

Tribal Development In India – The Contemporary Debate
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The Tribal Struggle for Property Rights

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INTRODUCTION

Gangayya, a 58-year-old man of the Koya tribe, has been working as an agricultural labourer in the fields of the local landlord since his adolescence. Surprisingly, he never knew that the land on which he had been working as an agricultural labourer was his own. A local NGO informed Ciangayya about it and led him to initiate a struggle for restoring his ownership right on the land. His agitation against the landlord for his property was fruitful and Gangayya got his land back with the help of that NGC3. The story does not end here; there are many such Gangayyas, who have been waging a ceaseless struggle for their property rights. The present work will deal with one such case pertaining to the land alienation of the tribes in the Agency area of West Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh, and also locate the role of NGOs and civil society in mobilizing the tribes to fight for their property rights.

TRIBES IN WEST GODAVARI DISTRICT

Andhra Pradesh has been the traditional homeland of many tribal groups who mostly live in the border regions of the northern and northeastern parts of Andhra Pradesh, touching the state borders of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. There are altogether 33 Scheduled Tribes in Andhra Pradesh and out of them 30 groups are found living in more than 6,200 villages in the districts of Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, West Godavari, Khammam, Warangal, Adilabad and Mahabubnagar districts. The Scheduled Areas of the state, the chief tribal habitat, constitute 11 percent of the total geographical area of the state. These tribes constitute 6.75 percent of the total tribal population of the country.

The Agency area in West Godavari district was declared as a Scheduled Area by Part A of the State Order, 1950, with the inclusion of 101 villages out of a total of 136 villages in Polavaram taluka. According to the 2001 census, the total population in West Godavari district is 3,799,213, out of which Scheduled Tribes are 93,460, around 2.46 per cent of the total population of the district. West Godavari district is a part of the highly fertile Godavari delta. It is bound by Khammam district in the north, Krishna district and the Bay of Bengal in the south, on the east by the river Godavari and by Krishna district on the west. The district occupies an area of 7,742 sq km with a population density of 454 per sq km. The total forest cover in the district is 81,200 hectares, constituting 10.49 per

cent of the total geographical area of the district. The forests are mostly deciduous forests, dry deciduous forests and thorny forests.

The present study was carried out in Jeelugumilli mandal the district. According to the 2001 census, the mandai population is 28,531, consisting of 14,400 males and 14,131 females; 22.17 percent of the population consists of STs and 16.10 per cent of SCs. The Koyas and Konda Reddies are the predominant tribes of the mandal and the major non-tribal cultivating and landowning castes are the Kapus, Kammas, Reddys, Komatis, and Rajus. The Christian missionaries here tried to convert the tribes but could not succeed in this endeavour; they then proselytized the local Scheduled Castes.

There are 29 villages in Jeelugumilli mandal, of which six villages have been very tense during the last six years because of land disputes between tribals and non-tribals. In the remaining villages, the intensity of the disputes has been less. We have selected the six tense villages for study. They are. Dharbagudem, Jeelugumilli, P. Rajavaram, Nersugudem, Madakamvarigudem and Rachannagudem.

LANDHOLDING PATTERN AND LEGISLATION FOR PROTECTION OF TRIBAL LAND

The tribes are supposed to own most of the land in the Scheduled Areas, but the trend is evidently contradictory in West Godavari district. The non-tribal immigrants surpassed the local tribes in acquiring land, which reached 71 percent of the total land in some of the Scheduled Areas in the state (Table 8.1). The Scheduled Tribes were behind others in possession of landholdings and a majority of them owned 0.05 to 7.40 acres of land. A large chunk of the land in the district was with the forward castes (Table 8.2). The same inference can be extended to our study villages in Jeelugumilli mandal.

