and class all are the parameters of social structures. Social structure can also divide into micro structure and macro structure. Micro structure is the patterns of relations between most of the basic elements of social life that cannot be further divided and have no social structure of their own. As for example, pattern of relations between individuals in a group composed of individuals- where individuals have no social structure, or a structure of organizations as a pattern of relations between social positions or social roles, where those positions and roles have no structure by themselves. (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, 2000).

Macro structure is thus a kind of 'social level' structure, a pattern of relations between objects that have their own structure. As for example, a political

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social structure between political parties, as political parties have their own social structure (Lopez and Scott, 2000).

Here, particularly in this study we are mainly focusing on the different structural changes in the society. These changes are due to the modification of economic activities, changes in capabilities, scope and family production of the dwellers. Land acquisition always influence to the sudden transformation of livelihood practices for the group of people who are affected by the acquisition. Land acquisition mainly aims at development issues but here the most important question arises that what does it actually mean by the development? Whose development, how it will occur and by whom it will be done? Development by the government and development by the private authority, these are very different in their processes, attachments with the people, motives and goals. Development, the term in itself is very complicated and relative. Perception of development is relative and it differs with time and space. Actually what the planners or policy makers think about development in maximum cases it will vary with the ground reality. The thought of local people also differ from the developers. Many small things are there in the shadow of a big project, which we think as insignificant or negligible. However, with the marching time these emerge as the altering factors of many socio-cultural and politico-economic variables. *Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 2013* is a very new and recent step taken by the central government for the people affected by the acquisition. But from the British period to till date, in maximum cases there were lots of packages for the loser families, for their development but the real scenario depicts something which were unwanted. Rehabilitation is another term, which depicts something more than the compensation or jobs etc. situation in our country is also changing. Based on the ground experiences, necessity of change in the previous act has felt by the government. It is a good sign for the country. Here in this particular field, people lost their land and got compensation money. Although their standard of living, food security, family bonding, education, age at marriage, women's micro-financial activities are negatively affected. In this

article, we were trying to portray the previous social structure, its fragmentation, loosening of kinships, changes in rituals due to the change in economy by acquiring the cultivable lands in that particular village. Changes in family earnings are directly related with all the aesthetics of the people like their daily practices, demand, aspirations, habits, feelings, etc. All these mutually affect the relationship among the people within and outside the family. Being a practitioner of anthropology, I have attempted to go up to the root of this issue—social fragmentation and its relation with land acquisition.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

*Study area and the people:* The villages of the study area come under the administrative jurisdiction of Kharagpur-I block of present Paschim Medinipur district. The Kharagpur-I block is situated in the western part of the district and is bounded in the north by the *Kasai* river. On the west and the south of the block lies the Jhargram sub-division while the Kharagpur township is located in the east. Although the two major townships of the district are situated almost in the vicinity of this block but it is chiefly an agricultural area with a few patches of *sal* forest. The area is characterized by vast open cultivable lands interspersed with village settlements connected by unmetalled roads.

According to a survey conducted by Block Development Office in 1997- 98 the block has an area of 201 sq. km. or 27,979.21 hectares within which 18,500 hectares are under cultivation (66.12 per cent). The same survey has also found that out of the total cultivated area at about 6,905 hectares are under more than one crop which turns out to be 37.32 per cent of the cultivated land of the block. The total population of the block is 1,21,685 of which the males outnumber the females (male 62,314 and female 59,364), and there are 22,666 scheduled castes (18.62 per cent) and 29,974 (24.63 per cent) belong to the scheduled tribes. Among the scheduled castes the females (11,683) outnumber the males (10,983) while within the scheduled tribe population the sex ratio is in favour of the males (15,528 males and 14,448 females). The population density of the block turns out to be a little more than 605 persons per sq. km. while the average household size is slightly above 5 persons. The district

statistical handbook, which is based on 1991 census data, however differs from the survey conducted by the Kharagpur-I Block Development Office. According to 1991 census figures the total population of the block had been recorded as 1, 21,659 while the area of the block was 281.94 sq. km. and this gave a population density of 432 persons per sq. km. with 268 mouzas of which 225 were inhabited (District Statistical Handbook, Medinipur 1998).

