



Behind Dispossession: State, Land Grabbing and Agrarian Change in Rural Orissa

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This paper seeks to examine the diverse forms and implications of land grabbing in Orissa, known for its abject poverty, starvation deaths and violent conflicts over the issue of displacement. Taking into account the historical processes of dispossession and marginalisation in rural Orissa, the paper attempts to argue that the current phase of displacement, involuntary depeasantisation and dispossession needs to be analysed in the broader context of agrarian transition in rural Orissa. In the backdrop of the debate over the (ir)relevance of the agrarian question in the age of globalisation, it is argued here that conceptualising 'land grabbing' as part of the continuing processes of primitive accumulation under globalisation provides greater analytical insights into the underlying political and economic forces that shape such massive reconfiguration of property rights over land. Linking the question of land to the larger dynamics of development, and drawing upon two rounds of primary survey in interior Orissa, the study brings out the linkages between catastrophic land grabbing and the classic processes of land alienation. Competition among national and State governments to attract foreign and domestic capital through liberal (and often illegal) concessions, has made state power an essential element of land grabbing. However, local economic and political processes such as peasant differentiation, agrarian distress, seasonal food and employment insecurity, social and spatial concentration of poverty, capture of the local state by a rentier elite, remain significant in explaining the specific dynamics of land grabbing in contemporary Orissa.

Key words: Globalisation, Displacement, Land Grabbing, Primitive Accumulation, Orissa

I. Introduction

Globalisation and neo-liberal economic policies have aggravated conflicts over land, water, forests and other natural resources in many parts of the developing world. Radical changes in the use and ownership of land, primarily as a result of large-scale, cross-border transfer of land rights, have been conceptualised as 'foreignisation of space' (Zoomers, 2010). This paper seeks to examine the diverse forms and implications of land grabbing in Orissa, known for its abject poverty, starvation deaths and violent conflicts over the issue of displacement. Taking into account the historical processes of dispossession and marginalisation in rural Orissa, the paper attempts to argue that the current phase of displacement, involuntary depeasantisation and dispossession needs to be analysed in the broader context of agrarian transition in rural Orissa. In the backdrop of the debate over the (ir)relevance of the agrarian question in the age of globalisation (Bernstein, 1996; Akram-Lodhi and Kay, 2010), it is argued here that conceptualising 'land grabbing' as part of the continuing processes of primitive accumulation under globalisation provides greater analytical insights into the underlying political and economic forces that shape such massive reconfiguration of property rights over land. Linking the question of land to the larger dynamics of development, and drawing upon two rounds of primary survey in interior Orissa, the study brings out the linkages between catastrophic land grabbing and the classic processes of land alienation. Firstly, entrenched, structural inequalities get reinforced under the neo-liberal development policies to generate highly unequal outcomes that mirror the older forms of discrimination

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and marginalisation. Secondly, the two kinds of dispossessions- one through the more visible, contested and large-scale displacement of people to establish mega-projects of various kinds, and the other through much less visible, gradual but no less catastrophic processes through which crucial livelihoods resources of people are systematically destroyed or are appropriated- act in tandem to create the conditions for land grabbing.

Land grabbing in Orissa has proceeded through diverse roots, such as land acquisition for mining, industrial, military and infrastructural projects, including SEZs; conversion of forest lands to agro-industrial plantations; state-initiated enclosures for conservation projects as well as illegal enclosures by non-state actors. Along with that the systematic undermining of livelihoods resources (such as forests, grazing lands, water bodies); reorganisation of property rights over resources (such as forest, agricultural land, village commons, tanks, ponds, lakes and rivers) and exclusion of a section of a section of the population; endemic non-responses by the state to natural calamities (such as recurring droughts, floods, tsunami) also create vulnerabilities among the resource dependent population. The consequent 'voluntary' land transfers that are found in the backdrop of such livelihoods crises are essentially part of a process of dispossession-in-slow-motion. In the more recent period, diversion of water from agricultural to industrial use, declining agricultural productivity as a result of industrial pollution and the over-all impacts of neo-liberal reforms have further reduced the bargaining power of the small and marginal farmers.

The paper is organised as follows. In the next section an introduction to the historical context of poverty and underdevelopment in Orissa has been selectively discussed. It also contains a brief analysis of the unfolding of neo-liberal economic policy in Orissa. The next section looks at the empirical evidence on the agrarian transition in Orissa, which is followed by a discussion on the linkages between neo-liberal reforms and dispossession in the state. The final section contains a discussion on the implication of the processes of land-grabbing for understanding the nature and implications of capitalist globalization.

II. Poverty, Hunger and Underdevelopment in Orissa: The Context

Orissa is not only the poorest state in India; it is at the bottom in terms of many indicators of social and economic development. Poverty in the state has declined at a remarkably slower rate than in many other poorer states in India. As per the National Human Development, 2001, Orissa's rank was among the lowest. Orissa has the highest IMR among the major states. On many other aspects of social sector development, its performance has been dismal. Orissa's track record in poverty eradication has been one of the worst in the country². In comparative terms, Orissa's track record in fighting poverty has been dismal:

'State level income poverty data reveal that in 1999-2000 Orissa has become India's poorest state, surpassing Bihar that was still the poorest in 1993-94 but showed a substantial decline in poverty during the late 1990s. At the end of the 1990s, Orissa agricultural wages also were lower than in any other state. Orissa's poverty headcount stagnated around 48-49 per cent between 1993-94 and 1999-2000, while at all-India level the headcount declined markedly, in Andhra Pradesh poverty halved, and even Madhya Pradesh showed a decline of 5 percentage points. For Orissa, the trend of falling behind the Indian average has a longer history, but is particularly marked during the 1990s.' (de Haan and Dubey, 2005).

Poverty is spatially and socially concentrated in Orissa- there are distinct regional patterns in the concentration and in inter-temporal trends in the incidence of poverty. Poverty in coastal

² The *Orissa Human Development Report* notes that the rate of decline in poverty ratio of the state over the period 1973-74 to 1999-2000 has been the second lowest in the country, even when the poverty ratio was as high as 69.07 per cent in 1973-74 to start with.

