CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and introduction

This study has been conducted in the West Singhbhum district of Jharkhand State and aims at understanding the socio-political dynamics of a tribal-dominated society and its influence on land dispossession as well as resistance movements. The time frame is restricted to the period since Jharkhand was formed on 15th November 2000 till the assembly elections conducted in 2014. The formation of Jharkhand separating the Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana areas of erstwhile Bihar is popularly regarded as the culmination of around seven decade old Jharkhand movement. Ethnic identity always remained central to the demand for Jharkhand raising the issue of hardship and suffering of around 27 per cent (Census, 1991) of its tribal population. Nevertheless, the immediate circumstances preceding the State formation indicate towards political calculations.

This study takes as a reference point the New Industrial Policy (NIP) of 2001 adopted by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government headed by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Babulal Marandi. The NIP opened the floodgates for a large number of memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the government and the corporate sector seeking investment for mining and industrial projects in the resource-rich State.

While there are proposals for several mega-projects intending to acquire large chunks of land (running in thousand acres), this study focuses on “dirty industries” which propose to acquire around 500 acres of land (see Appendix Table 1). Thus, the cases of land dispossession considered under this study do not fall under the rubric of “development-induced-displacement”. It rather adds to the existing contours of dispossession by attributing it a wider connotation comprising also of, what Sampat

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1 Formation of Jharkhand is said to be a strategy of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government at the centre to carve out a truncated State - originally proposed Jharkhand was to comprise of tribal areas of West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh - to establish its rule given the majority of its members of legislative assembly (MLAs) in South Bihar, which alone was proposed to be divided as Jharkhand.

2 ‘Dirty or Pollution-intensive’ industries are regarded by Mani & Wheeler (1997:4) as those having ‘low elasticities of substitution between the use of the environment and other productive factors’. The authors identify five sectors viz. Iron and Steel, Non-Ferrous Metals, Industrial Chemicals, Pulp and Paper, and Non-Metallic Mineral Products, which have incurred high levels of abatement expenditure per unit of output and are also intensive in capital, energy and land (ibid: 5). The operating and proposed Sponge Iron Industries in West Singhbhum fall within this definition.
(2013a) regarded as, “speculative dispossession”. Most of the studies (Baviskar, 1995; Nilsen, 2010; Sampat, 2013b) on land acquisition have looked into ‘displacement’ as an inevitable consequence and dispossession is defined in terms of loss of habitat, traditional resources of livelihood, uprooting of culture and so forth. A common undercurrent of projects evoking displacement is that the consequences are so overt that they immediately appeal to the public imagination. However, the present study deals with cases of land acquisition which defy displacement but rather causes dispossession which unfolds itself in a gradual manner affecting the lives and livelihood of the inhabitants.

### Table No.1.1: List of companies and their current status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Name of Company</th>
<th>Date of MoU</th>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Village/s</th>
<th>Area acquired (in acres)</th>
<th>Protesting Organisation/s</th>
<th>Present Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Balaji Industrial Products Ltd.</td>
<td>1-6-2004</td>
<td>Noamundi</td>
<td>Barajamda</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Operating since 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>V S Dempo</td>
<td>6-10-2005</td>
<td>Manoharpur</td>
<td>Dimbuli</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>Gram Ganhrajya Parishad</td>
<td>Still acquiring land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sri Sai Shraddha Metallic Pvt. Ltd.</td>
<td>Non-MoU</td>
<td>Noamundi</td>
<td>Kotgarh</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Jameen Bachao Samanway Samiti (JBSS), Oomon Mahila Sangathan</td>
<td>Under judicial consideration since case filed by protesting organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sai Sponge Iron Ltd.</td>
<td>Non-MoU</td>
<td>Jhinkpani</td>
<td>Noangaon</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Operating since 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Horizon Loha Udyog Ltd.</td>
<td>26-3-2004</td>
<td>Noamundi</td>
<td>Petteta and Bahada</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>JBSS started protest in 2012</td>
<td>Still Acquiring land</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Government of Jharkhand, Department of Industry  
http://jharkhandindustry.gov.in/ accessed on 27th May 2013

Several such industries have been proposed for West Singhbhum also, of which five cases have been selected for this study (see the Table above). Spread across the entire district, these cases help in drawing a general picture on politics of land dispossession and “not-so-popular” movements in West Singhbhum. Of the five cases taken up for this study, three cases (Kotgarh, Bahada-Petteta and Dimbuli) help

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3 In her study of the SEZs in Goa, Preeti Sampat (2014) found that the repertoire of the anti-SEZ movements, apart from other issues, also built around the issues of dispossession which could have taken place had the SEZs been allowed to be established in those regions. She regarded this phenomenon as “speculative dispossession”.
to understand the processes and factors assisting the companies in acquiring land while the remaining two cases (Noangaon and Barajamda) will be analysed with the objective to understand the nature of dispossession once the project takes-off. Even though these industries do not evoke the apprehension associated with displacement, the dispossession they cause are covert, gradual and enormously hazardous. In order to start operations these companies have to deal with numerous issues one of which is also people’s protest against land acquisition. However, protest should not be considered as an inevitable recipe in the processes of dispossession because in two of the cases (Noangaon and Barajamda) no protests were observed.