*Land Acquisition for Tata Metaliks:* About 200 acres of cultivable land was acquired by the state government from the possession of the residents of different villages under the Kalaikunda Gram Panchayat which included the inhabitants of the Gokulpur for a private pig iron industry named Tata Metaliks during 1991-92. One of the assistant secretaries of the state government addressed a letter to the district collector of Medinipur district expressing that government has received a proposal from the authority of Tata Metaliks regarding the area of land, which it wanted to acquire. The secretary also informed that the industry would help the young villagers by providing a job along with a good amount of compensation for the acquired land (Guha, 2007).

After a long bureaucratic procedure that took almost one year the collector fixed the rate of compensation at Rs. 16,935 per acre of cultivable land. But most of the losers did not accept the amount, as they were not completely ready to surrender their land. A group of villagers filed a petition to the district administration in which they demanded higher rates of compensation. The selected for acquisition was monocrop land and was not provided with proper irrigation facility. At the local level the ruling party leaders assured that the land loser families would be provided jobs in the factory but that did not materialize (Guha, 2007).

After the filing of the petition by the villagers the additional land acquisition officer conducted a survey in the area to look into the justification of the demand for higher rates of compensation and a new rate of compensation was announced, which turned out to be Rs. 20, 686 per acre. No compensation was provided to the sharecroppers who were however found to reside in the neighboring villages like Amba, Kalaikunda and Ajabpur.

The land losers were not satisfied with the new rate of compensation and continued their agitation by refusing to accept the compensation money, but gradually the intensity of the protest movement subsided under the counter campaigns, threats and pressure created by the local panchayat and ruling party cadres. Many of the land losers began to receive compensation money. What followed was a dismal story. No land loser was given a job in the company and some of the losers also did not get compensation money even a long period after the acquisition.

*Methodology:* The methodology of this study basically followed long-term anthropological fieldwork in some villages where land acquisition for a heavy industry had taken place. In this study we have made an attempt to understand the effect of land acquisition on social structure in a village inhabited by the peasant families dependent on agriculture. For this purpose, we have conducted participant observation combined with household census, mapping, interviews with questionnaire schedules, and collection of socio-economic data with the help of genealogies, case study, panel interviews and focus group discussions. The fieldworks for this study were conducted in several phases which began in the month of May 2008 and done during the same months in 2009. The organization of the data and their analyses were done during these breaks, which also provided us further research questions for probing and verification in the field. The final phase of the fieldwork was completed during October-December of 2012 and also in the months of May, June and August 2013.

The reason lies in the spatial proximity of the Gokulpur village from the Vidyasagar University campus which provided the present researcher a unique opportunity of conducting repeated field visits in the study area and establish long-standing contacts with the project affected people. This has enabled the researcher to collect information on the various aspects of land acquisition in the area over a long period of time.

#### GOKULPUR: THE VILLAGE AND THE VILLAGERS

The name of the village, studied as the field is Gokulpur and it is a multiethnic farming village. The

village is situated at about 7 km from the Medinipur town which was the District Headquarters of erstwhile Medinipur. This village is located very near to the river Kasai on the east and in the west lie the south-eastern railway track which runs between Medinipur and Kharagpur railway station. On the east of Gokulpur, there is another village, named Borkola. At the south side of this village, there are Chunpara and Nimpura. In the west and north lie the villages Amba and Ajobpur respectively. Except Chunpara all the other villages that surround Gokulpur are agricultural villages in which most of the inhabitants depend on agriculture and agricultural related economic pursuits. In Gokulpur too, the majority of the villagers are depended on the cultivation of paddy and various kinds of vegetables.

TABLE 1  
*Community/caste distribution of Gokulpur*

Community in Gokulpur	Male	Female	Total
Sodgop	557 (53.60)*	454 (51.47)	1011 (52.62)
Tati(Weaver)	156 (15.01)	147 (16.66)	303 (15.77)
Napit (Barber)	72 (6.92)	68 (7.70)	140 (7.29)
Santal	66 (6.35)	51 (5.78)	117 (6.09)
Maji	42 (4.04)	44 (4.98)	86 (4.48)
Muchi (Cobbler)	47 (4.52)	30 (3.40)	77 (4.01)
Kamar (Black smith)	39 (3.75)	31 (3.51)	70 (3.64)
Lodha	29 (2.79)	26 (2.94)	55 (2.86)
Brahmins	25 (2.40)	27 (3.06)	52 (2.71)
Kayasta	06 (0.58)	04 (0.45)	10 (0.52)
Total	1039 (100.00)	882 (100.00)	1921 (100.00)

