

## **Book Reviews**

### **The real face of Gujarat By Sanat Mehta**

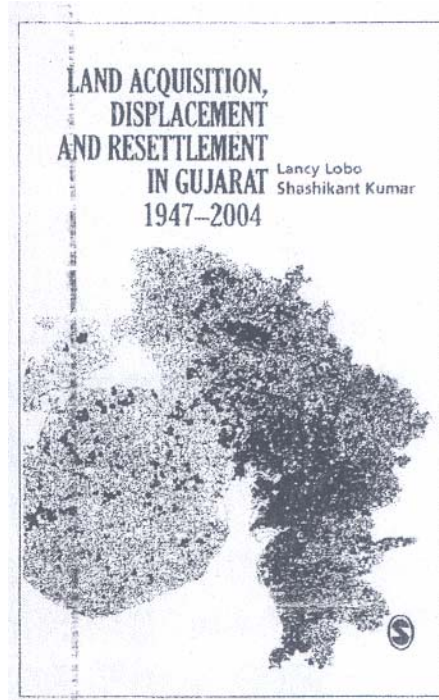
We claim that “we are 50 million Gujaratis.” But do we really know this Gujarat in its over all perspective? In geography, we learn about mountains, hills, rivers and forests of Gujarat. In history we learn and strive to understand the details of five thousand years old civilization and culture of Gujarat 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 or 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.

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