Table 8.1
Distribution of Land between Tribals and Non-tribals in Different Districts, 1991

Name of the District	Total Land in Scheduled Areas (in Acres)	Land under Occupation by Non-tribals (in Acres)	Percentage
Srikakulam	14,949.17	359.20	2.40
Vizianagaram	42,333.00	91.00	0.21
Visakhapatnam	288,107.00	Not available	-
East Godavari	173,417.49	33,739.16	19.46
West Godavari	75,702.42	27,979.16	36.96
Khammam	771,604.93	407,368.33	52.79
Warangal	142,533.00	102,104.50	71.64
Adilabad	297,170.95	180,349.40	60.69
Mahabubnagar	42,391.60	1,444.18	3.41
Total	1,848,209.60	753,435.66	40.77

Source: Andhra Pradesh Tribal Department.

Inequality in distribution of land continued to persist throughout the last century. It is pointed out that tribal- landholding had declined in all the 29 villages in Jeelugumilli mandal between the two settlement periods (1902 and 1933). The same trend is seen in our study villages too. Except in one village, the other villages witnessed either decline in their tribal landholding or they were fully occupied by the non-tribal villagers (Table 8.2). Thus the non-tribals possess more than half of the land in the entire Scheduled Area of Jeelugumilli mandal. A perceptible change appears in the earlier pattern of landownership over a period of time, The local non-tribal inhabitants illegally occupied most of the government and tribal land. To legitimize this act, these non-tribal landowners claimed that the tribal land had been transferred to them long before the legislation, and this could, therefore, not come under the present law. The tribes allege that the non-tribal landowners had tampered with the records and manipulated the process, including benami transfers.

Table 8.2

Change in Land Ownership in Study Villages between 1902 and 1933 Resettlement

Name of the Study Village	Total Land (hectares)		Total/Patta land (Percentage)		Government Land (percentage)		Tribal/Patta Land (as percentage of total/ Patta Land)		Non-tribal Patta Land (Percentage of Total / Patta Land)
	1902	1933	1902	1933	1902	1933	1902	1933	
Jeelugumilli	3,836.36	6,111.78	25.06	15.62	74.94	84.38	2.1	0.28	97.9
P. Rajavaram	1,180.65	1,210.51	100	94.08	0	5.92	0	0	99.72
Madakamvarigudem	852.59	812.68	85.13	78.49	14.87	21.51	97.95	99.13	100
Nersugudem	201.61	210.64	93.2	63.97	6.8	36.03	0	0	100
Dharbagudem	3,630.77	7,038.51	93.43	47.71	6.57	52.29	8.46	0.63	91.57
Rachannagudem	1,160.15	1,161.37	52.95	52.81	47.05	47.29	3.76	3.39	96.24

The main provisions in the (Constitution for safeguarding tribal land rights in Scheduled Areas are enumerated in the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Areas Land Transfer Regulation, 1959 (Andhra Pradesh Regulation 1 of 1959) and the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Areas Land Transfer (Amendment) Regulation, 1963 (Andhra Pradesh Regulation 2 of 1970). The Government of Andhra Pradesh has also promulgated various other laws to protect tribal land including the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Areas Laws (Extension and Amendment) Regulation, 1963 (Andhra Pradesh Regulation 2 of 1963), the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Areas Land Transfer (Amendment) Regulation, 1971 (Andhra Pradesh Regulation 1 of 1971), and the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Areas Land Transfer (Amendment) Regulation, 1978 (Andhra Pradesh Regulation 1 of 1978).

Some of the acts were passed in the colonial period and more after independence. The Agency Tracts Interest And Land Transfer Act, 1917, was formulated in the colonial period to pacify the tribes who participated in the Rampa Rebellion, 1879. It was the first of its kind to limit the rate of interest and the transfer of land in the Ganjam, Visakhapatnam and Godavari Agency tracts. According to this law, a tribal can transfer land to a non-tribal only after getting written permission from the agent (the district collector) to the effect. The post-independence law, the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Areas Land Transfer Regulation, 1959, prohibited transfer of tribal land to non-tribals. Amending this provision, the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Areas 1 .and Transfer (Amendment) Regulation, 1970, proclaimed that all land in the Agency Area belonged to the tribes unless the proven otherwise. If a non-tribal person was unable to produce documentary evidence relating to the purchase of the land before 1917 and show that it was under his continuous possession, the land would automatically go to the tribal claimant. The Land Transfer Regulation, 1970, banned any kind of transfer, share, lease, mortgage or sale (Murthy 1997: 13-15).