\*Figures in parentheses represent percentage out of column total

From this table, it is clear that, there are various types of community or caste in Gokulpur village such as Sodgop, Tati (weaver), Napit (barber), Maji, Muchi (cobbler), Kamar (blacksmith), Santal, Lodha, Brahmins and Kayasta. So, it is a multiethnic village. Sodgop is the dominate caste. Because 52.62 per cent villagers are belong in the Sodgop communities. The sex ratio of Sodgop community is 851 female per 1000 male. The Kayastha community is the smallest in Gokulpur village. They are only 0.52 per cent out of total population. Their sex ratio is 667 female per 1000 males. The second largest community in Gokulpur village is Tanti (Weaver). They are 15.77 per cent out of total village population. The different castes and communities in the village do not reside in separate named hamlets, although the Sodgops occupy the central position of the village. The Santal

and Munda tribal communities also reside on the margins of the village.

There are mainly two types of land in Gokulpur. They are termed as 'Jal Jami' and 'Kala Jami' in local parlance. The villagers call those lands as 'Jal Jami' which are low lying and hold water during the rainy season while the 'kala Jami' is located near the housesites and at higher elevations than the 'Jal Jami'. In the rainy season, people cultivate mainly paddy in the 'Jal Jami'. On the other hand, 'Kala Jami is used for vegetable cultivation, in the winter season. In Gokulpur 48.26% land belongs to the category 'jal' out of the total amount of land under cultivation. This has been calculated from the data collected by our household survey.

TABLE 2  
*Land types in Gokulpur village*

Land types in Gokulpur	Jal Jami	Total
Kala Jami (in acres)	Jal Jami (in acres)	
61.89 (51.74)*	57.73 (48.26)	119.62

\*Figures in parentheses represent percentage out of column total

Now landholding pattern of the households of Gokulpur is given in the following Table 3. This table has been constructed on the basis of the two types of land ('Jal' and 'Kala') owned by the villagers.

TABLE 3  
*Landholding pattern of the village before acquisition of land*

Size category of landholding in acres	Number of household	Mean household size
Landless	98 (25.26)*	4.50
0.5	59 (15.21)	4.38
0.5 - 1.5	87 (22.42)	4.85
1.5 - 2.5	61 (15.72)	4.15
2.5 - 3.5	27 (06.96)	4.55
3.5 - 4.5	28 (07.22)	7.28
4.5 - 5.0	10 (02.58)	9.90
5.0 +	18 (04.64)	6.67
Total	388	4.95

\*Figures in parentheses represent percentage out of column total

The Table 3 reveals the nature of landholding pattern of the Gokulpur village before the acquisition of land for the Tata Metaliks Company. Land is one of the most vital natural resource for life support of the peasant families in this area. But that does not mean

that all the families of this village owned agricultural land before the acquisition. About 25% families were landless in the village even during the pre-acquisition period. The rest 75% families owned some amount of agricultural land. The landholding pattern of these landowner families show that there were a few families (about 20%) who owned 2.5 to 5.0 acres of land or more. Majority of the families in this village (about 53.35%) owned 0.5 to 2.5 acres of land. The highest percentage of families in a single category of landholding belongs to the cohort 0.5 to 1.5 acres of land, which is 22.42% of the total number of families.

We should also look into the family size *vis-a-vis* the land ownership pattern in the village in order to understand the nature of dependency on land. The mean household size of families and their corresponding landholding categories clearly reveals a pattern. It shows that families from the landless level up to the level owning 3.50 acres of land supported 4.50 persons on an average, which is also very close to the average household size of the total village. But the average household size rises to more than 7 persons as soon as the level of landholding crosses 3.50 acres and the former rises to 9 persons with a landholding of 4.5 to 5.0 acres. This relationship between household size and landholding pattern implies that it is agricultural land which held a higher number of persons in a family. In that sense, it is one of the factors making strong bonding in the family and help to sustain big joint family. The earlier study based on field surveys have done in Gokulpur during 1996 (after land acquisition) also revealed the preponderance of landless and land poor families. There were 34 percent landless families and about 49.40% families under the landholding category ( $\leq$  0.5-1.5 acres) out of the 329 families (Guha, 2007). Comparing the two surveys, it can be said that although there is no radical shift in the landholding pattern in the village over the 12 years but some improvement has occurred in terms of landownership of families in this village. For example, in 1996, there were 14 families owning 2.5 to 3.5 acres of land while according to 2007 survey, 27 families (out of present 388 families) were found to belong to this landholding category. On the higher side, the situation is more revealing. There were only seven families owning 3.5 to 7.5 acres of land in 1996 where as in 2007 as high as

