CHAPTER – 6

LAND GRABBING
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6.1 Introduction

Ownership of land or possession of land for the personal pride and status is seen all through the history of the world. From the ancient time kings have fought for the possession of land. The first and second world war got triggered and ended for the cause of land. Land has become scarce commodity; this can be seen in the form of rise in land value resulting to conflicts and crime.

The location of a particular land in a particular setup determines the value and importance of the land, especially land within the city have a greater importance for all types of activities. But certain land carry high price based on its location factors. Perhaps the most attractive land is usually found in the CBD. Thus prime lands which are fallen vacant are usually belongs to the government or public lands. Such type of land within the city become’s the target of possessing by various land grabbing individuals to institutions. On the basis of for which purpose the land has been grabbed, the land grabbing can be categorized as follows,

a. Individual land grabbing for commercial utilization.
b. Religious institution grabbing for religious purpose.
c. Land grabbing for establishment of educational institution.
d. Land grabbing for recreational purpose.
e. Land grabbing for multistoried residential commercial complexes.

6.2 The Secular Status of India

India having one of the longest human histories in the world has been fabricated with distinctive culture and belief. Being second populous country in the world is steeping towards the economic prosperity and development. Nearly 70% of its population is engaged in agricultural activity and 70.04% of
literate population. The distinctive religious belief from region to region has segregated the Indian population into minor and major cultural orders which are quite often referred as cast. Each sect within a major religious group has their own identity of religious worship.

India being a cradle bed for the birth of religions such as Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikkism, Vaishnavism, Shaivishism have been knitted with diverse religious. The invasion of Muslim kings from the Middle East lead to the spread of Islamic in India. Similarly the Christian missionary from Europe as well as Syria propagated Christianity. Totally India has become a multi facet religious state in the world. Thus it has attained a secularism principal while enacting the constitution as republic of India.

6.2.1 The Secularism and Sentiment

Every village to each lane in the cities constitutes people of different faith and religion living together as neighbors is one of the admirable characteristics of Indian secularism. At the same time, there are also instances of religious conflict driving into hostile situations. The most common reasons for the disturbance for the harmony of secular principles will be at the time of inter religious or intercaste marriages and secondly, any form of damage or threat caused to the worship sites triggers communal violence.

6.2.2 Types of religious threats

1. The religious threats arises when the places of worship and statues of god or goddess are disfigured or damaged
2. Causing hindrance to the religious fare by another sect
3. If the priest of the Temple, Masjid or Churches are attacked by other religious groups
6.3 Legal Provisions to practice religion and to construct Places of Worship in India.

Practicing any religion is one of the fundamental rights given for the Indian citizens in the Indian Constitution. Similarly the government has declared to make provisions for the construction of religious places of worship while forming of new urban layouts, whether it is government layout or developed by a private developer or by a public cooperative society. In a new residential layout, the Karnataka Urban Development Authorities Act 1987 provisions fix the condition that 15% of the land should be devoted for various land uses such as, Residential, Schools, Commercial, Parks, land for religious purposes are one among them. The land for the construction of religious places in the government layout is easily granted and should be purchased by the religious groups from the government.

6.4 Types of Religious Symbols

More than one thousand religious sects are found in each federal state of India. Each individual sect worships different god and goddess as well as religious symbols. The statues are usually made out of stone, clay or wood materials. There are also religious symbols like trishul, trees, religious bell, flag, Anthill, religious pictures or drawings are considered scared. Damaged caused to any of these worship items results into religious tension and seldom into conflicts.
Types of religious symbols used in India.

- Sacred Hindu Sign
- God Shiva and Ganapthi: Hindu God Statues
- Temple Bell
- Sacred Hindu Flag
- Trishul: Weapon used by God
- Statue of Miniature Bull God

Types of Religious Symbols and statues cont...

- Statue of a Serpent with the statue of GOD Shiva at the bottom.
- Sacred tree worshiped by Hindu religious groups
- Cemetery of a Muslim Religious person worshiped by Muslim community, grabbed on road side.
- Ant Hill worshiped by Hindu religious people.