Even when the movements are organised their success is contingent upon their ability to identify as well as engage with the site and modality of dispossession which can be local and intricate given the nature of projects. In the resource-rich State of Jharkhand popular imagination is ripe with “land wars” being waged by communities, primarily tribals. Nevertheless, a comprehensive study elucidating the processes of dispossession as well as the people’s resistance from a grassroot perspective has yet not been accomplished. Borrowing extensively from an approach regarded as “anthropology” of the neo-liberal state, we will attempt to study the state in Jharkhand and its attitude towards the adivasi people by analysing the issue of land dispossession which has remained a subject of perennial importance. As against the analysis of large developmental projects, the present study looks into projects which barely evokes the common apprehensions associated with the former and hardly confirms to the neo-liberal agenda of chasing growth. The projects are rather symptomatic of a ‘capital’ which thrives on the patronage of corrupt politicians as well as state officials in an unstable political environment, where governments are formed out of a fractured mandate. Thus, the present study makes an attempt to understand the socio-political dimensions, politics of dispossession and the consequent resistance movement in a tribal-dominated society.

4 Daniel Munster and Christian Strumpell (2014) argues that an anthropological approach of analysing neo-liberal state do not bank on the notion of the latter being a meta-narrative. It rather emphaisises upon the way the creed of neo-liberalism reveals itself through grassroot experiences.

5 "Neo-liberalism” or “libertarianism” is considered here as a system in which the state is supposed to play the role of a “night watch-man”, i.e. not only removing the barriers in the operation of market forces but also creating favourable conditions for its survival and flourishing. The underlying assumption is that the resulting private-sector led growth will address the issues like poverty, unemployment, etc.
The present chapter is divided into five sections of which the first section aims at providing a brief introduction of the study. With a focus to cover the entire scope of the study stretched over three different themes, i.e. nature of a tribal-dominated society, politics of dispossession and anti-dispossession resistance movements, second section is divided into three sub-sections dealing with relevant survey of literature. In the third section, we will identify the research questions as well as the objectives which the study attempts to fulfill. The fourth section deals with the methodology adopted and the fifth section suggests the chapterisation of the dissertation.

1.2. Review of literature

1.2.1. A brief survey of literature on politics of land acquisition

Indian struggle for independence saw a huge shift in strategy in its ninety active years from 1857 till 1947. The “first war of independence” against colonial rule in 1857 was largely violent in nature and bereft of any blueprint for the future. The struggle, mostly, revolved around recapturing the lost territory from the colonisers without any ‘secular modern ideology of social transformation’ (Sarkar, 1983) in tune with the democratic ethos. Hence, it was during the later part of the struggle that demand for modern institutions, for better governance and ensuring rights of the people was raised. In this background, the creation of Congress in 1885 was a landmark event because it emerged not only as a political organisation but also as a movement. During the initial years, struggle was largely non-violent with prayer, protest and petition (PPP) being the dominant means of bringing reforms in governance. Later, self-determination and socio-economic amelioration was sought to be achieved through complete independence. Thus, the Congress Party became an agency which promised to alleviate the socio-economic conditions of the underprivileged section, once political independence was secured.

In keeping with the promise, the post-independence Indian state brought several provisions through the constitutional mandate to ensure the smooth inclusion of its subaltern within the mainstream. At the same time, it also attempted to preserve the distinct identity of the religious and cultural minorities. Despite the notion of equality propounded in Article 15 which prohibits ‘discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth’, Article 29 clause (1) mentions that,
Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same. (Bakshi, 2007:66).

Article 46, as enshrined under the directive principles guiding the actions of the state (Part IV) endows upon it the responsibility for promoting the educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections. In addition to this, special provisions are made to ensure their proper representation in the House of the people and legislative assembly of the States under Article 330 and 332, respectively. Moreover, Article 335 guarantees their appointment to services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of a State. These measures became the part of affirmative policies which were supposed to provide enough room for the inclusion of under-privileged section in the national mainstream. With effective provisions for social justice, the Indian state had set its goal for establishing a socialistic society pulling its poorest sections out of the vicious circle of poverty and destitution. One of the most underprivileged sections was that of the tribals, mainly concentrated in central, eastern and North-Eastern States.

Providing an overview of the adivasi society B D Sharma, an administrator and expert on tribal affairs, mentioned that

Tribal system is non-formal and based on oral tradition whereas the new system is formal and based on written documentation. In most of the tribal areas rights on land exist in a pyramidal form. The right of the family and the individual are generally usufructuary. The right of the clan and the community are absolute. But the new system is individualistic, recognising individual rights. (Sharma, 1978)

Given their particular cultural, social and political set up, a debate emerged amongst politicians as well as intellectuals over the specific place of tribals in the newly created polity. As a result, three alternative paths of development were identified at the time of independence. The first path known as ‘isolationist’ proposed to leave the tribal areas un-interfered and allow them to grow in accordance with their own genius while the second path called ‘integrationist’ sought to bring development

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6 In this study, the terms tribe and adivasi are used intermittently despite the awareness of the connotation which they carry. While the former is more so an official construct used for administrative purposes, the latter is embedded in the ideology of indigeneity and carries the notion of identity and culture.
while at the same time taking care not to aggravate the already prevailing disparity within the tribal society. The third was through ‘assimilating’ the tribals within the mainstream by giving a free play to economic forces (Sharma, 1978). Nehru, however, was aware of the simplicity of the tribal society and their vulnerability towards development intervention at its full pace. Therefore, he chose a middle path between the two extremes of complete insulation and free play of economic forces.

Two-pronged strategy for the welfare of the tribals was adopted. Whereas ‘development from above’ was supposed to accrue ‘trickle-down’ benefits to them, intervention through various programmes was sought to provide them direct benefits. However, keeping in line with its planned model of development most of the interventions made were from above and relied on individual achievement and competition (Sharma, 1978). Nehru’s notion of nation-building with emphasis on industries, modern institutions of governance and so on, derived largely from western notion of ‘modernity’ and proved to be of little help to the tribals. As against government expectations, big development projects proved to be detrimental to the existential needs of its subalterns.