How LAND is LOST TO NON-TRIBALS

The fertile lands in the Godavari area are, in fact, the main attraction for these immigrants, who, taking advantage of the ignorance, illiteracy and simplicity of the tribes, devised various methods to subjugate the tribes. One of the principal methods was to lend money in times of need. When the tribes were overburdened with debts, the moneylenders forced them to mortgage their land to pay for their debts. Also, they developed a new habit of using consumables that became quite costly and increased their indebtedness.

Several backdoor methods were used to get the tribal land transferred to the non-tribals with the help of the lower-rank officials of the revenue department. First, the land was transferred to another tribal who worked for the non-tribal owner. This was more or less tantamount to benami transfer. Second, the non-tribal man married a tribal woman for the sake of property, while in actual practice the status of the tribal woman was that of a concubine. Third, the non-tribal landowners forcibly cultivated the tribal land by denying pattas to the tribals, though the tribals were formally declared as owners.

The problem of land transfer arose when persons not belonging to tribal community came from the neighbouring districts with an intention to settle down. The demand of the non-tribals for land led to a big contest to own an additional piece of land. This raised the price of land in this area. Land problems became acute and it almost led to a condition where the tribes faced a threat to food security. The tribal inhabitants were then tempted to resist the land-grabbing activity of these non-tribal communities that created a tension between the tribals and non-tribals of the area.

BEGINNING OF STRUGGLE AGAINST LAND TRANSFER

The struggle began with the complaint lodged by Raminenei Rathiah in 1995 against the person who continued to cultivate 29 acres of land in jillellagudem, identifying himself as a tribal. The Special Deputy Collector (land transfer regulations) issued the order to evict him and distribute the land among the tribals. The sub-collector of Kovvur took prompt action to evict the encroacher against whom the complaint had been lodged. But the landowners protested this through hunger strikes and dharnas, which forced the authorities to impose Section 144, restraining both parties (tribals and non-tribals) from entering the disputed land until a revenue order was passed in the matter. A three-point compromise was consequently worked out between the tribal and non-tribals: (1) the pending disputes between tribes or non-tribals would be resolved soon; (2) non-tribal landowners would not be disturbed while the cases remained pending, and (3) the records of Telugu Girijana Magani Samaradhana (Agency land survey conducted in 1987) would be read out in all villages (Rao 1995).

Now the tribes strongly put forward their claim that the entire land in Scheduled Areas belongs to them, while the non-tribals continue to show the title deeds of the land they hold. This has led to a controversy regarding the contradictory facts presented in the 1902 Resettlement Survey Register (RSR) and the 1933 RSR.

Such controversies often took a violent turn during the struggle. Violent attacks on the non-tribals have also resulted in retaliation wherein both sections record loss of life. A civil war-like situation has resulted as a result of the hostility. The incidents at Manugopala and Busarajupalli are an example of this. A group of non-tribals raided the tribal hamlet over a land issue in Manugopala village on 21 March 1996. They allegedly beat up women and men and ransacked the houses. The casual treatment of the incident by the officials annoyed the tribals. On 5 August 1997, in a battle in Busarajupalli, the tribals scared the non-tribals by shooting arrows and beating up a few. Soon after the incident, the tribals were arrested and sent to the central jail. They were released in a phased manner only after the issue figured in the state assembly. Violent exchanges between tribals and non-tribals like physical attacks, threats to life and kidnappings increased over time.