(Figure No. 6.1)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Name of the Temple</th>
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<th>Name of the Temple</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chamundeshwari Temple</td>
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<td>Dhargha in Fountain Circle</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Kukkarahalli Shiva Temple</td>
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<td>Agrahara 101 Ganapathy Temple</td>
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<td>Banyan Tree with Temple on V M Road</td>
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<td>Hazrath Syed Saifuddin Shakhadri</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Ganesha Temple in Shivaji Road</td>
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<td>Dargah Hazrath Noor Alishah Vali</td>
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</table>
6.5 Land Grabbing at the pretext of public interest

En-cashing the sentiments attached to idols and symbols; there are another category of people who grab the land at the pretext of public interest to make their livelihood. The beneficiary constructs Temples or Masjid on the footpath, cross road square and in circles on public land. This kind of land grabbing for religious purpose is common phenomenon in all cities of India.

6.6 Phases of religious site expansion

Land grabbing for the construction of religious worships sites in public places occurs in clandestine method. The entire land grabbing activities can be classified into three stages such as:

1. Stage One – Erection of idols and symbols at public sites
2. Stage two – Construction of temporary miniature worship buildings
3. Stage three – Expansion of miniature building into a permanent structured building

Stage one: In this stage a small idol or a statue of a respective god of religious sets will be placed in an unnoticed way (most likely during night time). This site will be taken over by self styled priest who come and perform pooja (prayer) during early morning hours and also evening. Gradually the devotees of that particular God gather to worship (see figure no 6.2). (there are also instances where certain God statues are worshiped by all the sects).

(Figure No. 6.2)
Stage Two: As the strength of the devotees to the particular temple increases, the income to the temple also gets enhanced. At this stage of time the priest who is in charge of that temple get moral support and financial support from the devotees as well as support from the local political leaders. Thus, a miniature temple is constructed without any fear of authorities during the broad day light (see figure no 6.3).

(Figure No. 6.3)

Stage Three: the expansion of miniature religious worship place depends upon the availability of land for expansion. If the land is confined to a cross roads square point, the religious building gets expanded within the confined land. There are instances where the places of religious worship grow by years, where there is no land confinement. In this stage, the structure of the worship place gets expanded and also the surrounding land is encroached (see figure no 6.4).

(Figure No. 6.4)
6.7 Confined and Non Confined Land Grabbing sites.

The phases of expansion depend upon the availability of land adjacent to the grabbed land. Broadly the land grabbed places can be categorized into two types, such as,

a. Confined lands.
b. Non confined lands.

6.7.1 Confined lands.

Confined land for grabbing are those places where the land is limited for expansion such as circles, Squares, Tri angular land road junctions and oval land road dividers. These types of places have limited scope for the future expansion.

The vertical building expansion from a non structure to miniature structure and to a full sized structure is the most normal form of vertical expansion. While expanding vertically the horizontal or the adjacent land also get encroached. In a confined land, the expansion gets seized as it comes to the fullest encroachment of the religious building. There are sites which depicts the stages of confined land such as,

i. Stage 1 confined land grabbing sites
ii. Stage 2 confined land grabbing sites
iii. Stage 3 confined land grabbing sites

Stage 1 Confined Sites: As mentioned above, grabbing land in a confined site give limited scope for further expansion or encroachment.

(Figure No. 6.5)
Most of the sites which are grabbed in a confined site are grabbed few decades ago. At present the grabber are conscious and select a land which have scope for further expansion or encroachment of available land in a phased manner (see figure no 6.5).

**Stage 2 Confined Sites:** The semi structure buildings will replace the stage 1 site. There are instances where the structure looks like a full structure. Perhaps more interestingly the structure are altered further and also extended since the availability of land is limited. Beautifying the existing place of worship becomes the main course of alteration (see figure no 6.6).