Tribals of central India, as they sat upon huge reserves of mineral resources, were destined to suffer once the Indian state initiated its policy of constructing the “temples of modern India”. Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana regions of Bihar, presently known as Jharkhand, also underwent changes in the wake of such developmental policies. Due to the construction of big dams, mining projects, industrial complexes etc. a large scale of land was acquired forcing huge displacement of the inhabitants, mostly tribals ⁷ (GoI, 2014:259). Although opportunities of employment were created, the tribals were not in a position to take advantage due to the lack of skills required for the jobs. The required labour force was mostly received from the neighboring areas of Bihar and Bengal. Moreover, failure of the government to rehabilitate the displaced tribals forced them into wanton destitution. They had lost their source of livelihood and had to look for available avenues to ensure livelihood (Badgaiyan, 1986). This situation had several socio-economic and political

⁷ For a detailed account on Displaced Persons (DPs) and Project-affected-Persons (PAPs), see the Report of High Level Committee on socio-economic, health and educational status of tribal communities in India prepared under the Chairmanship of eminent adivasi scholar, Prof. Virginius Xaxa. The report highlights that the tribals constitute around 47 per cent of the total displaced population due to development projects.
implications for the tribals of the area, e.g. they were reduced to a minority in their own land.

The above mentioned initiatives in independent India were taken in the name of developing its people. It has been argued that societies alien to modern system requires a locally conducive process which gives due consideration to their indigenous system. But development in the third world countries cannot be seen in isolation and bereft of politics. Hence, scholars have argued that ‘development’ itself is a catchword which found its place in the present discourse due to post- World War II discovery of ‘poverty’ by the industrialised countries (Escobar, 1995). Moreover, this became a strategy of controlling the newly independent Asian and African countries by integrating them in a system in which they were in a relatively disadvantaged position (ibid.). Further deconstructing the development ideology, Kalyan Sanyal (2007) argued that this ideology has shifted its stance under different phases. For example, from its 1950s-60s avatar of being “development as a systemic transition” the discourse came to be known as “development for improvement” during the 1970s (Sanyal, 2007:88). Yet another view on ‘development’ has been endorsed by scholars like Pranab Bardhan (2011), Sanjoy Chakravorty (2013), and others who perceive the marginalisation of certain sections as the “necessary cost” (Levien, 2015:147).

In addition to the implementation of large development projects the government also tried to intervene at the local level through welfare programmes. Government in the post-colonial India accepted that tribal communities are egalitarian and homogeneous and this conception formed the basis of ‘affirmative actions’ and compensatory discrimination for the STs (Devalle, 1992). In reality, however, tribals of Jharkhand did not form a homogeneous entity and were marked with class distinctions apart from the presence of non-adivasis in their society. Because of this, benefits were largely cornered by the pre-existing tribal elite class with a few benefits percolating to the middle class, in turn, raising their political awareness (Corbridge, 2004). Moreover, State’s official tribal policy assumes a correspondence between ethnicity and location. Just over two-third of Jharkhand’s STs are residing in the sub-plan areas which, since 1974, have been the basic unit of tribal planning in India. 21.36 per cent of ST population still lies out of account (ibid).
Another statist intervention came in the form of Joint Forest Management (JFM) which aimed at increasing the forest cover up to one-third (33%) of the total geographical area while at the same time reducing poverty among the communities who were dependent upon the forest resources for their livelihood. From the fieldwork undertaken by a senior government official in Ranchi district to evaluate this programme, it may be concluded that the elite capture was also responsible for its under-performance. The accumulation of ‘household social capital’ among the rich villagers seems to have occurred alongside a decline in shared labour systems and community grain banks (Kumar, 2004). Hence, the noble intervention has not only failed to alleviate the socio-economic conditions of the poor tribals but has also led to the degradation of a traditional institution of ‘shared labour’ (ibid). This is how the two-pronged development strategy un-folded itself in the tribal-dominated areas of central India.

As the present study takes up land as the central factor, it will be worthwhile to concentrate on the works by various scholars who have attempted to study different aspects of land acquisition and issues revolving around it. From the plethora of such literature, we will selectively deal with those which help us understand land acquisition in the post-liberalisation era.

India, at the present juncture, is witnessing several anti-dispossession resistances popularly termed as “land wars”, and the politics revolving around land dispossession have emerged as the biggest challenge for ‘neo-liberal’ capitalism. The anti-dispossession resistances noticed throughout India are local, mostly apolitical and have diverse agencies carrying on its goals. Purposes for land acquisition differ widely from real estate and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to mining and industrialisation. Rate of compensation varies depending upon the site of land acquisition which may take place in close vicinity of cities or remote corners of the countryside. The fact that many of the land deals are concluded amicably while others aren’t indicate towards the unwillingness of the land owners. Primarily, behaviour of the land owners is shaped by either of the two considerations; firstly, they are unhappy with the compensation and other benefits; and secondly, they out rightly reject the proposal due to some other reasons. Concerns related to compensation are largely dealt under the neo-liberal paradigm forcing the policy makers to work in
tandem with different stake-holders for arriving at a consensual solution (Sud, 2014). But the land deals made impossible due to “other reasons” are usually sealed by the use of “extra-economic” measures. Thus, the embattled terrain of land acquisition provides us the opportunity to not only understand the nature of state but also state-society interactions.

Levien (2012) calculates the “rate of accumulation by dispossession” to say that the state in the neo-liberal era engages with the task of “upward redistribution of land”. On the other hand, scholars like Chakravorty (2013) argue that the increased land cost due to high compensation and strict rehabilitation and resettlement (now onwards R&R) policies will make the land prices untenable for the purchasers. Chakravorty further argues that land acquisition at higher rates while benefitting the land owners will adversely affect the end-users due to the high ‘opportunity cost’. Arriving at the important question, Chakravorty enquires about what will happen if the owners do not get their desired price or simply refuse to sell their land? Here, the principle of public purpose or “eminent domain” will be applied and the land owners will be compelled to part with their possession. Whereas Chakravorty (2013:xx) has attributed the difficulty in land acquisition to the changed attitude of the farmers making land a precious commodity owing to the information symmetry, Levien (2013) locates the reason in the changing ideological position of the state wherein land is acquired for private capital investment.

