

MANAGING THE COMMON LAND FOR LANDLESS DESTITUTE - AN EMPIRICAL STUDY**Mohd Sadiq Salman¹ and Abdul Munir²**

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Abstract: *Land resource is the source of livelihood of majority of Indian population. The landless earn their livelihood through informal employments and by utilizing Common Property Resources (CPR), especially the Common Land Resources (CLR) for various economic gains. Majority of landless people work as agricultural labour, labourer or get temporary employment through NAREGA. They also utilize CLR to supplement their income. The present study is an attempt to analyze the distribution and temporal change in the CLR of Aligarh district since last decade. The study further investigates the dependency of landless people over the CLR. The study reveals that there is a decline in the CLR since last decade. The landless people are engaged in various informal economic activities during different parts of the year. The study reveals that 67 per cent of the landless households utilize CLR for economic gains. The maximum use of CLR was undertaken by those working as agricultural labourer, getting employment through NAREGA or practicing livestock husbandry. The most preferred mode of utilization was grazing and agro-forestry. The beneficiaries obtain up to 33 per cent of their annual income from CLR. Thus, CLR were found to be significant in the sustenance of the landless household and should be managed properly.*

Key words: Landless, Sustenance, Common Land Resources (CLR), Grazing

Introduction

India is an agricultural country where a major part of its population lives in rural areas with agriculture as the main economic activity. Thus the livelihood of the people is highly dependent upon their land resource. The landless earn their livelihood through informal employment and supplement their income from other sources. Due to continuous fragmentation of land over the past generations the land holders have very small pieces of land and very few have medium or large size of land holdings. Thus, the landless, marginal and small farmers generally constitute more than half of the total households in a village. Thus the marginal and small farmers having insignificant land rely upon the "Common Property Resources" (CPR) for their livelihood. The Common Land Resources (CLR) is the sub-category of CPR. The term "Common Land Resources" (CLR) is used to refer to property owned and defended by a community of resource users, to property owned by no one, and to property owned by a government to which the people have "common access" (Jodha N.S., 1986). It includes village

pastures, common grazing grounds, bush lands, threshing grounds, waste dumping places uncultivable fields, waste lands and rangelands. The CLR in Indian Context have been specified into five categories of land use/land cover viz. forest, pasture and grazing land, cultivable wasteland, barren and uncultivated land and fallow lands other than current fallow (Salman M.S. and Munir A. ,2013). The CLR are common to all and no one has any exclusive right upon. The forests provide timber, the pastures support the livestock of the farmers and the uncultivated and barren lands are utilize for construction of houses, poultry farms, animal husbandry and other uses.

The CLR in a village include the land administered by the village *panchayat* or community including the land which lies within the formal boundary of the village (Jodha, N.S., 1990, Arnold, J.E.M. and Stewart, W.C., 1991). Sometimes, there is a well-defined category of land which referred to as *panchayat* grazing/pasture land and is known as *gauchar*, *gochar*, *gairan* and *gomol* in different agro climatic regions. Apart from that generally, there are some demarcated areas in every village for various purposes and are accessible to all the villagers. They are the areas allotted for processing of agricultural produce, storing of grains, other agricultural produce, firewood, use for other household enterprise, for recreational or religious purposes and to organize village fairs and marriages. Sometimes a portion of the land is allotted for periodic markets also. These all are constituents of CLR. The continuous fragmentation of the land and increasing cost of production has rendered small pieces of land to become uneconomical (Mohammad N., 2001). The increasing population has resulted in immense pressure on the land resources of the country, specially the CLR (Jodha, N.S., 1985).The CLR are a source of livelihood for the rural poor (Thomson et al. 2001). Thus, landless people, marginal and small farmers generally utilize the CLR for various economic gains (Munir, et al., 2008) and are one of the important sources of livelihood to the poor households (Salman M.S., 2015).

The landless people are engaged in different economic activities for their sustenance. The major occupation of the landless people is shop keeping, business, agricultural labour, rickshaw puling, labour and other petty jobs. Due to low employment opportunities, high competition amongst them, increasing food prices and low remuneration of their work have made them the most deprived section of the villages. The present study aims to understand the role of CLR upon the sustenance of the landless households

Aims and Objectives

The present study has been undertaken with the following aims and objectives:

- 1) To analyze the spatial distribution and temporal change of CLR in study area.
- 2) To analyze the role of CLR in income of landless households.