(Figure No. 6.6)

**Stage 3 Confined Sites:** With in a available space the full form of building is constructed as final structure. But there is no end to the beautification of the worship place. Nowadays the confined site land grabbing is not seen. Most of the confined site sturctures are in 3 stage which shows that the land grabber are more conscious of future land encroachment. Only in few places the confined land sites is in the stage 1 and stage 2, most of them have reached stage 3 which are seen in the city (see figure no 6.7).
6.7.2 Un Confined Land

The Un-confined lands are those land which do not posses horizontal expansion limits. The land grabbed over the foot path becomes easily vulnerable for linear expansion. In un-confined sites the stages of expansion goes as similar to the rest. After stretching up to the road limit the expansion inevitably happens towards sides in a linear shape. Because of the un-confined land the expansion will continue over years in a gradual scale such as,

i. Stage 1 Un-Confined Site
ii. Stage 2 Un-Confined Site
iii. Stage 3 Un-Confined Site

**Stage 1: Un-Confined Site:** Selective lands are chosen with pre intention of extending. The photographs shown below are Hindu and Muslim religious worship sites. At Hindu site the statue of a God has been placed and there are vermillion is seen sprayed on the tree and also on the small protection structure of the statue. In another place the Islamic community people has buried the religious priest and it has become the place of worship for Islam followers. This site does not have the roof. In future the roof will be constructed and further expansion of the site takes place. Almost the land encroached by the Islamic people are for burial. This may be due to the reason that, the Islamic people do not believe in any other form of religious God or Statues for worshiping. Worship the cemetery is not followed by all sects of Islamic
community (see figure no 6.8). Only few sects believe in worship. Some Hindu sects also visit such sites and chant prayers and offer flowers.

(Figure No. 6.8)

Stage2: Un Confined Site: The main characteristic feature of this site are half raised buildings with semi permanent roof and side walls. At present the city is having this stage of worship places next only to the stage 3. In the photos shown below the building is constructed with semi permanent structure and the extended front portion is covered by Zink sheet roof. Another Photograph depicts the Islam religious site with half structure (see figure no 6.9). The material used for roof and wall are temporary in nature. This kind of structure is common in the most densely populated areas.
Un Confined Stage 3 Sites: Most of the worship site on the road sides and in the old extensions of the city has attained third stage. The structure will be built into full form with permanent establishments. The photographs shown below are the Hindu places of worship and also the Muslim. All these structure have elevated into the present form from stage 1 to this level. Another aspect is that, although it has attained the final stage it has ample scope for further expansion and encroachment of land on either side (see figure no 6.10).
6.8 Unauthorized to authorized

Construction of Religious buildings other than the notified places is violation of rules. Every building activity plans should be approved from the city corporation or from the respective town planning authorities. The land specified for residential buildings should consist only of residential houses and house building activity. Only in a specific place where the land has been approved for the purpose of the religious buildings, in such places the worship buildings can be constructed. Other than, such type of approved plan construction, buying land and constructing according to the persons individual need is a violation of rule as per the Town and country planning act. In a situation of this nature, actually grabbing land in the public places in a prime zone of the city is an offence. Contrary to this the Land is grabbed in the public places and those lands are utilized to construct the places of religious worship without any prior approval from the authorities is clear mark of two offences. But the sentiments of the public rule the law rather than the law ruling the region and people. Obliviously, the old precedence’s and the moral support of the public, silences the authorities and to keeps their eyes closed on such issues. Finally the same authorities will authorize the unauthorized or illegal act.
For this type of activity there is no place or land value barrier. It can occur in any place in India by any religion until the people to support to them are existing that place.

6.9 Conclusion:

Although it is not good to defend the act of land grabbing, but there is sense of lawless tradition is still continued in India from the ancient time. The people of India exercise their ancestral right on land and more especially on the religious issues. This tradition has resulted into creeping flaws in the urbanization process. Related to the people religious sentiments are concerned, Either judiciary or the government or helpless to go against their sentiments. One’s place of worship cannot be demolished by the Hindu majority Government. Certainly such act will bring disharmony among other religious groups. Land grabbing for religious causes are seen in different States of India according to the faith of the highest population in that particular state. The Hindu dominated places comprises of more land grabbing for the construction of the temples and this will be countermanded by the next populous religious groups.