In Panduvarigudem village of Jeelugumilli mandal, tribals attacked the police on 29 May 1997 at the instigation of Mr. Sivaramakrishna and Mrs. Sarada Devi, director and coordinator respectively of SAKTI (an NGO), who encouraged the tribals to forcibly take the land back from the non-tribal land-grabbers. On the same day, 200 tribal women kidnapped the Mandal Revenue Officer of Jeelugumilli. On 12 June 1997, the tribals of Gopalapuram village of Jeelugumilli mandal trespassed into the non-tribal lands, plucked mangoes and took away lorry-loads of raw mangoes, threatening the non-tribals with bows and arrows. On the same day, the tribals kidnapped two non-tribals, demanding the release of the two tribals who were in police custody. One of the non-tribals was killed and 10 were injured at P. Rajavaram village in the tussle. On 30 June 1997, the tribal agitators destroyed the seedbeds of the non-tribals and eight tribals were injured in retaliatory attacks. The tribes from Panduvarigudem kidnapped a police constable on 2 July 1997, and the police fired tear gas shells to disperse the mob.²

The tussle had consequences for both the tribal and non-tribal settlers of the locality. The first and foremost effect was suspension of cultivation, which has continued for the last six years. The economy of Jeelugumilli mandal has been seriously affected, as there has not been any cultivation. While the tribes still wait for the settlement of land in the dispute, they remain without any income, as there is no cultivation and a majority of them are agricultural labourers. Many non-tribal workers have become jobless and lost their income.¹ Even if they cultivated land, the tribals attacked them during the time of harvest. Some, who were more fortunate, could still enjoy the produce by parting with a portion of it as ransom. Others have had to bear the double brunt of losing their investment in addition to the ransom, and remain without income. The standard of living of the people in the area has considerably gone down over the years. Education of children, marriages, ceremonies or even claiming a loan has become problematic because of the disputes.

In Jeelugumilli mandal, the tribes formed a strong group against the non-tribal landowners, asserted their ownership right over land, occupied the land under the control of the non-tribals, started tilling the land and harvested the standing crops. At the same time, they took possession of the land and distributed it among themselves equally. These tribals could not however cultivate all the land because of lack of monetary support. As a result, some of their land has remained fallow since the last five years. But they continue to harvest horticulture crops like cashew, mango and guava, which do not require much investment.⁴

In areas where the land is left uncultivated, some non-tribals have entered into an understanding with the tribals that they will pay Rs. 1,000-2,000 per acre to the tribals so that there will be no further complications until the crop is harvested (Prasad 1995).^s This temporary arrangement has often been violated by the tribal agitators, who suddenly attack and take away the produce in tractors after the harvest. Many such incidents used to occur in the mango and cashew groves. In such instances, the non-tribal farmer becomes a loser on two grounds: he loses money paid to the tribals as well as the investment made on the crop. Some non-tribal farmers have therefore filed criminal cases in police stations against tribals on charges of theft of crops, infringement on private property, threat to life and physical injury.

The West Godavari district collector, Ms Vasudha Misra, undertook a verification survey to solve the land disputes. A village-level committee was formed to coordinate with the administration. The survey identified 2,151.08 acres of land, including 1,202.95 acres of AWD (assessed waste dry land) land, 857.02 acres of paramboke land (village common land), 26.29 acres of LTR (Land Transfer Regulation) land and 64.82 acres of LCC (Land Ceiling Case) land for distribution among the tribals. Besides, 873.25 acres of land occupied by the tribals was regularized and 154 acres of AWD land, under the occupation of non-tribals was assigned to the tribes. The MROs (Mandal Revenue Officers) were instructed to assign the remaining land to the eligible tribes (Anon. 1998a).

In Dharbagudem village, the Field Enjoyment Survey was conducted for 3,650 acres of land on 13 April 1998, but the local tribes did not accept its findings. They questioned the

very validity of the title deeds that the government subsequently issued for registration (Anon. 1997). Being disappointed with the government intervention, the tribal leaders themselves made a survey of the land in the villages of Vankavarigudem, Dathuvarigudem, Kappavarigudem, Kothacheemalavarigudem, Patha Cheemalavarigudem, Lakshnipuram and Barrientalapadu, and earmarked 6,000 acres as the tribal land. This land was later distributed among them.