Orissa has declined to comparatively low levels while that in the north and south Orissa continue to remain high (Table 2). Regional and social concentration of poverty reinforce each other- SC and STs have higher rates of poverty than others, but ST/SCs of interior Orissa have a remarkably higher probability of being poor than their counter parts in coastal Orissa³ (de Haan and Dubey,2005; Shah et al, 2005; Mishra,2009; Panda, 2008)⁴. This spatial and social concentration of poverty in Orissa is rooted in the historical processes of economic transformation and stagnation. The structural inequalities in the distribution of assets and entitlements mirror the underlying processes of social hierarchies, discrimination and exclusion. The agrarian economy of Orissa and the way it has been transformed since the colonial period provides clues to the regionally and socially differentiated poverty regime in rural Orissa.

Table 1: Poverty in Orissa and India, 1973-74 to 2004-05

Year	Orissa			India		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
1973-74	67.28	55.62	66.18	56.44	49.01	54.88
1977-78	72.38	50.92	70.07	53.07	45.24	51.22
1983	67.53	49.15	65.29	45.65	40.79	44.48
1987-88	57.64	41.53	55.58	39.09	38.20	38.85
1993-94	49.72	41.64	48.56	37.27	32.36	35.97
2004-05	46.80	44.30	46.40	28.30	25.70	27.50

Note: The above are official estimates given by the Planning Commission.

Source: Dev, Panda and Sarap (2004) and <http://pib.nic.in/archieve/others/2007/mar07/2007032102.xls> cited in Mishra, 2009.

Table 2: Poverty in Rural Orissa: Social Groups and Regions: 1993-94 to 2004-05

Region	Rural			
	ST	SC	Other	All
	1993-94			
Coastal	87.0	51.0	40.9	45.3
Southern	77.4	58.8	59.0	68.8
Northern	63.7	41.4	33.1	45.9
Orissa	71.3	49.8	40.2	49.8
	1999-00			
Coastal	66.63	42.18	24.32	31.74
Southern	92.42	88.9	77.65	87.05
Northern	61.69	57.22	34.67	49.81
Orissa	73.08	52.3	33.29	48.04
	2004-05			

³ The regional differences are not just limited to divergent initial conditions, the trends in poverty reduction shows remarkable differences as well. The Coastal region, which has the least poverty ratio, has experienced a significant decline in the HCR- from 45 per cent in 1993-94 to 27 per cent in 2004-05. During the same period, the Southern region, which has the highest incidence of poverty at 73per cent in 2004-05, has experienced an *increase* in poverty by 4 percentage points. The Northern region has witnessed the biggest *rise* in the incidence of rural poverty from 46per cent in 1993-94 to 59 per cent in 2004-05 (Panda, 2008).

⁴ Alternative estimates of poverty also indicate a similar picture. As pointed out by de Haan and Dubey (2003), NCAER (1999) data suggests that 'Orissa in 1994 had the highest percentage population below the poverty line: 55 compared to the all-India average of 39 per cent, with – perhaps even more striking - a poverty gap of 0.30 compared to the national of 0.18, and the lowest average per capita income per year: Rs.3,028 compared to the India average of Rs.4,485 (poverty line for Orissa was set at Rs.2,330; mean income of the poor was Rs.1,319)'.

Coastal	67.7	32.8	22.4	27.4
Southern	82.8	67.2	59.6	72.7
Northern	72.8	64.4	46.0	59.1
Orissa	75.8	49.9	32.9	46.9

Source: based on NSS data, de Haan and Dubey, 2005 for 1999-00 figures and Panda, 2008 for the rest.

It is precisely in the two poorest regions of Orissa (Northern and Southern), where an overwhelming majority of Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste population lives. For Orissa as a whole, the incidence of poverty among the ST and the SC is higher than that among the others. Between 1993-94 and 2004-05, poverty ratio in fact, has increased among the STs and SCs in the northern and southern districts. This spatial and social concentration of poverty among the tribals and dalits living in interior districts of Orissa is the outcome of the historical processes of exclusion and discrimination that have been among the pronounced features of the social economy of the region. But the exclusion from and unequal access to state-initiated anti-poverty measures also has significant bearing on such outcomes (Samal?; Shah et al, 2005).

Historically, the regions of northern and southern Orissa has been the home of a number of tribal groups, which were gradually brought under the direct and indirect political control of British colonialism. Many of these areas were ruled by small princely states under the patronage of the British colonial government, while much of coastal Orissa was under the direct rule of the British government. While migration of the people from the plains to these hinterlands had a long history, during the colonial period, the rulers of these tribal dominated states, in an effort to raise more revenue, started providing incentives to cultivators and traders to settle in their kingdoms. Simultaneously, there was a gradual attempt to change the property rights structures over land, forest, water bodies etc., in favour of the state. Access to forests and other Common Property Resources were restricted and regulated. There is some evidence to show that the caste composition of the zamindars and *gauntias*, the village-level representatives of the state, also underwent some changes. Gradually, the upper castes started taking control from the tribal chieftains. The response of the tribals took various forms, from rebellion to gradual submission. During the colonial period, there were a series of tribal rebellions in these princely states, which were basically protest against encroachments by the state and outsiders upon what the tribals thought as their traditional sources of livelihoods. Faced with severe and recurrent droughts, some of the tribals also migrated to the distant tea plantations in Assam.

In the post-independence period, a remarkable aspect of the 'transfer of power' in the *garjats*, as these princely states were known, was the continuity of the structure of authority and control. The feudal rulers of the princely states simply reinvented themselves as leaders of their erstwhile subjects and started controlling political power in this region for many decades. In more than one sense, this continuity of political leadership has been influencing the political developments of this region till date.