To curb the apprehensions related to land dispossession, yet another neo-liberal approach banks upon the issue of corporate social responsibility (CSR) having more relevance in context of global capital. Several scholars have attributed the increase in activities of mining companies to the adoption of policies characterised as a shift from ‘national developmentalism’ to a ‘neo-liberal globalism’ (Reed, 2002; Imbun, 2007 and Kemp et al. 2011). The scholars working under the neo-liberal

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8 Levien (2012) tries to frame a theory to explain the “land wars” and he uses Harvey’s “accumulation by dispossession” which is based upon the notion that “contemporary dispossession emanates from, rather than create the pre-conditions for, advanced capitalism”. Levien observes the issue of land acquisition as that of capitalist accumulation and defines the ‘rate of accumulation by dispossession’ as the difference between the cost of government-acquired land and its ultimate appreciation in the hands of a capitalist.

9 Farshad Araghi (2010:123) uses the term “national developmentalism” to argue that the post-colonial states were the bureaucratic welfare states which recognised the nationalist and developmentalist aspirations of its people while acknowledging the peasantry as a political force for which the agrarian reforms were adopted.
framework use the term ‘Resource Extracting Industries’ (REIs) for the mining companies which are characterised as ‘large, vertically integrated, capital intensive, transnational corporations engaged in oligopolistic competition’. While such industries find it hard to operate in the developed countries due to the ‘least cost rule’ applied there, they shift their destination towards developing countries. Raising the issue of public policy approach in developing countries, Reed (2002) argues that such countries apply less stringent regulation while following economic liberalisation to attract foreign capital. Moreover, the presence of democratically elected governments in the developing countries have not significantly boosted the self-determination of the people and this is felt more so often by the vulnerable population groups, e.g. indigenous groups and ethnic/racial minorities. Even though minor attempts have been made to ensure the accountability of the companies on the ‘polluter-pay’ criteria, these steps have failed to achieve their goal due to poor institutional arrangements. Interestingly, scholars like Imbun (2006) argue that, CSR which is considered as a voluntary role of business organisations is now being used by companies to gain legitimacy back home as most of the pressure originates from advanced countries. Given these facts the CSR approach enjoys little credence to explain the land imbroglio in India which requires a more nuanced intervention.

In their study based on Singur, Ghatak (et al. 2013) analyses the discourse of land acquisition to understand the locus standi of different stakeholders other than the land owners. Such studies have led to the broadening of the lexicon of compensation, rehabilitation and resettlement. In fact, the category of Project-affected-Families (PAFs) was reconfigured into the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (LARR henceforth) thus expanding the ambit of compensation and R&R. Despite the expanding horizon of compensation, land acquisition is still a contentious issue and needs to be understood from a perspective which captures the different dimensions viz. owners, buyers, state, society, etc. Addressing this aspect, Bedi (2013), in her study of anti-SEZ resistance in Goa, argues that development protest should not be homogenised and a particular viewing of the state depends upon the micro-politics of a place. She states that ‘anti-dispossession struggles are shaped by the policies, land acquisition processes and protest ambiances’ and identifies conditions on which resistance will depend (ibid.). These assertions reverberate appropriately in the politics of land dispossession
throughout Jharkhand where the industrial firms take advantage of the social, economic and political factors existing at the local level. The present study is, hence, guided by the conviction that the politics of dispossession and resistance movements are shaped by the dynamics of micro-politics in West Singhbhum.

Levien (2013) also claims that the nature of dispossession shapes the character of anti-dispossession movements and identifies six fundamental features of any form of politics, i.e. target; strategy and tactics; political organisation; social composition; goals and ideologies. But he did not identify the ways in which the process of dispossession adjusts itself in the light of existing social, political, economic and legal realities to render the anti-dispossession struggle stingless. Thus, the politics of dispossession does not take place in a linear fashion but is rather a dialectical process with the potential to reshape the social milieu in which it takes place and *vice versa*. The intertwined nature of social domain, land acquisition and resistance movements makes it necessary to understand the discourse of social movements in India and their shifting modalities in context of land dispossession.

**1.2.2. A brief survey of literature on social movements**

Indian state, perceived through the lens of constitution, was founded on high ideals of extending benefits to its people irrespective of *caste, class, sex, religion, race, place of birth, etc* (Article 15). In the succeeding years, while making its presence felt in several spheres of life through taking great strides towards development, the state failed to address several issues. This situation invited social protest from the aggrieved sections in turn provoking different response from the state. While some protests were co-opted others saw the use of repressive machinery depending upon the challenge the former posed to the existence of the state. Perceptions about social movement also vary widely from people to people. Tocqueville (2000:347), in his *Democracy in America* (first published 1835), while elaborating upon the political behaviour of the Americans believed that social movements are signs of societal conscience. However, scholars like Huntington (1968) believed that movements are signs of *political decay*.

Proponents of liberal school argued that all social conflicts need to be solved by using the available constitutional means. Even in the absence of suitable legal structures they advocate the use of peaceful negotiations and denounced methods like
direct action (Shah, 2002). But, as the existing institutions failed to cope with the increasing unrest in society a section of liberal and radical political scientists began to explore the area of social movements for greater understanding of political processes (ibid). Scholars have made serious attempts at understanding movements as entities emerging from the society against its structural adjustments, state injustice, and so on. Moreover, there are also scholars who have shifted their stand on movements. For example, Kothari (1970) earlier emphasised upon the study of only those actions of political change which offers a greater scope of political freedom. But he later shifted stance and argued that movements need to be understood as corollary to the vacuum created within the democratic process due to the failure of modern political institutions (Kothari, 1988).