56 families belonged to the above landholding category. Does this mean that during 1996-2007 some land has been distributed to the villagers of Gokulpur through land reform? The household census and economic surveys conducted during 2007 in the village did not yield any case of land distribution by the Land Reforms Department of the Government. Our field interviews revealed that many families of Gokulpur purchased agricultural land and some have received land as dowry which is a very common practice among the peasant families in this area. It seems that we have to investigate in more detail regarding the improvement in landowning scenario in Gokulpur which of course is not related directly to acquisition of land for the industry. But the improvement in the landownership pattern proves another point. The point is although the peasant families in Gokulpur are living under a constant threat of land acquisition, since many industries have been coming up in this area, but they are still trying to stick to their agricultural occupation through landownership (Majumder, 2007; Majumder and Guha, 2008, 2009).

#### *Effects on Family and Kinship*

In this section we have made an attempt to understand the impact of land acquisition on family and kinship relations among the land loser families. The data for this section have been collected through interviews, case studies and genealogical method.

The case studies collected by us revealed that the fragmentation of joint families is one of the most inevitable consequences of land acquisition which in turn led to the loosening of the consanguineal kinship ties among the brothers and their wives who were previously united under the joint family. The nuclear families formed out of the fragmentation suffered from food insecurity as well as mutual help and co-operation in the socio-economic life. During this phase, the members of the nuclear families were found to fall back on their affinal kins for help and co-operation in socio-economic spheres. But it was also found that in course of time the affinal kins of the landlosers gradually reduced the frequency of contact and co-operation towards the latter. This two stage process ultimately marginalised the small landloser families within the local society.

*Fragmentation of the Joint/Extended Family*

The fragmentation of joint families was found to be one of the most adverse consequences of land acquisition, which weakened the consanguineal kinship ties among the brothers who were united in the joint family of their father. The fragmentation of joint families was also found to be associated with other socio-economic consequences, like search for jobs outside the family both by men and women, differential income by the brothers and conflict among brothers and their wives. In this section, we have made an attempt to understand the process of family fragmentation with the help of some quantitative data and qualitative case studies.

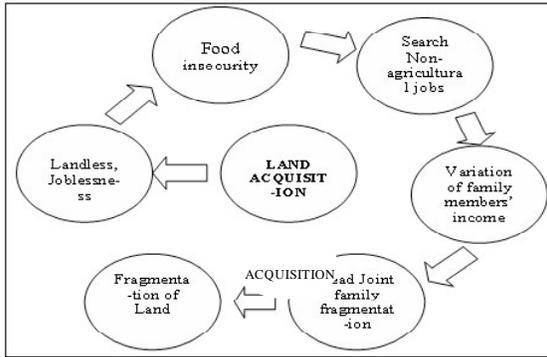


Figure 1: A generalised diagram showing the fragmentation of the joint family and the associated phenomena under the impact of land acquisition (cf. Majumder, 2011).

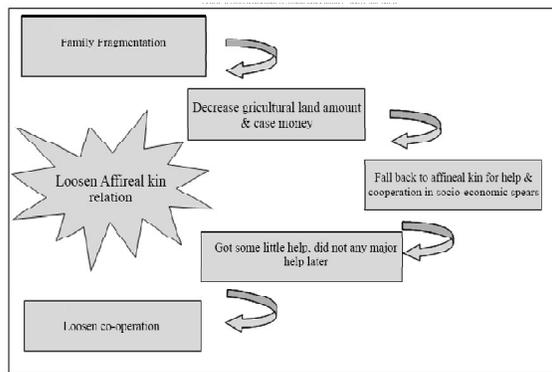


Figure 2: A generalised diagram showing the process landlessness to kinlessness after the fragmentation of joint families in Gokulpur (cf. Majumder, 2011).