After independence, starting with the Hirakud multi-purpose dam on Mahanadi and a steel plant at Rourkela, a number of development projects were launched by the government in this area. It was expected that these projects, through various forward and backward linkages, would create prosperity in this backward region. To a limited extent, it did act as the catalyst for agricultural and industrial development in parts of the state, but for the people who lost their land these projects became symbols of domination of the state and outsiders. Factories and roads came up, but a large section of the local inhabitants, particularly tribals, continued

to remain as victims rather than participants in the onward march of development. Forests, which were so central to the livelihood security of the people, thanks to state's apathy and greed of the few, disappeared. The state policy of supplying forest products at a low price to the industrialists made matters worse. Although, some of the Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) were nationalized, the operations of the state agencies, instead of helping the producers and collectors of these products, actually penalized them. The traditional irrigation systems, such as community tanks and wells in Balangir and Kalahandi, died a slow death, thanks to the government's apathy and clash of interests at the local level. Agricultural productivity, barring a few areas, remained stagnant. The processes of land alienation through debt bondage continued unabated (Sarap, 1991b). And finally a stage came where Kalahandi, Balangir and Koraput (KBK) region came to be recognized as synonymous with mass poverty, starvation and hunger deaths (Currie,2000; Lokadrusti, 1993). Behind the increasingly fierce protest against displacements in Orissa, lies this long history of denial and marginalization. Thus, displacement for 'development projects' of diverse kinds have a long history in Orissa. The varied kinds of state intervention, in favour of capital, and against the poor and marginalized have been mediated through unequal power relations at the grassroots.

The development projects, because of their very nature, have not been able to create alternative sources of livelihood for the majority of those who were displaced. Again, whatever traditional means of survival the poor had, those sources have been snatched away, destroyed and polluted by the more powerful sections of the society. It is this combination of these two processes, which have created the current crisis in Orissa. Another important dimension is that, because the majority of displaced persons were politically marginalized, the rehabilitation and compensation efforts in Orissa, like many other areas, were clearly dismal. If today the commitments of the government to provide adequate compensation to the displaced persons are met with a great deal of mistrust, the reason is that past experience of people in various parts of the state has taught them not to take these assurances seriously. Some, like the tribals, without having a *patta*, were even otherwise excluded from the rehabilitation packages.

III. Globalisation, Neo-liberal State and Dispossession in Orissa

The development policy that has been adopted in this relatively backward state exemplifies the neo-liberal response to poverty and underdevelopment. The state government has embarked upon an ambitious plan of mining and industrialisation, inviting both domestic and foreign capital. In spite of its relatively less developed status, Orissa has been at the forefront of implementing neo-liberal reforms in the case of a number of public utilities (electricity, health and infrastructure). Orissa was one of the early followers of the electricity privatisation.

However, the core of the neo-liberal development policy for the state has been to encourage private investments in the extractive industries. During the post-reform phase, there has been a systematic approach to attract foreign direct investment to India, through policies of 'deregulation' and generous concessions to capital. Within the federal governance structure in India, provinces or states have been in competition with each other to suitably amend their policies as well as images so as to remain 'attractive' to both foreign and domestic capital. State governments in India find themselves competing against each other in order to attract domestic and international capital, a process that has been termed as 'provincial Darwinism' by Stuart Corbridge. The FDI in India tends to gravitate towards the more developed states with better infrastructure or well establishes manufacturing or service sector bases. However,

a significant number of investments have also aimed at mining and extractive industries in states east and central India (Orissa, Jharkhand and Chhatisgarh) which have rich mineral deposits⁵.

Orissa's recent phase of development intervention is marked by two distinct processes of interventions: the establishment of mining and industries leading to conflicts over land, water and environmental pollution. The other, equally important aspect is gradual shift in public policy towards a more market based approach. Such a policy shifts operates at various levels, such as privatisation of public utilities. These changes has generally led to increases in the costs of healthcare, education, fuel and transport, among others for the poor), emphasis upon infrastructure projects that help private capital in extracting resources from the inaccessible areas (linking up industries with ports or railway networks) that carefully avoids interventions in favour of the poor such as asset redistribution, even while implementing a number of projects that are potentially directed against poverty, malnutrition and ill-health.

Dispossession-in-slow-motion: Agrarian Transition in Orissa

While the abrupt disruption of livelihoods by large-scale displacement of population has been at the centre stage of the fierce battle over land across Orissa, this accumulation-by-dispossession has happened in the backdrop of a rather slow, but equally devastating process of dispossession in the agrarian economy. This section attempts to bring out the key features of the agrarian structure and relations in Orissa. Firstly, Orissa's agriculture is pre-dominantly small-holder's agriculture: nearly than 85 per cent of ownership holdings were marginal owning less than a hectare of land in 2003. However large and medium farmers accounting for 1 per cent of households, own nearly 11 per cent of the area (Table 3). Orissa is among the states where area under tenancy is higher than the national average. However, between 1981-82 and 2003 there has been a marked increase in the area under tenancy – from 9.98 per cent to 13.15 per cent – while there has been a decline in area under tenancy at the all-India level (Table 4).

Table: 3 Size-class wise distribution of households and area owned over five broad classes for 1982, 1992 and 2003

State	year	Percentage of households						Percentage of Area owned					
		marginal	small	semi medium	medium	large	all	marginal	small	semi medium	medium	large	all
Orissa	2003	85.50	9.70	3.70	0.90	0.10	100	41.52	27.06	19.72	9.98	1.78	100
	1992	75.15	14.42	7.34	2.40	0.12	100	26.37	27.16	25.99	18.08	2.40	100
	1982	66.06	20.84	9.31	3.42	0.37	100	19.88	29.73	25.04	19.50	5.84	100
All-India	2003	79.60	10.80	6.00	3.00	0.60	100	23.05	20.38	21.98	23.08	11.55	100
	1992	71.88	13.42	9.28	4.54	0.88	100	16.93	18.59	24.58	26.07	13.83	100
	1982	66.64	14.70	10.78	6.45	1.42	100	12.22	16.49	23.58	29.83	18.07	100

Sources: NSS Report No. 491: Household Ownership Holdings in India, 2003

⁵ The mining and quarrying sector has been the fastest growing sector in Orissa at above 10% per annum growth since 1980-81 to 2006-7 (Panda, 2008). 'While 98.39 percent of the country's chromites are located in Orissa, about 60 percent of the country's bauxite reserve is also found in Orissa. Orissa also has got the country's 27.99 percent of iron ore and 24.11 percent coal deposits, 91.84 percent of nickel ore, 28.41 percent of manganese and 30.83 percent of mineral sand which have occupied important places in the mineral map of the country' (Vasundhara, 2005).

