

POST CONFLICT FACE OF
POVERTY AND SOCIETY:
UNDERSTANDING A
GANDHIAN INITIATIVE
AGAINST PAUPERIZATION
AND VIOLENCE IN
MUSHAHARI
(MUZAFFARPUR, BIHAR)

*Anand Kumar
Kanihar Kant*

Working Paper 42



Chronic Poverty
Research Centre



Indian Institute of
Public Administration

The CPRC-IIPA Working Paper Series disseminates the findings of work in progress to encourage exchange of ideas about poverty related issues. The findings are being placed in the public domain at the earliest with a view to generate wider debate.

The views expressed are those of the authors.

ISBN: 81-86641-54-8

For information about the working paper series, contact:

Professor Aasha Kapur Mehta

Professor of Economics

or

The Registrar/Deputy Registrar (Academic Support)

Indian Institute of Public Administration

Indraprastha Estate, Ring Road

New Delhi- 110002

Post Conflict Face of Poverty and Society: Understanding a Gandhian Initiative against Pauperization and Violence in Mushahari (Muzaffarpur, Bihar)

Anand Kumar
Kanihar Kant



Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi



Chronic Poverty Research Centre

2011

Anand Kumar is Professor of Sociology at Centre for the Study of Social Systems, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Kanihar Kant is a Ph.D. Scholar in Sociology at Centre for the Study of Social Systems, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Contents

	PAGE
1. Introduction	1
2. Contextualising the Mushahari experience	3
2.1 Background to Mushahari block	3
2.2 The conflict in Mushahari	8
3. Sarvodaya response to the Maoist violence: The Mushahari Plan	10
4. Strengths and limits of the Gram Swaraj approach	15
5. Poverty and society in Mushahari: The post-conflict scene	22
5.1 Caste and religion	24
5.2 Education scenario	25
5.3 Incidence of chronic poverty	26
5.4 Occupations and unemployment	32
5.5 Landholding in the region	36
5.6 Migration	41
5.7 Summing up	45
6. Towards conclusions	46
References	49
Annex	51

Abstract

This is an analytical narrative about post-conflict dynamics of poverty in a block of villages in north Bihar known as 'the Mushahari Project'. It is related with the socio-economic and political consequences of violent class conflict initiated by an underground group of Maoists, also known as the Naxalites, in Mushahari Block of Muzaffarpur district which led to a 'face to face' engagement between the Gandhian social workers and the Maoists. The Naxal challenge to the Gandhian workers about the relevance of the Sarvodaya work around Land issues led to radical reorientation of the Gandhian model and resulted into the making of an inclusive approach for rural reconstruction and poverty eradication. It involved social mobilization of the rural communities across caste and class lines as well as a realignment between the rural communities, the state and market forces for an effective and integrative process of socio-economic changes. The Gandhian response as conceptualized by the Sarvodaya leader Jayaprakash Narayan insisted on a) creating space for coming together of the peasants, artisans, landless labourers, political workers and the bureaucrats for a developmental agenda, b) moving away from class violence, and c) desisting from politics of revenge by moving towards a multifaceted programme of infrastructure development, agricultural growth, and income generating activities. The paper also addresses the successes and failures of the Gandhian/ Sarvodaya engagement about rural poverty and social conflict.

Key words: *Poverty, conflict, social violence, Naxalism, Maoism, Gandhian approach, holistic approach, participatory development, community power, under-development, agro-based rural development.*

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC) for valuable comments and suggestions on the first draft of this paper. We would like to thank Aasha Kapur Mehta and Andrew Shepherd for their kind cooperation in completing this work. We are also grateful to the participants of the 2005 CPRC-IIPA workshop in New Delhi for useful questions and comments. An earlier version of this paper was presented at a seminar of the Centre for the Study of Social Systems, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Fieldwork was carried out by Dr Haridwar, Shri Surendra Kumar and Shri Vishwanand. The final draft became possible with the help of Shri Manish Tiwari and Shri Pradeep Kumar Jena. We also received valuable help from Shri Bharat Kumar.