GOVERNMENT ACTION IN THE DISPUTE-INFESTED AREAS

The police started reprisals against the tribes and regarded the eruption of disputes as a law and order problem, though it started originally as a revenue issue (Anon. 1998b). The tribes resorted to kidnapping mandal development and revenue officials for release of tribals and SAKTI volunteers who had been in police custody. The state government promised the withdrawal of the criminal cases against the tribals and agreed to release them, but it was in vain. The non-tribals managed to bribe the police officials to look after their 'Welfare'. The tribes now hardly go to the police officials for justice, as they place no trust in the police. That results in more FIRs being filed against them (Table 8.3).

Table 8.3
Police Cases Registered against Tribals and Non-tribals

Year	Cases against Tribals	Cases against Non-tribals	Cases under Investigation
1995	10	3	0
1996	13	2	0
1997	34	3	15
1998	30	5	32
1999	30	3	29
2000	34	4	17
2001	18	0	8

Source: Police Station, Jeelugumilli, 10 April 2001.

Most of the tribals against whom cases are filed are illiterate. They are not aware of the importance and seriousness of representing their cases properly. In addition, their financial position does not allow them to engage advocates. Taking advantage of this opportunity, the non-tribals slow down the process of legal redressal by filing appeals. Thus the cases drag on for years.

The revenue officers have filed cases relating to registration of land between 1970 and 1978. The powers relating to the resolution of such cases rest only with the RDO (Revenue Divisional Officer). Since the last 10 years no progress has been made in this regard. The officials are alleged to have taken large bribes for settling the issues (Anon. 1993).

The officials in the Agency Area face the vital problem of political interference. As the issue of land has wider political consequences and as it is the issue of every common man, the political parties do not play any active role for the fear of losing their vote bank. Though their statements make it to the newspapers and create a lot of excitement between the disputing parties, there is no clear political agenda on this issue. Further, because of; the lack of infrastructural facilities like roads and transport, the officials do not have easy access to the interior tribal areas/ The Janmabhoomi programme, which has been implemented throughout the state, does not extends to such interior tribal villages. The concerned officers do not like to risk their lives in the dispute-infested areas.

In 1970, a special office known as the 'Special Deputy Collector for Tribal Welfare' was created in almost all the districts with large tribal populace to redress the grievances of the tribals and to put an end to the illegal transfer of tribal land to non-tribals. The person holding this office was responsible for detecting cases of land alienation and helping the concerned nit to regain their land (Rao 1987: 72). The concept was beset with many inherent limitations, due to which it could not function in the desired way. The Revenue Department and the state government showed 'step-motherly treatment' to this new office (ibid.: 81). Many of the concerned administrative officials were not interested in visiting the tribal areas or were not in a position to cover the entire tribal area. They either paid visits only to the 'r side villages' or depended on the village Dora (headman who is landlord) for information, both in the case of spot studies and also in the detection process. The tribals were not taken into confidence. The collector constituted 99 village-level 'Peace Committees' in 1997 to resolve land disputes and to restore peace in the Agency villages, especially in Jeelugumilli mandal. Each village committee consisted of the Sarpanch of the Village Administrative Officer (VAO), three tribal people (including a woman) and three non-tribals (one from Scheduled Caste, one from Backward Class, and one from Other Castes, with a woman from either of these groups) (Swamy 1998). Despite all such measures, the problem of land alienation remained grave in the tribal areas.

ROLE OF THE NGO

The NGO SAKTI (Strength for Action Knowledge for Tribal Initiation) was established in 1985. Within 10 years, the organization expanded from East Godavari district to the Scheduled Areas of West Godavari, Khammam, Warangal and Visakhapatnam districts. It has primarily been playing the role of a facilitator in initiating the tribal people in West Godavari district Agency Area to demand their rights to land, forest and wages. At the same time they were mobilized against the evil habit of liquor consumption.

The organization used to collect land records and computerize them for preservation and easy availability. On the basis of such records they put pressure on the government to ensure restoration of land to tribes. In this process, the tribes succeeded in occupying 10,000 acres of land in West Godavari district, though the official procedures have been carried out only on 4,000 acres. Around 200 petitions in the High Court relating to LTR, maintenance and land acquisition were filed in East and West Godavari districts. Since

then they installed village courts and resolved all the land-related disputes there instead of going to the statutory courts at the collector's office at Rampachodavaram. In the village court, 150 acres of land were judged in favour of tribals. The organization also initiated a statewide meeting involving 20 NGOs and Mahila Sangams to work on the land issue. It vehemently opposed the police repression in the wake of the tribals raising their voice against the non-tribal land-grabbers.