Table: 4 Incidence of Tenancy in Rural Orissa and India, 1981-82 to 2002-03

State	Year	EOH	MH	ELIH	NONLIH	OWA	LIA	NONLIA
Orissa	1981-82	74.27	24.06	1.49	0.18	83.97	9.92	6.12
	1991-92	70.46	17.69	1.70	10.15	84.41	9.48	6.11
	2002-03	77.60	12.00	8.40	2.00	83.78	13.15	3.07
All-India	1981-82	80.58	16.24	2.37	0.81	91.08	7.18	1.74
	1991-92	81.98	8.87	3.85	5.30	87.91	8.28	3.81
	2002-03	88.60	6.99	3.06	1.35	92.57	6.60	0.84

Sources: (i) Report on Landholdings (2); 37th Round 1982, NSS Report No.331.

(ii) Report on Some Aspects of Operational Holdings; 48th Round 1991-92, Report No.407.

(iii) Report on Some Aspects of Operational Holdings, 2002-03, 59th Round, NSS Report No.492.

Notes: EOH = Entirely Owned Holdings; MH = Mixed Holdings; ELIH = Entirely Leased-in Holdings; NONLIH = Neither Owned Nor Leased-in Holdings; OWA = Owned Areas; LIA = Leased-in Area; NONLIA = Neither Owned Nor Leased-in Area.

Table 5 Terms of Tenancy in Rural Areas, 1981-82 to 2002-03

State	Year	Holdings				Area			
		FM	FP	ST	OT	FM	FP	ST	OT
Orissa	1981-82	5.15	8.06	41.96	44.83	5.10	8.10	42.00	44.80
	1991-92	20.58	5.83	53.29	20.30	19.70	4.70	50.90	24.70
	2002-03	11.88	9.98	68.52	9.62	10.97	9.19	71.61	7.81
All-India	1981-82	10.88	6.28	41.84	41.00	10.90	6.30	41.90	40.90
	1991-92	20.32	15.62	36.89	27.17	19.00	14.50	34.40	32.10
	2002-03	26.57	19.80	43.96	9.67	30.19	19.88	40.60	9.33

Sources: From table-3, H. R. Sharma's Magnitude, Structure and Determinants of Tenancy in Rural India

Note: FM = Fixed Money; FP = Fixed produce; ST = Share Tenancy; OT = Other Terms.

Table 6 Area Leased-in to Total Operational Area in district-wise from 1980-81 to 2000-01 (in percent)

District	1980-81	1985-86	1990-91	1995-96	2000-01
Balasore	2.53	1.23	2.21	15.02	19.31
Bolangir	0.22	0.32	0.04	0.78	0.39
Cuttack	2.58	4.35	0.53	13.95	23.10
Dhenkanal	1.19	3.22	0.43	6.10	8.17
Ganjam	3.15	1.87	0.12	8.59	9.87
Kalahandi	0.17	0.65	0.22	0.63	0.57
Keonjhar	0.64	0.20	0.33	1.88	3.73
Koraput	0.47	0.21	NA	1.90	1.67
Mayurbhanja	1.17	1.93	0.52	4.06	5.80
Phulbani	0.73	0.43	0.04	1.93	2.15
Puri	1.74	1.23	0.09	7.74	11.84
Sambalpur	0.90	1.25	0.75	3.12	5.33
Sundergarh	0.33	0.23	0.25	1.41	1.63
Orissa	1.27	1.45	0.45	5.60	7.52

Sources: Report on Agricultural Censuses of Orissa, Various Years

Evidences from Field Survey

The historical transformation of production relations in the study region, throughout the colonial period, resulted in the differentiation of the peasantry and gradual expansion of the landless labour class (Padhi, 1999). An important aspect of this transformation was land alienation from the tribal peasantry to the upper and middle castes (Nath, 1998). Unlike many other parts of India, dominance of the upper castes has continued in Orissa, both in terms of access to political power (legislative and bureaucratic) as well as control over land. The development of canal irrigation in Sambalpur district, particularly after the construction of the Hirakud dam, has resulted in significant changes in labour relations. Two rounds of field survey in villages in Sambalpur and Kalahandi districts (in 1999-2000 and 2010) on production exchange relations in both areas of rain-fed and irrigated agriculture clearly brought out the processes of marginalisation, land alienation and pauperisation in rural Orissa.

Our 1999-2000 study of production and exchange relations in three paddy-producing villages reveals the processes of gradual immiseration of the rural peasantry (for details see Mishra, 2004; 2008a). The study of agrarian structure in the three villages revealed that the landless, marginal and small landowners account for around 86 per cent of all surveyed households. The extent of landlessness was found to be *higher* in the irrigated belt than in the unirrigated region. It was found that the top 6 per cent of landowners control 32.35 per cent of the cultivated area. The decomposition of landowning households, according to the different caste groups, reveals a neat correspondence between land-ownership status and caste-status – the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe households have relatively higher share among the landless and marginal farmers while in the larger size-classes the OBC and general categories have a higher presence⁶. The distribution of operational holdings according to various size classes shows the preponderance of small and marginal cultivators, particularly in the dry village. In the irrigated villages, the small as well as the large farmers were found to be leasing-in land, but in the unirrigated village, land-lease market was found to be dominated by small and marginal farmers⁷. As a whole, while in the irrigated villages, fixed produce tenancy emerged as the major form of land-lease contract, in the dry, backward village, sharecropping is the main form of leasing-in. An important aspect of the land-lease market in the unirrigated village is the relatively higher importance of usufructuary mortgage.