TABLE 4

*Fragmentation of land loser joint families in the study area*

Family type	Number of families in pre-acquisition period	Number of families in post-acquisition period
Joint Family	37 (100.00)*	12 (13.95)
Nuclear Family	-	74 (86.05)
Total	37	86

\*Figures in parentheses represent percentage out of column total.

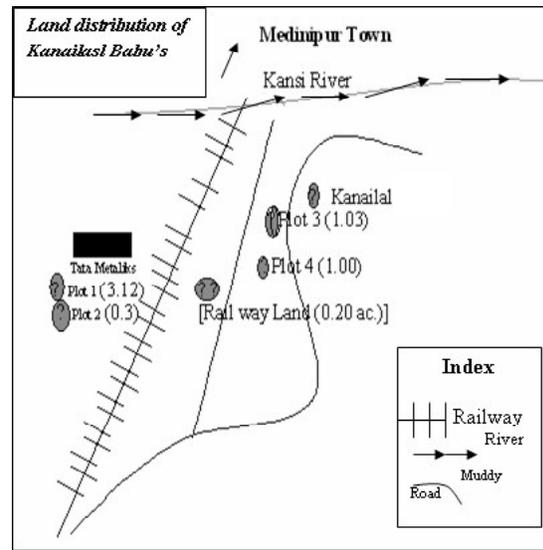


Figure 3: Land distribution of K Babu

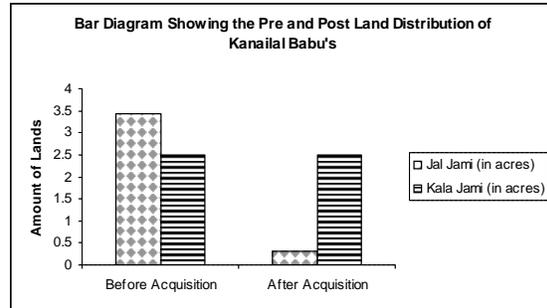


Figure 4: Pre and post land distribution status of K Babu

In Table 4, an attempt has been made to show the fragmentation of joint families of land losers in pre and post land acquisition period. Before land acquisition, the total number of families in our sample was 50 among which there were 13 nuclear families. The above table shows that there were 37 joint families and after acquisition, these 37 land loser

families were fragmented into 86 families of which the nuclear type predominated (86.05 per cent). This nuclearisation of families has been caused by the sudden loss of land although the process took place over a period of 15-17 years. The sudden loss of land had created two crisis events which every land loser family encountered. The crisis events were unemployment and food shortage. The degree of intensity of this two crisis events depended on the amount of land lost by a particular family. The second adverse event was the increase in workload among the adult male and female members of the family. The conflict among the members of the family was also found to be another associated phenomenon of this adverse event, which augmented to their family fragmentation (Majumder, 2011).

#### *Loosening of the Kinship Ties*

In this section we have described how the land loser families have lost their kins under the impact of land acquisition. The case studies collected by us revealed that the fragmentation of joint families is one of the most inevitable consequences of land acquisition which in turn led to the loosened the consanguineal kinship ties among the brothers and their wives who were previously united under the joint family. The nuclear families formed out of the fragmentation suffered from food insecurity as well as mutual help and co-operation in the socio-economic life. During this phase, the members of the nuclear families were found to fall back on their affinal kins for help and co-operation in socio-economic spheres. But it was also found that in course of time the affinal kins of the land losers gradually reduced the frequency of contact and co-operation towards the latter. This two stage process ultimately marginalized the small land loser families within the local society.

#### MARGINALISATION THROUGH KINLESSNESS

##### *Case Study*

##### *Effects of Land Acquisition on Kinship*

Kanaial is a Sodgop Landloser farmer. About 15/16 years before he with his three sons and daughter passed his life happily by cultivating 5.92 acre paddy land. His three sons got married successively. He led a happy life with his three sons and their wives. The

average yield of paddy in his land ranged between 13000 to 14500 kg in a year. He did not purchase any paddy from the market to feed the members of his joint family.