The NGO claims to have weaned tribals of 36 villages away from podu (shifting) cultivation in dry land areas to vegetable cultivation, and initiated marketing of palm fibre by breaking the trader's monopoly. Since 1994, it has continued to build a campaign against the non-tribal farmers in the Agency Area in innovative ways. It modified the tribes' traditional games like snake-and-ladder, and other conventional games like Thokkudubilla (a game played by young girls using a flat stone) into popular means of educating the tribes about the types of land, the kinds of crops that could be produced on them, and how to measure the value of the produce. SAKTI trained the tribal women in how to argue their cases in the local courts and made the tribals aware of the status of the banjar (waste) land in the villages. The working assumption was that the banjar land was encroached by the non-tribals. In order to lend teeth to their argument, the tribals did not allow the non-tribals to cultivate the fields until the government distributed the banjar land to the tribes. Such involvement of tribals in understanding the information procedures of government and other institutions has empowered the tribals to deal with the institutions of revenue, police, forest, judiciary and development agencies.

Since 1992, SAKTI has played an active role in the implementation of court verdicts on resolving land disputes in the area. In the case of P. Gangamma vs. Vasudha Mishra, the High Court issued the order for verification of ownership of the entire land in the Agency. According to the verdict, such verification would take place under the supervision of a district-level monitoring committee consisting of tribes and non-tribal representatives, local NGOs and political parties. The survey detected 3,432 acres of land and assigned it to 2,383 tribals. In many cases though, the tribals failed to get hold of the land due to litigation.

The dispute assumed severe proportions since the eruption of violence in Jillellagudem in May 1995. In Jillellagudem Manugopala and Koyanagarpalem villages, the tribes demanded that the non-tribals should vacate the land that rightfully belonged to them. To prevent precipitation of any violent incidents the pro-tribal NGO, SAKTI, and the non-tribals formed an association called Agency Rythu Sangham. They reached an agreement that everyone in the village would henceforth have access to the land records; detected lands should be transferred to tribes soon; and the tribes would no more forcibly take away land from the non-tribals who had proper title deeds and records. In April 1996, a group of non-tribal people of Manugopala village attacked the tribals; in retaliation, the tribals confiscated crops in Jeelugumilli and Polavaram mandals. This led to the situation becoming tense and the state government appointed a settlement officer to investigate the claims of the non-tribal farmers.

In February 1997, the non-tribals in P. Rajavaram village refused to co-operate in the investigation of land records and hatched a plot to get the leaders of SAKTI, P. Sivaramakrishna and his wife, arrested. The enraged tribals kidnapped the Jeelugumilli Mandal Revenue Officer (MRO) in protest. A non-tribal farmer in P. Rajavaram village succumbed to injuries caused by a poisoned arrow of the tribals in this action.

To resolve the land disputes in Scheduled Areas, the collector West Godavari district ordered a detailed survey. Under this survey, 2,151.08 acres of land was identified for assignment to tribals, which included 1,202.95 acres Assessed Waste Dry Land (AWD), 857.02 acres poramboke (village common land), 26.29 acres Land Transfer Regulation (LTR) and 64.82 acres Land Ceiling Case (LCC). It also regularized 873.25 acres of tribal-occupied land and the MROs were asked to assign the balance land to eligible tribals. The authorities took up the survey without involving SAKTI, which had collected the land records in the three mandah. SAKTI had been demanding access of tribal volunteers to peruse revenue records before launching the survey so that tribes could make their claims. Since the authorities could not provide records or documents to the tribal members, most of them boycotted the village committee and did not participate in the survey. Ms Payam Gangamma, a tribal woman who was an active member of SAKTI, and her three associates filed a writ petition in April 1997, complaining that tribes were not allowed to participate in the survey operations as ordered by the commissioner (tribal welfare). They alleged that officers were not showing the records to the tribals, not recording their objections and favouring the non-tribal landlords.