Our filed-survey revealed that contractual relations in labour market in the irrigated villages broadly follow a similar pattern, but are more complex and fragmented than those in the unirrigated, dry village⁸. In the rainfed agricultural belt, the agricultural labour contracts are broadly of two types: casual and permanent. Within the permanent labour contracts, two kinds of arrangements were noticed: (i) Firstly, the *halia* or *guti* systems, which is basically

⁶ In total, among the landless 41.80 per cent are ST, 32.8 are SC, 22.22 per cent are OBC and the rest 3.17 per cent belong to the general category. Among the marginal farmers, 57.36 per cent are OBC, 26.36 per cent are ST and 16.38 per cent are SC. On the other hand in the semi-medium and large categories, OBCs followed by the general group have a relatively higher share. Taking all the households together, the 4.50 per cent of general households own 10.32 per cent of total area, 44 per cent of OBCs control 44 per cent of area, 23 per cent of SC own 14 per cent of land and 29 per cent of ST household own 13 per cent of the area.

⁷ While in the developed and well-communicated irrigated village, fixed produce tenancy was found to be the most important form of tenancy, followed by fixed-cash tenancy, in the intermediate irrigated village, share tenancy, followed by fixed produce and fixed cash tenancy was found to be the predominant form of tenancy.

⁸ In a study on Sambalpur district, Nath (1998) finds that labour relations in the irrigated area are not qualitatively different from those in the dry region (Nath, 1998), while Sarap(1991a) reports substantial changes in the region following intensification and commercialization of agriculture.

an attached labour contract for male adult labourers, the duration of which is usually one year: (ii) Secondly, the attach labour contracts for young boys, called *kuthia*, who are employed mainly for taking care of the cattle. Both these contracts involve an initial payment of paddy, called *baha bandha* (literally meaning ‘mortgaging your arms’), and followed by payments either in installments or in lump-sum after the harvest, along with some gifts during the festivals. It is important to note that the incidence of permanent labour contracts has declined substantially in the study village, not for any other reason, but for the sheer unviability of agriculture in this drought prone region. In the casual labour category, gender differences in terms of wages as well as task-specific preference for male or female labour were also noticed⁹. The labour relations in the dry region has to be understood in the backdrop of relative stagnation in agricultural production, substantial degradation of forests and other CPRs, frequent droughts and food insecurity, particularly for the poor and the marginalised groups (Nayak and Mahajan, 1991; Mishra and Rao, 1992; Rao, 1995; Mishra, 1996; Mishra, 2001; Sarap and Mahamalik, 2003). In recent years migration to urban areas of Orissa and neighbouring states, particularly for short-duration, seasonal migration, has also been affecting labour contracts in the study village.

Some features of the labour market in the irrigated belt are similar to that in the dry region. The payments to permanent labour, however, unlike in the dry villages, more often than not, are made in cash, mostly in monthly installments. The extent of permanent labour was noticed to be higher in the relatively less developed irrigated village than in the irrigated developed village. Among the casual labourers two types of arrangements were noticed – time-rate and piece-rate. Some of the time-rated casual workers were also found to be under repetitive casual labour contract. The casual labour market was also found to be segmented in terms of gender, particularly in the second irrigated village. The migrant labour from the neighbouring districts of Balangir, Kalahandi and the bordering state of Chhatisgarh generally work under piece-rate contract. Women and children in the age group 12-15 form a significant part of the migrant labour groups. A comparatively recent phenomenon is the formation of labour groups by the local labour, particularly the youths, who also work under piece-rate contracts. The contractual arrangements with the migrant labour were also found to be of three types, viz. those negotiated by the employer himself, who sometimes travels to the villages of the migrant labourers before the peak season; those negotiated through an agent, who more often than not, acts as the group leader and thirdly, supplementary contracts with a group of labourers who have already finished their work. Usually small and marginal farmers in the irrigated area enter into the third type of contract with the migrant labourers, after they finish the work in the field of large farmers, partly as an attempt to reduce the transaction costs. All these different forms of labour contracts have certain implications for interlinked transactions, particularly because often the contracts are cemented through provision of credit at low or zero rate of interest. While the in-migration of labourers from neighbouring drought prone area and the resultant competition among the resident and migrant labourers have strengthened the bargaining position of the cultivators, the high labour demand in the irrigated belt, particularly during the peak season, has forced them to design a variety of labour arrangements including incentive payments, provision for house-sites and tiny pieces of land for farm servants and permanent labourers, recruitment of group leaders, among the migrants, as monitoring agents, besides providing cheap credit.

⁹ Another important feature of the casual labour market was that, though contractually independent, some casual labourers work for the same employers quite often, a type of contract that we have termed as repetitive casual labour contract.

An investigation into the structure of credit market revealed the high degree of indebtedness of farmers, mostly to the informal sources. An overwhelming majority of the borrowing households resort to borrowing from informal sources. The data shows a relatively higher participation of the poor and the marginalised sections of peasantry in the informal credit market. It is important to mention here that a sizeable percentage of large farmers also borrow from the informal sources, particularly in the irrigated villages. In terms of distribution of volume of credits, it is found that access to formal credit is typically low for the landless labourers and small farmers. So far as the purpose of credit is concerned, it is found that the landless labourers and the marginal farmers borrowed mainly for consumption purposes while large size classes of farmers borrow mainly for production purposes¹⁰.

It was observed that for the landless labourers and the marginal farmers, moneylenders and shopkeepers are the two most important sources of borrowing, while for the small and semi-medium farmers, traders and moneylenders are the most important sources. For large and medium farmers, traders are the most important source of informal credit. The structure of informal credit market in the rainfed village was found to be somewhat different from that of the irrigated villages in the sense that traders play a far less important role in the former. An important dimension of the informal credit market is that the average size of borrowing from different sources follows a particular pattern: shopkeepers have generally advanced lower size of credit, even within the same farm-size category. On the other hand, there seems to be some flexibility in the average size of loan advanced by moneylenders. This points out towards a fragmentation of the informal credit market with different class of lenders advancing loans for particular needs and particular group of farmers¹¹.