In 1992, he received a notice from the Medinipur Land acquisition office and came to know that 3.12 acre of his land will be acquired for the Tata Metaliks Company. After receiving the notice he went to a meeting organized by the local peasants, but did not submit any objection. The local political leaders belonging to the ruling party however gave assurance to him that one of the members of his family will get a job in the industry. After some days, his land was acquired. Like many farmers of Gokulpur and nobody were given a job. K babu received ₹68, 000/- as compensation for his 3.12 acres of land. After receiving the compensation money, Kanai Babu and his eldest son made an attempt to purchase some cultivable land in their locality but the money was not sufficient for the purpose. Then he bought two ploughs and a pair of bullocks for cultivating the land he still possessed, and deposited the rest of his compensation money in the bank.

At this stage, acute problems centering on the cohesion of the family arose. Since the joint family faced food crises, the sons began to engage themselves in different types of non agricultural jobs outside the family. It had two serious effects. Firstly, all the three sons could not give adequate time and labour for the cultivation of the land still owned by the family. Secondly, the income of the three sons was not equal from the employment outside the family. These two facts led to a situation of difference of opinion and conflict among the sons and their wives as well as between the father and his sons. The conflicts among the members of the family did take place and finally, the sons resolved to get them separated and run their own families. K Babu also felt helpless and when the sons wanted get their shares of the compensation money he agreed and divided the money. The jointly held family land which was under the name of K Babu was also partitioned, although in an informal manner. The pair of ploughs and the bullocks remained with K Babu who stayed with his wife and the youngest son (who later married) and one unmarried daughter. The separation of the families at this stage did not lead to the construction

of separate houses. The three separated family units shared the same roof within the ancestral compound but used to take food cooked from three separate hearths. We have identified this stage of joint family fragmentation as the 'First Phase'.

In course of time the elder sons became eager to construct their own houses within the ancestral compound. During this period, the sons asked for some money as loan from Kanai Babu but he could not help them as he still had an unmarried daughter. Both the elder sons then sought loan money from their respective father in laws. The father-in-laws rendered some help in the beginning but gradually

financial assistance from the in-laws families declined. This in turn has led to a loosening of the relationships of the landloser family with their affinal kins.

Kanai Babu, who is now 78 years of age, is a helpless old man with his aged wife. Just a few years back, he had three sons looking after him and his joint family did not face any food crisis. He lamented that he now lives in a kinless world. He felt that his separated sons are not also leading a happy life. Landlessness has led them to this kind of crises and we identified this stage of fragmentation of the family as its 'Second Phase' (Majumdar, 2011).

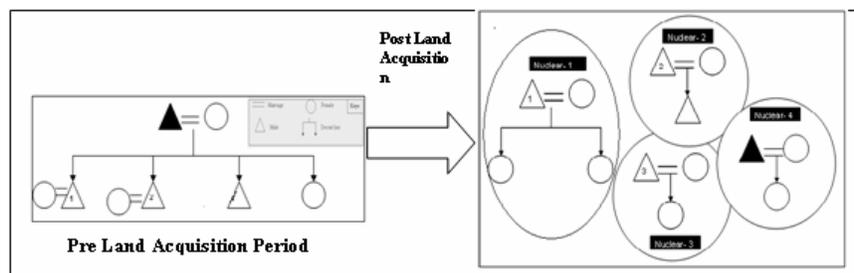


Figure 5: Genealogical diagrams of Kanailal Maity's family fragmentation

#### *Deprivation of the Girl Child from Schooling*

At the time of our fieldwork we found that although the educational achievement of the women in Gokulpur was lower than the men, more women of the younger age groups were attaining primary and upper primary levels of school education. Under this general trend of educational achievement, we have collected data through interviews and case studies on the educational scenario of the land loser families in the village. One of the most adverse effects of land loss was reflected in the discontinuation of education of the children by the parents. It was found that the girl child was deprived most in this process of dropping out from school education. In the following table we have made a comparison of the dropout of the girl child among the land loser and non-land loser families from primary, upper primary and secondary levels of education. The table shows that irrespective of the level of education the number of girls who discontinued from school education is higher among the land loser families than the non-land losers. The comparative scenario is stark at the primary level in which more than 26 per cent of the enrolled girls dropped out from school after the acquisition of land

while there was not a single case of dropout among the non-land loser families, which means that the parents of non-land losers continued the education of their girl child at the primary level. The comparative figures however showed that a sizeable section of girls dropped out from school education at the upper primary and secondary levels both among the land loser and non-land loser families but the percentage of dropouts among the land losers were much higher than the latter. The overall picture showed that land acquisition had caused a greater number of dropouts among the girls in Gokulpur village.