Tracing the trajectory of study on movements in India, Oommen (1990) argues that it was propelled due to two reasons. First, the scholars tried to seize this virgin terrain, and second, the long and protracted anti-colonial struggle gave currency to the study of movements. However, there also exists a contradiction in the narratives provided by the mainstream and the subaltern perspectives. This is specifically the case with the study of terminated movements using ‘post-factum’ analysis. As against this, an advantage with the study of on-going movement is that it captures both the micro and macro dimensions thereby giving a relatively complete picture. Irrespective of the life-cycle and career of a movement which determine their style of communication, the pattern of mobilisation will vary depending upon the contexts and categories involved (ibid.). Hence, any study of ongoing movement should take into account the participants and the context in which they operate.

Emphasising upon the different aspects of movement, scholars have provided various definitions. Alan Touraine (1981:77) defined them as “the organised collective behaviour of a class actor struggling against his class adversary for the social control of historicity in a concrete community”. Identifying crucial laxity within Marxist framework, he attributes cultural orientation to social movements in addition to the objective condition of class. “Directed against a truly social adversary”, Touraine also argues that, “movements do not wish to create a more modern society than one against which it is fighting” (ibid.: 80). As opposed to this, Desai (1966) argued that movements and protests of people will continue till adequate
political institutional forms for the realisation and exercise of concrete democratic rights are found. He also states that as the civil and democratic rights of the people are not constitutionally protected, their violation will be countered through movements (Desai, 1984). Oommen (1990) regarded movements as “conscious efforts on the part of men to mitigate their deprivation and secure justice” and argues that any attempt at studying social movements should take into account the dialectics between historicity (past experiences), social structure (present existential conditions), and the urge for a better future (human creativity) (Oommen, 2010). Yet another scholar has defined social movements as “sustained collective action” over time in which participants must have shared objectives and ideologies with a stable organisational base (Baviskar, 2010).

However, study on the nature of social movements has moved from the social realm and now its role in the political arena is being debated. As movements are not apolitical and interacts frequently with the political institutions they have a chance of influencing as well as getting influenced by the political actors. But some scholars have assigned the non-political space to the movements (Frank and Fuentes, 1987) which is criticised by others as an attempt towards depoliticisation of the social realm (Dhanagare and John, 2002). Although the fervor of capturing state power is usually absent in social movements, even Frank and Fuentes (1987) could not deny that they produce a sense of morality, (in)justice and social power through social mobilisation against deprivation. Hence, it is by virtue of negotiation with the state for allocation of resources out of their limited availability that movements acquire political shape. Studies on movements have contributed immensely towards understanding the nature of society, state, regime, etc. Most often movements have been studied under the Marxian analysis which entails a top-down approach primarily concentrating on the class issues. However, in the recent times studies have been conducted with emphasis on grassroots approach on movements and its role in understanding the nature of state (Srikant, 2010).

Apart from the nature of state what remains crucial in the study of movements is the social milieu from which it emerges. Movements need to be understood as entities having its basis in society and the social constraints which might influence its significance. In his work on land dispossession, Levien (2013) has analysed several
anti-dispossession struggles from many parts of India and concluded that the response of *adivasis* in case of dispossession is different from the people living near cities. Assigning limited role to political idioms like culture and identity, he identifies two categories of anti-dispossession struggles. One is by the “bargainers” who negotiate for compensation and another is by the “barricaders” who out rightly reject dispossession and refuse to treat their land as commodity. In the case of “bargainers” the state can orchestrate a class compromise thereby making dispossession hegemonic rather than merely coercive. But Levien fails to capture the use of political idioms in the articulation of subalternity wherein the *adivasis* have evolved to attach certain, if not more, importance to material needs of life rather than simply observing land as a cultural asset. This complex perception of the tribals can be explained against the background of the changes pervading their society. Whereas assertion of cultural assertion serves the purpose of adivasi elites and activists to organise the community, the former has only limited relevance in explaining or shaping the attitude of the community towards land. Moreover, to assume that the adivasis are entirely driven by cultural concerns makes essential the use of force in every instance of land acquisition. But this is not the case in Jharkhand and persuasion by the private firms has played significant role in land acquisition. A better way, therefore, to analyse politics of dispossession is through a close examination of local mechanisms which play a crucial role in land dispossession.

Another important aspect in the study of social movements is that of the issue of agency in organising the anti-dispossession struggle. Citing the example of Singur and Nandigram, Levien (2013:366) argues that dispossession is becoming an electorally salient issue and anti-dispossession struggles have shed their skepticism towards political parties to further their case in Bhatta Parsaul, Niyamgiri and so on. Even though the political parties have associated themselves with anti-land dispossession resistance movements on more than one occasion they are yet to carve out a clear stand on this issue. On the role of political parties Chakravorty (2013:xxv) argues that “a party is in favour of land acquisition where it is in power and against it where it is not”. However, the *Nagri* and *Icha-Kharkai* movements in Jharkhand defy this hypothesis where the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) despite being one of the coalition partners opposed the government’s attempt to acquire land. Moreover, most of the political parties in Jharkhand have hesitated to come out openly in favour of
land acquisition due to the political salience of the adivasi community. Nevertheless, under present circumstances in West Singhbhum the companies take advantage of the micro-level power dynamics and apply persuasive means, either arm twisting or moralising, to gain access to land. The anti-dispossession resistance movements despite their presence on the horizon for several years have succeeded only partially to halt land acquisition.