Our recent field survey in Balangir, Kalahandi and Sambalpur districts (June-July, 2010), during which the three villages studied during 1999-2000, were revisited, reveals several important changes that have taken place during the past decade or so. Firstly, the profitability from paddy cultivation, which was the main crop in the region has substantially declined. Farmers identified several factors behind this development: water shortages, less reliable and timely supply of water through the canal system, increase in prices of inputs such as fertilizer and pesticides, under-pricing of paddy in the post harvest period, and finally a rising cost of labour. This was more pronounced in the irrigated villages. In the rainfed villages, among the more prominent changes was the move towards cotton that is being aggressively promoted by the agriculture department as well as private traders.

Labour out-migration, both seasonal and long-term has substantially gone up during the past decade or so. While youth from the irrigated villages mostly migrate to cities and towns within Orissa as well as to cities like Delhi, Mumbai and Ahmedabad to work as semi-skilled and skilled labour, families from the rainfed areas migrate to work in brick kilns and in the booming construction sector in cities. More than two lakhs labourers migrate to the brick kilns of Andhra Pradesh every winter, immediately after the harvesting season. Mostly they migrate to the brick kilns in the vicinity of Hyderabad, Sikanderabad, Vijayanagaram and Vishakhapatnam. The history of this migration is at least two decades old, but it was the severe drought of 1996-97 that was the turning point in the history of this migration. This migration starts during November-December, and continues up to May-June. Another group of migrants, who mostly intend to find work in the brick industry as loaders, start late, i.e. around late December and stay until July. This migration contracts are negotiated through

¹⁰ While the percentage of consumption credit to total credit was as high as 90.44 per cent for the landless, 78.57 for marginal farmers, the share of production loan in total volume of credit taken was 71.13, 99.75 and 92.04 for semi-medium, medium and large categories of farmers respectively.

¹¹ The average size of credit advanced by moneylenders, traders and shopkeepers were found to be Rs 2940, Rs 4722 and Rs 653 respectively.

contractors and often the workers do not have any idea about the destination in which they are going to work. Most of the migrants return within six months. In recent years some workers have started migrating to Chennai and Bangaluru as well. Of late, many migrants have started going to brick kilns in various urban centres of coastal Orissa, such as Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur and Puri.

In the neighbouring districts of Bargarh and Sambalpur, irrigation from Hirakud dam project has facilitated intensive wet rice cultivation. The demand for labour picks up during periods of transplantation, weeding and harvesting. Groups of relatively young men and women move together to work under piece-rate contracts for specific types of farm work. At times farmers visit their villages, pay an advance and seal a contract before the group travels to the destination, at times the workers travel to key points like Bargarh bus stand where prospective employers or contractors negotiate the deals with them.

The most noticeable feature of this agrarian transition is that a large number of small and marginal cultivator families are simply unable to survive without short-term migration or remittances from members who have already migrated. Peasant agriculture is facing a serious crisis as state support is being withdrawn and profit margins are getting squeezed. The interventions by the state, in the form of National Employment Guarantee Act, have not been enough to stop the distress migration. The core aspect of the seasonal migration is the access to the advance payment which is given to the families at the time of the *nuakhai* festival around September-October. A team of three persons (two adults and a child, called *pathuria*) typically receive an advance of around Rs 20,000 against their future commitment to work in the brick kilns during December-May period. Often this is the only income they can hope for- rest of the contracts, such as the destination, living conditions at work place, piece rates at which bricks will be made etc. are left to the labour *sardars* or contractors. There are definite elements of labour bondage in such contracts, although many observers feel that with rising demands for bricks and interventions by the NGOs, some extreme forms of coercion such as physical punishment, isolation, non-payment of wages and sexual exploitation of girls have reduced in recent years. The rural credit market continues to be dominated by informal lenders, who charge exorbitant interest rates (often ranging from 36 per cent to more than 60 per cent in few cases). The extent of distress and despair in the villages of this region is not adequately acknowledged and discussed, even while discussing the State-specific scenarios. This inability of the landless and small peasantry to reproduce themselves without non-agricultural incomes, often earned under severe distress, holds the key to understand the true nature of the agrarian crisis in rural Orissa. This is a slow and gradual process of dispossession, in which the role of force exercised through the state and non-state agencies can hardly be overlooked. The refusal of the local state to intervene in favour of the poor, the role of exclusionary social practices and caste dominance in influencing the terms of transactions for the marginalised groups in the agrarian markets and the dominance of local labour *sardars*- all of these have elements of coercion, both implicit and explicit.

Development as Dispossession: The post-reforms decades

Virtually the whole of Orissa, including Kashipur in Rayagada, Lanjigarh in Kalahandi, Lower Suktel area in Balangir, Kotagarh in Phulbani, the mining-industrial belt in Jharsuguda, Kalinganagar and now Rourkela, has turned into a battleground on the issue of development and displacement. Many of these conflicts are localized and some of these struggles are not even reported in the media, but there seems to be a clear picture emerging out of these disparate conflicts. The people who are opposed to the displacement caused by the proposed irrigation, mining, industrial and conservation projects are not just demanding better compensation packages, in many cases they have raised serious objections to the notion

of development that has acted as the basis of their displacement. It is important to see these protests and conflicts surrounding the establishment of development projects, in the larger framework of the political economy of development of relatively backward areas, which has generated and sustained a simultaneous process of deprivation and marginalization of a section of the population. To consider displacement as the inevitable but unfortunate outcome of an otherwise benevolent development process is to deemphasize the structural and historical linkages between dispossession and 'development' of a certain kind. It is important to recognize that many of those who have been displaced in Orissa, and also elsewhere, have been dislocated not because of a mega-event like the construction of a dam or an industry, but because of a rather gradual but systematic undermining of the basis of their livelihoods. Not only that these two kinds of displacements are interrelated, it is important to understand both these aspects together to understand the protests in their proper perspective.