TABLE 5

*Distribution of girl child dropouts among land loser and non-land loser families*

Educational level	Land loser		Non-land loser	
	Number of dropout	Total number of enrolled girl child	Number of dropout	Total number of enrolled girl child
Primary	7 (26.92)*	26	—	83
Upper primary	35 (67.30)	52	26 (35.13)	74
Secondary	27 (93.10)	29	35 (52.23)	67
Total	69 (64.48)	107	61 (27.23)	224

\*Figures in parentheses represent percentage out of the total number.

IMPACT ON DOMESTIC AND AGRICULTURE  
RELATED RITUAL

*General Scenario*

In this section we have made an attempt to understand the impact of land acquisition on domestic and agriculture related rituals among the land loser families. The data for this section have been collected through interview and case study method. The villagers of Gokulpur perform and participate in various religious festivals and rituals throughout the year and many of these rituals are directly related with agriculture. The performance of the rituals involves feasts and merrymaking with the kins and neighbours along with the worship of gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon. There are two kinds of religious performances on the basis of their social character, viz. domestic and communal. The rituals directly

related with agriculture are domestic in nature which incurred economic costs to a particular family. The impact of land acquisition on the performance of these domestic rituals was most visible to us me when I collected the case studies. In almost all the families which lost land due to acquisition, I have found curtailment of budget in the domestic rituals leading to shorter duration of the rituals and invitation of lesser number of kins in each occasion. All these have had a psychological and social impact on the members of the landloser families. In every case I have come across persons who lamented over the bygone days when they enjoyed great merrymaking and sumptuous feasts with their relatives in the rituals. A good and longer performance of religious rituals meant better harvest in the next year. In the following table a list of year-round religious festivals and rituals is given along with their social character and objectives.

TABLE 6

*The annual calendar of religious festivals and rituals with their social characters and objectives in Gokulpur village*

Bengali months	Rituals/Festivals (local names)	Social character	Objectives
<i>Baishakh</i> (Mid-April to Mid- May)	(i) Ganesh puja, (ii) Bhagaboti puja	Ganesh puja is performed in shops  Bhagabati puja is performed in the household	(i) Commercial success (ii) General well-being of the family
<i>Jaistha</i> (Mid-May to Mid-June)	Dasahara, Ambobacci	Both are performed at the domestic level	General well-being of the family
<i>Asar</i> (Mid-June to Mid- July)	Sitala puja	Performed at the domestic level	General well-being of the family
<i>Sraban</i> (Mid- July to Mid- August)	Monasa puja	Performed at the domestic level	General well-being of the family.
<i>Bhadra</i> (Mid-August to Mid- September)	Biswakarma puja	Performed at the domestic level, as well as in blacksmith shops	Commercial success
<i>Aswin</i> (Mid-September to Mid-October)	Durga puja, Kali puja, Kojagori Laxmi puja, Dipwanita (Alaxmi puja)	i) Durga puja and Kali puja performed at the communal level ii) Laxmi Puja, and Dipwanita performed at the domestic level	These two are the major festivals of Bengalis which are performed for the general well-being of the community.  Performed for the better harvest of paddy.
<i>Kartick</i> (Mid-October to Mid-November)	Kartick puja	Performed at the domestic level	For the birth and well-being of children

*Contd...*

<i>Agrahayana</i> (Mid-November to Mid-December)	Nabanna utsav	Performed at the domestic level	To increase production of staple food (paddy)
<i>Pous</i> (Mid-December to Mid-January)	Pous parban	Performed at the domestic level	General well-being of the family
<i>Magh</i> (Mid-January to Mid-February)	i) Saraswati puja	i) Performed at domestic and communal level	i) For the achievement and improvement of education, particularly for the young learners
	ii) Chandi puja	ii) Performed at communal level	ii) General well-being of the family
<i>Falgun</i> (Mid-February to Mid-March)	Go-fagun	Performed at the domestic level	General well-being of the domestic animals
<i>Chaitra</i> (Mid-March to Mid-April)	Siva- gaajon	Performed at the communal level	General well-being of the community

*Note:* The specific date and timing of a religious festival or ritual is fixed by following the Bengali almanac known as *Panjika* in Bengali parlance.