The activities of SAKTI were criticized from various fronts. The non-tribals argued that they had been settled in the area for generations and to make them vacate the land entirely was not justifiable. They blamed SAKTI for misleading the tribals to claim that all the land in the Agency Area belonged to them. Interestingly, the local CPI(M) also supported the charge, with the argument that by merely giving 20 per cent of each non-tribal farmer's land to the tribals, SAKTI would not be able to solve the problem at its roots. Some people blamed SAKTI for complicating issues instead of pressing for speedy redressal. The non-tribal farmers alleged that the SAKTI had more concern for earning foreign funds by creating much hype about the issue of tribal land.

CONCLUSION

Migration of non-tribal men from the plains areas to the tribal areas has changed the structure of land relations and led to antagonism between the tribals and non-tribals. The problem of land alienation is therefore not an accidental one; it is rather the effect of the slow moving process of deprivation. The disputes are nothing but the manifestation of the concerted forces of tribes to protest against the antagonistic class interests operating in these areas. The state formulated several land legislations and protective measures, which very often were full of loopholes, all of which naturally coincided with the interests of the advanced communities (the non-tribals).

The tribal people were alienated from their land, but the 'state' itself became 'alien' to the tribes with its anti-tribal activities. The two-faced nature of the state police, the appalling

police repression and indifference of the government officials are examples of this. Lack of proper survey and settlement, unsystematic land administration, mutually contradictory regulations, unsympathetic and anti-tribal bias of the officials, judicial delays, and cumbersome and complicated procedures are a few of the legal and administrative lacunae that point to the state's inefficiency.

The non-tribal settlers usurped the tribal land despite the tribals having protective legislation. Serious land disputes between the tribals and non-tribals for the past six years in the Agency Area of West Godavari district have made tribal life miserable. Like Gangayya (whose case is mentioned above), many tribal men found the state unresponsive to their needs and grievances. In fact, they were utterly unaware of the state's duty in protecting their rights. Disputes in Jeelugumilli mandal were left unresolved and the revenue officials added a lot of confusion to this controversy due to the faulty implementation of protective legislation. It is only recently that the tribes have started demanding their land and a consciousness has been created among them. The NGO, SAKTI, succeeded in empowering the illiterate and ignorant tribals. Its innovative methods of mobilization through folklore and games made the tribes aware of their property rights. Lack of awareness of protective legislation, which was the major hurdle in the tribal agitation for land ownership, was overcome through the support and encouragement of the NGO.

The case of Jeelugumilli is one in which the inefficient working of the state was brought to light by civil society. The tribes who were the aggrieved parties in this instance chose the NGO to ventilate the various discriminations perpetrated by the non-tribals through the agencies of the state and the government officials. The state and the NGO are at loggerheads in Jeelugumilli. This no-win situation can be resolved only when the state and civil society (NGO) work complementing each other, rather than as adversaries.

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NOTES

1. Interview with Non-Tribal Leader, Kedupuganti Raghavendra Rao, JangareddiGudem.
2. Note on Land Problems in Agency Areas of West Godavari District, Cabinet Sub Committee Meeting, Government of Andhra Pradesh. Social Welfare (T.W) Department, Hyderabad. Cabinet Sub Committee Meeting Report, Hyderabad, 1997, 16-22.
3. Interview with tribals in Panduvarigudem, Jeelugumilli Mandal, Konam Pedasattaiah and Oketi Penchalayya on 17 and 18 March 2001.
4. Interview with the non-tribal leader, Eedupuganti Ratna Manikyam, Jeelugumilli on 20 March 2001.
5. Interview with the non-tribal leader, K.I. Narasimha Rao.

6. Interview with MDO in Jeelugumilli.
7. The information regarding the NGO has been gathered through fieldwork, interviews with tribals (members and non-members of SAKTI), government officials, and the director and coordinator of SAKTI.

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