One of the important aspects of the development of Orissa has been the spatial unevenness in the levels of development of the coastal districts and the northern and southern districts. It is in the later that there is a greater concentration of poverty, malnutrition and illiteracy. These are the districts where there is a larger concentration of the Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste population. In order to understand the nature of the deprivation and destitution that characterizes Orissa today, it is important to take note of some aspects of the history of these interior districts.

Thus, any attempt to view displacement in isolation from the larger dynamics of denial of access to basic sources of livelihood to the poor is, to put it mildly, flawed. The development projects, because of their very nature, have not been able to create alternative sources of livelihood for the majority of those who were displaced. Again, whatever traditional means of survival the poor had, those sources have been snatched away, destroyed and polluted by the more powerful sections of the society. It is this combination of these two processes, which have created the current crisis of development in Orissa. Another important dimension is that, because the majority of displaced persons were politically marginalized, the rehabilitation and compensation efforts in Orissa, like many other areas, were clearly dismal. If today the commitments of the government to provide adequate compensation to the displaced persons are met with a great deal of mistrust, the reason is that past experience of people in various parts of the state has taught them not to take these assurances seriously. Some, like the tribals, without having a patta, were even otherwise excluded from the rehabilitation packages.

Some recent developments in Orissa provide additional insights into the political economy of these conflicts. Firstly, in terms of overall growth process, the performance of Orissa in the post-reform decade has been very dismal, (except for the period since 2004) not only in comparison with other states of India, but also in comparison with its own track record in the 1980s. Secondly, a troublesome aspect of this post-reform growth scenario is that the growth of agriculture and allied activities has considerably slowed down in the nineties. Thirdly, manufacturing has also suffered a serious setback during this period. Mining and quarrying, however, has significantly improved its performance and in fact has among one of the highest growth rates in the 1990s. The other sector, which has been able to maintain its growth rate, is the tertiary sector.

Table 7: Mineral Reserves and Production in Orissa

Minerals	Proven Reserves (in Million Tons)			Production (in Million Tons)		
	Orissa	India	Orissa as % to all India	Orissa	India	Orissa as % to all India
Coal	58,012	2,34,114	24.78	47.8	327.6	14.59
Iron Ore	4,177	17,712	23.58	16.2	83.3	19.45
Bauxite	1,370	2,807	48.81	3.6	8.58	41.96

Chromite	110	114	96.49	1.79	1.81	98.90
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Source: *Indian Bureau of Mines, Reserves as on 2000, Production in 2001-02*

In the context of economic reforms, the relatively backward states like Orissa face a number of additional difficulties in improving their growth performances. Among the states, Orissa has often taken the lead in initiating reforms in various sectors such as power and health. There seems to be a greater degree of unanimity of opinion in the ruling quarters regarding the need to attract private investment to the state, both from domestic and foreign sources. Given the vast mineral reserves and comparatively lower level of utilization of these resources, the Government of Orissa has been aggressively campaigning to attract investment in mining and processing industries. A number of MoUs have been signed with domestic and foreign companies, and some of these deals, like the recent one with Posco, have attracted a great deal of criticisms as well. While the government seems to be very clear in its emphasis on this sort of industrialization strategy as a panacea for the ills of underdevelopment, there have been allegations that the government has provided too many concessions to these companies and has compromised with the long-term interests of the state and its people. In a nutshell, it is part of a 'race to bottom' in which, governments compete with each other in relaxing labour laws, environmental safeguards and in making themselves attractive for private investment in general and foreign capital in particular. There is a great deal of polarization in Orissa, so far as public opinion on these issues is concerned. In fact, there have been frequent, often violent, attacks on groups and individuals opposing such industrialization strategy, not just by the law enforcement agencies of the government but also by non-state groups, including gangs of hired goons.

What is less clearly recognized in this context is that the monumental failure of Orissa on the human development front has clear implications for the development-displacement nexus. To understand the making of the processes of dispossession and displacement, we need to look at the social and spatial unevenness of the development process itself in relation to the direct attacks on the livelihoods of the poor and the marginalized. Instead of accepting the glaring inequality inherent in the process of development and making an honest attempt to find innovative solutions to the problems that sustain poverty on such a massive scale, the leadership in Orissa has opted for an elitist growth strategy. Such a strategy, in all likelihood, would further marginalize the poor and underprivileged in Orissa.

The shifting of emphasis to a market-led growth strategy in the early nineties was seen by many as a barrier to development of lagging regions like Orissa (Nair, 1993). There was a discernible shift away from policies aiming at reducing disparities and interregional disparities are seen to have widened during the post-reforms period. Soon mining and extractive industries were started to be projected as the corner stone of Orissa's development strategies. Given that Orissa was more agricultural than the rest of India and productivity in agriculture was not growing fast enough, rapid industrialisation with infusion of foreign and domestic capital was seen as the key solution to Orissa's backwardness. The multilayered realities of backwardness in Orissa and such visions of industrialisation, inspired by the neo-liberal policies of deregulation and opening-up of the economy could not have been more at odds with each other (Mishra and Rao, 1992).

Orissa has a fairly long history of dispossession for 'development'. Starting from the Mahanadi Multipurpose Dam project in early 1950s to a number of steel, aluminum and other industries as well as mining projects today, there have been several cases of large-scale displacement of populations with inadequate and no compensations. This has been well documented in the literature. However, in the earlier days most of the development projects

were initiated and implemented by the government and public sector companies, in recent years the conflicts around development has increased manifold. Padel and Das (2010) have documented the extent of interest shown by various companies, Indian and foreign, to mine bauxite in Orissa. Bauxite mining and dam construction has gone hand in hand, firstly under (partial or complete) state ownership. Now both of these resources are being privatised, often allegedly by not following the rules (Nigam, 2003). Kashipur block in Rayagada district has become one of the better known cases of conflicts around land and displacement (Padel and Das, 2010; Mishra, 2002, Das, 2001; 2003). Land grabbing in Orissa has been going on in different forms and for varying purposes, such as land acquisition for mining, industrial, military and infrastructural projects (Kashipur, Niyamgiri, Kalinganagar, Saintala, Jharsuguda), including SEZs (POSCO); displacement for constructing dams (Upper Kolab, Indravati, Lower Suktel and many others) conversion of forest lands to agro-industrial plantations (Coffee plantations in Koraput); state-initiated enclosures for conservation projects as well as illegal enclosures by non-state actors. But, in terms their implications for the small farmers and landless labourers there is a remarkable similarity. The tribal populations more, often than not, have not been able to claim compensations primarily because their rights over land was not well recorded. Landless labourers and those not having titles over land have been the worst victims of such involuntary displacement. A majority of them have joined the urban informal sector as casual labourers. Thus, irrespective of their stated objectives, most of these 'development projects' have created a class of dispossessed people without any livelihoods security.