Furthermore, dwelling into the reasons which makes social movements ineffective Kothari (2002) argued that, “although the masses are on the rise, the institutional channels through which they ought to have found expression and which were to provide a springboard of radical action is found to be wanting, co-opted and corrupted”. In context of Jharkhand, Nandini Sundar (2009) has tried to place the movements under the discourse of legality while challenging the state’s attempt to acquire land. But scholars like Nilsen (2010) are critical of “jury politics” and citing the case of NBA and others vs. Union of India, 2000 argue that this strategy takes away the edge from an otherwise political issue by relegating it to the domain of jurisprudence. However, Levien (2013:364) takes an opposite view on “jury politics” and asserts that the delay caused due to litigation makes the project untenable for the private investors thus benefiting the protestors. Likewise, Bedi (2013:47) views “jury politics” as being helpful in putting a permanent moratorium on SEZs because even after change in political regime the judicial decision acts as a guideline for policy position.

1.2.3. A brief survey of literature on Jharkhand

The post-independence phase of Jharkhand movement has been largely analysed as an entity crucial for the creation of a separate state (Mahapatra, 1972; Ghosh, 1998). Political, social and economic situation of the people of the area has largely been studied within this framework. Scholars have argued that during this phase also the issue of displacement, exploitation and human rights were prominent (Sengupta, 2004). But the tribal unrest spawned by exploitation and oppression got overshadowed by a movement for regional autonomy (Balakrishnan, 2004). In this section, we will attempt to provide an overview of the changing dynamics of the tribal society in Jharkhand and tentatively suggest the reasons accounting for these changes.

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10 Jury politics refers to the strategy of the protest organisations wherein they contest the legality of land acquisition by appealing to the judiciary.
Most of the scholarly works on Jharkhand are skewed towards exploring the different dimensions of Jharkhand movement. Nevertheless, many works also pertain to the analysis of changes pervading the adivasi society. Changes in the tribal society have been attributed mainly to the external interventions either in the form of administrative practices or development initiatives. Analysing the role of development projects, Sachchidananda (1972) argues that they spread a lot of disaffection against the government because instead of targeting the tribals as beneficiaries these programmes covered the entire geographical area. The two major beneficiaries of this approach were the tribal elite and the outsiders who migrated into Jharkhand. Migration from and into the adivasi areas are also a major reason for the socio-cultural changes and have been studied extensively. In his attempt to analyse the process of growing industrialisation, land alienation and emigration of tribals, Weiner (1978) points out toward the process of ‘detribalisation’ and argues that the Jharkhand movement had become the exclusive concern of the educated, urban population among the tribals.

In yet another related work on migration, Badgaiyan (1986) relates the process of immigration with that of the loss of political and economic structure of tribal society. Even though Sachchidananda and Mandal (1985) perceive the introduction of bureaucracy in the form of courts and administrative offices as the factors responsible for exploitation of the tribals, they believe the disintegration of tribal society and culture in the wake of industrialisation to be a process of re-organisation and re-integration with the national culture rather than manifestation of dysfunctions (ibid.). Recently, capturing the changes brought in tribal societies due to policy of integration, Nathan and Kelkar (2003:1955) stated that the socio-economic system of the tribals has moved from one based on stability and self-consumption to one based on accumulation and market-orientation. They also provide ample example showing how a value has grown among a section of the mainstream which wants to draw a very cosmetic picture of the tribals and even engage in practices which incentivise the transformation of cultural practices of tribal community into commodities (ibid.: 1959).

After the creation of the state in 2000, studies have been conducted covering various aspects of Jharkhand. George (2009) elaborates upon the legal protection
granted to the tribals against land alienation. However, she also mentions about the exceptions introduced in the protective laws allowing land transfer for industrial and mining purposes. Carol Upadhya (2009) emphasising upon the disjuncture between juridical rights and actual customary rights explains why access to common lands and the erosion of community rights emerged as major points of conflict between local communities and the State in Jharkhand. Ritambhara Hebbar (2011) has studied the engagement of the locals with issues of politics, culture and science in their quest for self-rule. She describes the discourse on forest management as the local people engage both with the customary institutions as well as modern scientific methods. This draws attention to the differences within the tribal society as far as self-rule is concerned. However, scholars like Alpa Shah (2007) explain the hostility of the local people towards the statist institutions due to their experiences of exploitation. People, she adds, prefer to nurture the traditional institutions for its virtue of sacral polity and they participate in elections to have less, not more, access to the state. In her later work, juxtaposing the experiences gained from the everyday life of the villagers with the accounts of the village elites and the rhetoric of the urban indigenous rights activists, Shah (2010) reveals a class dimension to the indigenous rights movement. However, this dimension is easily lost in the culture-based identity politics that the movement produces.

One important aspect of local politics in Jharkhand has been an attempt at revitalising the indigenous institutions of governance (Shah, 2010). It is in this context that we need to understand the customary institutions of *manki-munda* in West Singhbhum which enjoys power to arbitrate disputes and acts as police officers in cases of petty crimes. But there has been a gradual decline in their customary role as the powers shifted towards modern departments of police and judiciary (Sundar, 2005). While scholars have argued that the role of customary institutions like *munda*¹¹ being closer to the village saw only minor decline (Sundar, 2009) some scholars have even argued that customary institutions organised at broader level like *parha*¹² also retained their significance (Shah, 2010).

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¹¹ *Munda* is the customary head of a village in the *Ho* adivasi society.