#### ATYPICAL CASE STUDY

A typical case of a land loser family is now described to provide an overview of the impact of land acquisition on the performance of religious rituals at the domestic level.

Susil Maity and Bimal Maity are two brothers who now live in separate households. About 20 years ago, they lived in a joint family with their parents. At present their parents are not alive. They passed away about 12 years ago. According to Susil Maity before the acquisition of land they possessed about one acre of agricultural (*jal jami*) land in one plot in which they used to cultivate different kinds of paddy, like *rupsal*, *patnai*, *lal saran* etc.

In the year 1991, SM's father got a notice from the Medinipur Land Acquisition Department which said that that they would have to vacate their land for the construction of a private pig iron manufacturing factory. After receiving the notice, Susil's father met some leaders of the village and attended a meeting organized by them. In the meeting, it was decided that the villagers would demand that the owner of the land should be given ₹ 22, 000 rupees per acre as compensation and one person from each land loser family be inducted in the factory as an unskilled worker by the company. Finally, they received ₹ 18, 000 for the acquisition of 0.80 acre land in 1992, but no member of their family got a job in the factory.

When asked about the impact of the acquisition

of agricultural land on the various religious rituals related with the performance of different agricultural tasks, Susil opined that they no more perform those rituals in the manner they used to carry them out when they had land. In earlier times, members of his family and other relatives as well as neighbours participated in the agricultural rituals. For example, he narrated, 'on the first day of *Baishakh*, *Bhagabati puja* used to be held in their home. A Brahmin priest used to come to perform the Sanskritic rites by setting up the holy earthen pot to worship the Goddess *Bhagabati*'. It was believed that the worshipping of the Goddess in the beginning of the Bengali year would bring prosperity and happiness in the family throughout the year. During this ritual all the bullocks and cows of the house were bathed, the cow-sheds were cleaned and the animals were garlanded. Susil's mother and sister performed all these tasks. Another important rite performed during the *Bhagabati puja* was *langal puja*, which involved the worshipping of the ploughs owned by them. The adult male members of the family used to clean the ploughs and anointed vermilion powder (*Sindur*) in the iron share of the ploughs (*langal*). After the performance of these rites, a good feast was also given to all the guests (including the neighbours and relatives from the maternal side of Susil) who used to attend the ceremony on the first day of *Baishakh*.

Susil lamented, 'After the acquisition of land the *Bhagabati* worship no more takes place in their house

with the same kind of grandeur. It is still held but just to follow the tradition. There is no feast, no relatives come to our house, we sold out most of the cows and bullocks and we also do not invite the Brahmin priest to conduct the Sanskritic rites of the ceremony. At present, the plough worship has also become an extinct ritual'.

One of the most important religious ceremonies in a farmer's family in Bengal is *Nabanna*, which literally means the celebration of the 'new paddy'. *Nabanna* is a post-harvest ritual in which the Goddess Laxmi is worshipped. *Nabanna* was also used to be performed in the joint family of SM. He recollected that during the days when his father was alive how much grandeur was there during the *Nabanna*. A good number of relatives used to come and a lot of food items were prepared and they enjoyed the feast with their relatives and neighbours. It was not only a religious worship; it was also a social gathering. But 'Nabanna is no more held with such pomp, we only do the Laxmi puja now-a-days and that is all'.

#### CONCLUSION

This ethnography study has focused mainly on the effect of land acquisition on social structure of the land loser families. The major finding of the paper shows that land acquisition in a rural area does not only lead to landlessness and household level food insecurity but also cause faster fragmentation of joint/extended families. The second important finding of the study revealed that fragmentation of families under the impact of land acquisition is also accompanied by a number of adverse events, like educational dropout, intra-family conflict etc. The study raises questions regarding the different types of family fragmentation that has occurred among the peasant families of Gokulpur. Beside these, agricultural related rituals are also affected by this acquisition.

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