IV. Land Grabbing as Primitive Accumulation

The on-going process of land grabbing in Orissa has a few definite features, notwithstanding the diverse forms that it has taken in recent years. As the backward economy of Orissa is gradually getting integrated into the circuits of global capital, the relative isolation of the rural economies are being smashed. The new linkages between Orissa's agrarian economy and corporate capital are being mediated through the redefinition of 'development' as extractive industrialisation. As a mineral-rich State Orissa government's primary objective has been to negotiate with private and domestic capital to invest in mining and mining-based industries. In the neo-liberal federal order that has been unfolding in India, State governments have been competing against each other to attract private capital. An essential feature of this development has been the use of state power to facilitate the establishment mining and mineral-based industries. Kalinganagar and POSCO-affected villages in coastal Orissa, Jharsuguda and Niyamgiri hills in northern Orissa have been the epicentres of this conflict. There has been strong protest from the people against the use of state-power to facilitate corporate land grab in various parts of the State. Use of state power as an instrument to forcibly separate producers from their means of production has been the hallmark of primitive accumulation of an earlier era. As global capitalism in transforming economies of the margins, the logic of primitive accumulation appears as an on-going feature of capitalist transition.

The local state and the local elites are deeply implicated in this process of violent disruptions of livelihoods. While the relaxation of environmental regulations, non-compliance with standard norms and statutory provisions, submission of misleading and false information are some of the more visible forms (that have been noted by several government and court - appointed committees), through which the nexus between local politicians, local state and corporate work, there are several other dimensions of this nexus that remains less publicised. The role of the local elites in creating a division of opinion at the local level has been

substantial; almost everywhere anti-displacement individuals, groups and their supports not only have to face the wrath of the police and the local bureaucracy but also the opposition from 'project-supporter groups', many of whom are said to be in the pay-rolls of the corporate, directly or indirectly. There are often violent clashes between those supporting and those who are in favour of displacement. Use of extra-constitutional means of violence by both state and non-state agencies against the leaders and supporters of mass movements are far from being the exception. In 2000, following the police firing on tribals in Maikanch village, protesting against an alumina project in Kashipur, there was a call for strike in the district headquarters, not to protest against the police brutalities in which three people died and several others were injured, but to protest against the movement against the Alumina project! This was far from an isolated example. The local rentier class that has benefited from their access to and control over state's resources and institutions now see newer opportunities for themselves through the investment opportunities, both domestic and foreign. Thus, while talking about the state's role in the on-going primitive accumulations we need to understand the role of local elites as facilitators and partners of capital. One of their crucial roles have been to transcend the boundaries between state and society and use their multilevel connections to legitimise capitalist accumulation.

The second dimension of state response to these protest movements, has been through acting against civil society groups seen as 'instigators of violence'. Three NGOs operating in Kashipur area were de-registered and their grants were cancelled as part of the strategy to contain the movements. The fact that *Prakritik Sampad Surakhya Parishad*, the apex organisation of the protestors, had often asserted its independence from the NGOs and had even criticised their role in the movement, was not enough to save them from the onslaughts from the state. There was a well coordinated attack on the offices of one NGO by 'private' supporters of the project as well.

The third form of response has been to treat these popular movements as handiwork of the Maoists. The Communist Party of India (Maoist) has significantly expanded its base in southern and many other parts of Orissa. The Maoist insurgents have been active in many other parts of the country such as Lalgarh in West Bengal, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, where popular struggles against corporate land grabbing have developed strong routes. This has been used by the state agencies to dub all popular movements as violent struggles against development.

However, the processes through which accumulation-by-dispossession work are not limited to those displacing people from land through coercive state action. The dispossession through gradual, but systematic undermining of resources upon which the poor depend is another significant aspect through which small and marginal peasants are being uprooted from their villages. In recent years, the magnitude of those who are being forced out of their land and are being forced to migrate to earn a livelihood has expanded manifold. Here again the selective use of state power by the more powerful sections of the rural society has been a crucial element. Often these two processes outlined in this paper work simultaneously, reinforcing their impact on the peasant population. Farmers in Sambalpur-Bargarh-Jharsuguda region, for example, have been protesting against the diversion of water from the Hirakud reservoir for industrial uses at the cost of irrigation for farmers. The impact of industrial pollution on crop productivity has already been noted.

V. Conclusion

The basic argument of this paper is that global land grabbing as a process needs to be understood in relation to the dynamics of capitalist transition in local contexts. In the case of

Orissa, the evidences point out that the trans-border /global dimensions of land grabbing provide valuable clues to uncover the role of state in this dispossession-through-coercion. Competition among national and State governments to attract foreign and domestic capital through liberal (and often illegal) concessions, has made state power an essential element of this process. However, local economic and political processes such as peasant differentiation, agrarian distress, seasonal food and employment insecurity, social and spatial concentration of poverty, capture of the local state by a rentier elite, remain significant in explaining the specific dynamics of land grabbing in contemporary Orissa. Rather than understanding these two as distinct processes there is a need to understand their multilevel linkages that shape the process of land grabbing under specific circumstances. The significance of global and local political economic forces in shaping the processes and outcomes of land grabbing is beyond doubt. Even when local capitalists acquire land through using state apparatus, the overriding logic of global capitalism creates the context in which some claims over land are privileged over others.

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