¹² *Parha*, *Pir* or *Pargana* are the broader units of customary administration among the *Munda*, *Ho* and *Santhal* adivasis, respectively, and comprises of a cluster of villages. A *pir* is headed by *Manki* while a *Parha raja* is the head of a *parha* and *pargana* is governed by a *Parganait*.
Scholars who have worked on the customary village councils (CVCs) in other parts of India have argued that the CVCs have developed a harmonious relationship with Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) further leading to smooth implementation of development projects (Ananthapur, 2008). Thus, the CVCs despite their non-formal political status can be comprehended as a ‘pattern of dialectic, decision and action’ (Mandelbaum, 1970 as quoted in Ananthpur, 2009). However, dealing with the issue of formal recognition of the CVCs, Povinelli (2002) in her study of Australian aborigines highlights the declining virtue of “multiculturalism”. She argues that the non-indigenous Australians are unable to take into account the corporeal practice of the aborigines. In order to comprehend liberalism’s limits in recognising difference, she further suggests revisiting the historical emergence of liberalism as a mood in a social setup where tradition is intertwined with new values.

In the present context of Jharkhand when legislations run counter to the traditions, Povinelli’s argument presents a case for rationalising laws and traditions through proper dialogue between the actors. However, the said dialogue was entirely missing while the government moved ahead to conduct elections according to Jharkhand Panchayati Raj Act (JPRA) in the scheduled areas by neglecting the presence of customary institutions. This negligence on the part of the state has led to a localised impasse between the PRIs and the CVCs hindering the implementation of local developmental projects. However, the presence of sympathisers for both the institutions has further aggravated the already existing political divide. As a result, other than perpetuating under-development conducting of panchayat elections has led to social divisions among the adivasis and between the adivasis and the non-adivasis.

In the preceding sections, we provided a brief survey of literature on three broader themes, i.e. politics of dispossession, anti-dispossession resistance, and changing nature of adivasi society. A common thread running through the survey suggests that even though generalised theoretical constructions helps to understand the broader discourse, a grassroots perspective is more useful in finding solutions through an analysis of the situation in its specificity. The present study is different from the available literature in that it attempts to analyse dispossession in a scheduled area where the legal discourse on land is supposed to be framed in such a way that it protects the cultural minorities. Any contravention of this provision has the potential
to question the cultural sensibilities of a liberal state. Nevertheless, in their long interaction with the other as well as statist institutions the adivasi society of West Singhbhum has undergone changes which influence their perception and response to the phenomenon of land acquisition. Capturing the local mechanisms of socio-political interaction, this study will help to contest some of the established notions viz. cosmetic view of an adivasi society, perception of being “barricaders” in land acquisition, and finally, the discourse of identity in framing a social response.

1.3. Research questions and objectives

Changes in adivasi societies of Jharkhand have been explained mainly in terms of their culture and economy (Shah, 2007; Hebbar, 2011; Nathan and Kelkar, 2007). But the socio-political change has largely escaped the attention of researchers till now. Moreover, the academia has largely ignored the task of exploring the dynamics of land acquisition in a scheduled area. Given the differences in legal regime which govern the land in scheduled areas it becomes imperative to analyse the processes and politics of land dispossession. Lastly, the discourse on anti-dispossession resistance movements has been largely explored with the intent to identify certain pan-Indian trends. However, the “not-so-popular” movements in West Singhbhum comprises of certain modalities which makes it an interesting case to identify the shifting patterns.

It is against this backdrop that the following research questions have been framed:

1. How does state intervention influence the micro-level power dynamics of a scheduled area in Jharkhand?

2. What role do the local factors viz. ethnicity, protective laws, local elites etc. play in determining the politics of land dispossession?

3. How does interaction between society and larger politics of land dispossession shape the anti-dispossession resistance movements?

In the backdrop of these queries, this study can claim to fulfill the following objectives:

1. To examine the influence of panchayat elections in exposing the already existing as well as creating new dissensions in the village society;
2. To analyse the local mechanisms which inform the politics and processes of land acquisition; and

3. To understand the nuances of local anti-dispossession resistance movements and the reasons behind their shifting modalities.

1.4. Research Methodology:

The study is based on a field work conducted in the district of West Singhbhum of Jharkhand which is recognised as a scheduled area and is home to the ‘Ho’ tribe. The methodology is adopted with the view to provide an account of politics in a tribal-dominated society from the grassroots perspective. For the purpose of collecting data, in-depth and open-ended interviews were conducted. Un-structured questions pertaining to the issues of land acquisition and respondents’ perception on industrial development were asked. Fifty three respondents belonging to three blocks, namely Jhinkpani, Noamundi, and Manoharpur of West Singhbhum district were interviewed. These blocks were selected as they are the site of operating industrial units and ongoing land acquisition for industrial projects in the district. The respondents range from the leaders of organisations engaged in grass-root movements to the politicians who had been Member of Parliament or Members of legislative assembly from the district and assembly constituencies, respectively. The respondents also included villagers whose land has been acquired, middle-men engaged in sale or lease of land and the customary village headmen.

Table No. 1.2: Category-wise details of the respondents interviewed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Tribal</th>
<th>Non-tribal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land owners</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company representatives</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-man</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customary leaders</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern representatives</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political leaders (ex-MP, MLA and ex-MLA)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activists and other social leaders</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand total</strong></td>
<td><strong>53</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13 Adivasi group, primarily, residing in West Singhbhum, East Singhbhum and Saraikela Kharsawan districts of Jharkhand. They can also be found in the neighbouring areas of Odisha, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh. The Hos claim to be drawing their lineage from the same ancestors as the mundas.
Based on the experience during the pilot survey conducted in January of 2012, it can be said that the people were divided on the issue of panchayat election with some supporting the former while others supporting the customary institutions. However, this situation also raised the challenge of capturing an unbiased opinion of the people towards the two institutions. Keeping in view the political situation in the villages, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were used to record both the narratives and counter-narratives from the respondents. FGDs were conducted in 12 different blocks of West Singhbhum. In each such meeting around 20-30 respondents turned up out of which only fifty per cent participated actively. Whereas some of the FGDs comprised of both male and female participants, few were attended entirely by male and, interestingly, one of the meetings was attended by only female members. The villages were selected randomly as the customary institution as well as the PRIs existed in all the blocks. However, care was taken so that geographically entire district is covered.

