

## Irregularities galore in Nuapada land allotment schemes

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**Earlier I was paying Malgujari (land revenue) and now my son is paying it for a piece of land we are yet to see," said a landless farm labourer Mahadeb Bag (65) of Birighat village under Khariar tehsil of Nuapada district.**

"My joy knew no bounds when I was allotted a patta for a four-dismal homestead land by the Government some 20 years back but we are still to take the land under possession," added Mahadeb.

The Government is distributing both farm and homestead lands to the landless farmers and homeless. Mahadeb was one such fortunate person, who got a patta in 1992, but he has not been shown the land. Since then, he is running from pillar to post to get it but in vain.

"I requested the local revenue inspector several times but each time he assured me to show the land but did not. I went to the local Tehsildar but he also could not deliver me justice till date," said the old man showing the patta and some revenue receipts.

Mahadeb is a poor farm labourer, who is living in a thatched house in a small piece of land belonging to Masatram Sabar of the village. Mahadeb, a Schedule Cast, was a migrant labourer. Due to his old age now he is not going outside. He has a BPL card and both wife and husband are earning their livelihood by doing whatever work they are getting in the village. But due to the apathy of the revenue officials, the dream home of Mahadeb is shattering day by day.

" This is not an isolated case, there are hundreds of landless poor who have been given pattas but never seen their land or those who have even seen the land they are yet to get the possession as the land is in the possession of someone else," said Ajit Panda, a social activist.

"Due to this, the landless poor and the BPL card holders, who are entitled to the various schemes, including IAY and Mo Kudia are deprived of the benefits," Panda added.

An old couple Nakraman Hira and his wife Teer Hira of Birighat village have been given patta in 2002, but they have too not been shown the land. They have taken shelter in a Government plot near a forest land by building a mud house.

Tikchan Majhi, a tribal farmer of the same village, is now in panic and fighting to save a piece of land of 2.34 acres which he is holding for more than last 50 years. Tikchan and his family have inherited the same land from their forefathers, who had cleared the forest and made it cultivable and fertile. Tikchan and his brothers' families have 12 members in total who are earning their livelihood by toiling hard and growing both vegetables and crops. The family obtained the lease patta for the land just a few years before the last settlement. Now he has become one of the most successful tribal farmers in the locality, the department of horticulture as well as agriculture also recognized his work. His land is being irrigated by lift irrigation.

But what shocked this tribal farmer is when he heard that the same piece of land has been distributed among 42 homesteadless households of his village in 2002. He was shocked when the revenue inspector visited his land and said he had to vacate it as it had been distributed to others. Tikchan protested and showed the documents to the officials. The record of right of last settlement showed that the land had been under encroachment of Tikchan's family. On this basis, the land was allotted to Tikchan. But to the misfortune of Tikchan, the same land has been recorded again as "basti yogya" (suitable for homestead) during last settlement and redistributed among the homesteadless.

This is just an example of the apathy of the Government machinery. But the fellow poor villagers who have been distributed with pattas seem to be more sensible than the mindless administration. The fellow villagers have refused to

take their respective piece of lands into possession even after demarcation and identification by the revenue department.

"Tikchan is also a poor man like us and we have witnessed how the family has developed this land since decades and are earning their livelihood, How can we snatch that from him ?" said Chhelia Majhi, a poor tribal, who has been given a patta of four dismal land.

"We have written to the Government to give us another land instead of this one as we don't want to see one of our fellow brothers to be landless and jobless due to us. Why the Government has given the patta to us of a land which is already in a possession of a fellow villager?" asked Chhelia.

Now, Tikchan has hired an advocate to fight the case in a court for which he has already paid more than Rs10,000 for which he has to take some loan but still he is uncertain about the land he is cultivating as the land has been reverted to the Government Khata (records) at the time of last settlement and redistributed among 42 villagers on record. "When the Tehsildar said me if I did not obtain stay order from the court, he would be forced to use legal means to vacate me, I had no option left but to go to court," informed Tikchen.

When contacted the Tehsildar said there is no more suitable homestead land in the village to be allotted. So Tikchan must vacate the land for the benefit of the beneficiaries, he advised.

According to a recent survey of Odisha Gabeshana Chakra, 26 per cent families are land less out of its two lakhs families in Nuapada district. Around 20,000 persons have been distributed patta for the lands in last 30 years through different programmes and schemes. But, unfortunately, more than 50 per cent beneficiaries are struggling to have that land. The report further revealed lands of about 2,000 beneficiaries have been reverted to the Government records and redistributed to others.

"This is the fault of the revenue and settlement officials, for which the poor people are suffering. It is unfortunate that the officials do all these with malafide intentions without verifying the ground situation," said social activist Panda, who was a member the study team.

*(The writer is an Odisha based freelance journalist)*