Leaders of certain organisations like Kolhan Raksha Sangh, Gram Ganhrajya Parishad, Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Mahasabha, Adivasi Ho Samaj Mahasabha and Manki Munda Sangh were also interviewed. Semi-structured questionnaire was followed for the purpose of FGD while the personal interviews were un-structured and done with the intent of knowing the respondents’ opinion on the matter of society, economy and politics, at large. In addition to interviews, observation of events like public meetings, dharanas\(^{14}\) and other forms of protests were carried out. Analysis of newspaper reports of previous ten years provided an insight into the mode and nature of protests. Other secondary sources like books, pamphlets and reports of NGOs were also used. Various processes involved in the commencement of land acquisition, i.e. the time since an area is identified for industrial projects till the post-investment situation in the villages has been the subject of investigation under this study.

### 1.5. Chapterisation

The thesis is organised into seven chapters in all. As elaborated in the above sections, the first chapter introduces the research area and delineates the scope of the present study. The review of literature has been done with the intent of understanding the issues pertaining to politics of land dispossession, social movements and the

\(^{14}\) ‘Sit in’ strikes
changing dynamics of the tribal society in Jharkhand. Apart from developing a theoretical perspective this endeavour helps to glance through the empirical dimensions of land related issues. Finally, the objectives of the study points toward a major lacuna in the available literature on land acquisition as the domain is bereft of an analytical work on scheduled areas. It is from this fact that the present study derives its salience. The second chapter Locating the ‘adivasis’ in Jharkhand Politics aims at providing a brief account of the autonomy movement in Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas of erstwhile Bihar which culminated into the creation of Jharkhand. However, the main reason behind dwelling into the history of Jharkhand movement is to understand and locate the ‘adivasis’ in the contemporary political discourse of Jharkhand.

The third chapter is titled as Conceptualising ‘dispossession’: State, Laws and Land Acquisition in India. The objective of this chapter is to provide a detailed account of the discourse of land acquisition from a historical perspective and locate it in the post-liberalisation era. The changing contours of land acquisition serves the purpose of revisiting the major ideological shifts and, hence, the nature of Indian state. In an attempt to conceptualise ‘dispossession’ we have disentangled the major narrative of displacement from the consequences usually regarded as “negative externalities”. Though the pollution caused is environmental, the effect also proliferates to individual landholdings and unfolds itself over a period of time. This exercise points toward a major loophole in environmental governance as well as lexicon of ‘compensation, rehabilitation and resettlement’.

The fourth chapter Analysing ‘under-development’ among the Hos serves as a prelude to the enquiry of dispossession politics as rooted in the inter-play of local factors viz. ethnicity, class, legal provisions, political factions, and so on. Panchayat elections conducted in 2010 acts as the entry point in contesting the “cosmetic” notion of homogeneity and egalitarianism attributed to adivasi society. An argument is made that competitive social norms have pervaded the tribal societies and also serve as the probable reason for perpetuating under-development. The reason why under-development is analysed is due to the fact that it acts as a supply-side factor in facilitating the processes of land acquisition by tilting the power relations in favour of the industrial firms.
In the fifth chapter titled *Politics of ‘disguised dispossession’*, the objective is to provide a detailed account of land acquisition in a scheduled area. In this endeavour, we first provide a detailed discussion on theoretical perspective to be adopted for analyzing land dispossession in West Singhbhum. This is followed by a brief account of the socio-economic and legal profile of the district. In the next section, empirical evidences gathered through the field work have been analysed. Applying a case study approach the five industrial projects has been clubbed into two groups. Whereas, the first group of cases are analysed to understand the roles played by local forces in the process of land acquisition another group of cases provide an insight into the nature of dispossession taking place. Issues related to poor compensation, unfavourable terms of employment and poor execution of voluntary Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been highlighted. Keeping in view the covert nature of dispossession, a term of ‘disguised dispossession’ has been proposed to explain this phenomena.

The sixth chapter *Revisiting shifting modalities of anti-dispossession resistance movements* aims at understanding the nature of anti-dispossession resistance movement in West Singhbhum. An attempt has been made to theoretically understand the anti-dispossession resistance movements and arrive at a framework to analyse the one under consideration here. Elaborating on some of the crucial elements used to organise movements, we have explained how ‘adivasi’ identity in West Singhbhum is constructed differently from its generic connotation. In the final part, we identify and analyse the local factors acting as barriers to collective action. It is argued that the resistance movements are not always an ‘all-out’ war against land acquisitions despite the vocabulary used by the protestors. In fact, the articulation of objectives for the movements is informed by ambiguity as well as realities. While the ambiguities comes in the form of some pre-conceived notions providing an imaginary solidarity with similar movements elsewhere, the local realities guide the day-to-day action and endow upon the protestors a power to bargain for certain crucial benefits.

The seventh chapter *concludes* the thesis by summarising the key findings from the different chapters. The objective in this chapter is also to highlight the various debates revolving around land and capture its potential to redefine the political economy of the Indian state. In so doing, the thesis helps in understanding
the situation of one of the most marginalised sections of the population and suggests measures to make the process of development more inclusive. However, a major emphasis is upon the nature of politics that should be adopted by the adivasis in dealing with the institution called state. Despite having an old interaction with statist forces the adivasis as a constituency has not yet interacted with the state in the same manner as caste people do. Rather than ‘keeping the state away’ the adivasis in Jharkhand need to strategically interact with the state to make it an active agency to pursue an alternative course of development conducive to their culture, lifestyle and livelihood.