Database and Methodology

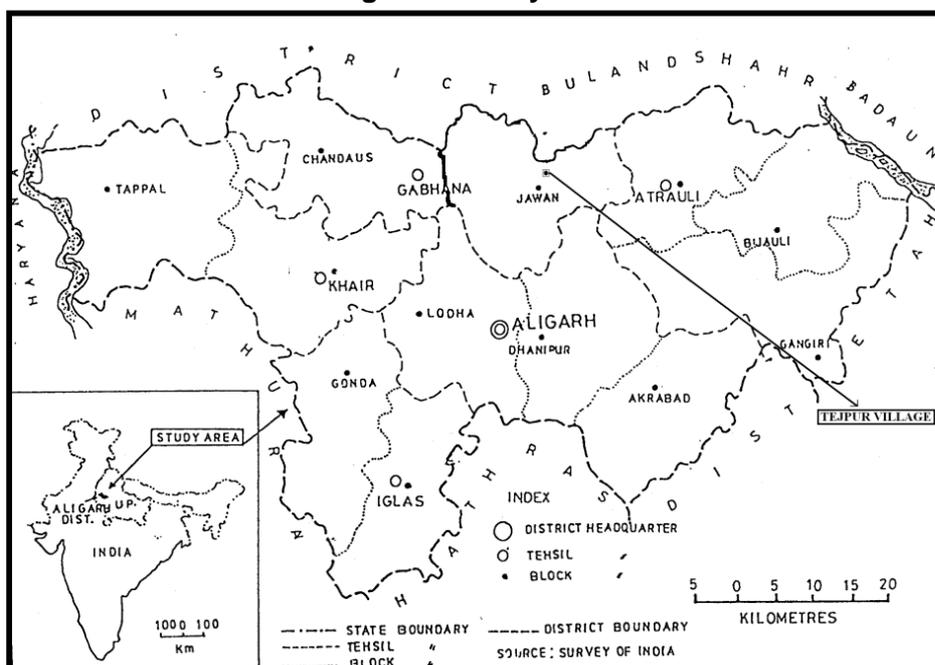
The study is based on the primary data collected through field survey and secondary data collected from various government sources. A village having accessibility and population between 1000 to 3000 persons was selected for intensive field survey. Individual observations of researcher were also considered. The study was undertaken in a sampled village Tejpur in Jawan block of Aligarh district. All the landless households were surveyed and the village

pradhan (political head) was also interviewed. A questionnaire was used to generate the data regarding social structure, occupation, income, income through CLR and utilization modes of CLR. The secondary data was obtained from different government departments. The primary data was thoroughly checked processed using simple statistical techniques and finally represented using suitable maps, tables and diagrams.

Study Area

District Aligarh was selected for the present study. It lies between latitudes 27°33' N to 28° 11'N and between 77°29' E to 78°38'E longitudes in the central part of Ganga-Yamuna *doab* (interfluvies) in western Uttar Pradesh. The district has a total area of 3696.94 Km² with a population of 36, 73,849 persons (Census 2011). From administrative point of view, the district is divided into 5 *tehsils* (sub division) and 12 developmental blocks which include 1211 villages. The Ganga, the Yamuna and the Kali are important rivers of the district. River Ganga and Yamuna form the eastern and western boundaries of the district for small distance. The soil of the district is alluvial in nature and mostly loamy in texture.

Figure 1: Study Area



Sampled Village: Tejpur

The study was conducted in Tejpur village in Jawan Sikandarpur Block of Aligarh district. It lies at a distance of 19 kms. from Aligarh city and 2 kms. away from the Jawan Sikandarpur town on Anupshahr Road. The total households in the villages were reported to be 300 having a total population of 2,476 persons (fig.1). The main occupation of the people is agriculture and very few are engaged in non agricultural activities. The total landholders in the village are 190 and the rest 110 are landless households. The main communities living in the village are Hindus and Muslims. The various castes of Hindus present in the villages are Lodha Rajput, Brahman, Kushwaha and Harijan.

Land Use Pattern and Spatio-temporal Analysis of CLR in Aligarh District

The major occupation of the people at Aligarh is agriculture thus; most of the area of the district is under agricultural use. The net sown area was found to be 81.89 per cent during 2015. The next major part of the geographical area of the district after agriculture is devoted for land put to non agricultural uses (11.05 per cent). The share of forests in the district is only 0.69 percent and the share of barren and cultivable wasteland and fallow lands is 1.59, 1.89 and 2.34 per cent respectively. The land under pastures and miscellaneous uses and under groves is 0.47 and 0.09 percent respectively. The variation in the land use pattern was seen at block level also.

Table 1 Block wise Temporal Change in Common Land Resources, Aligarh District (1995-2015)

Name of Block	Common Land Resources (in Hectares)			Change in CLR (1995-2015)	
	1995	2005	2015	Area	Percentage
Akrabad	5520 (18.26)	2228 (8.55)	2112 (8.18)	-3408	-61.74
Bijouli	3450 (13.56)	2399 (9.40)	1499 (6.02)	-1951	-56.55
Jawan Sikandarpur	5324 (17.17)	3254 (10.71)	2431 (7.69)	-2893	-54.34
Chandaus	3866 (11.71)	1953 (5.90)	1881 (5.64)	-1985	-51.35
Atrouli	1928 (6.71)	727 (2.52)	1045 (3.83)	-883	-45.80
Dhanipur	4476 (16.15)	2405 (8.22)	2566 (8.53)	-1910	-42.67
Khair	2539 (7.65)	1685 (5.08)	1516 (4.74)	-1023	-40.29
Gangiri	2957 (8.44)	1679 (4.76)	1776 (5.11)	-1181	-39.94
Iglas	1089 (4.18)	678 (2.63)	770 (3.02)	-319	-29.29
Tappal	2577 (6.76)	2382 (6.24)	1962 (5.25)	-615	-23.86
Gonda	1017 (3.52)	1264 (4.33)	957 (3.28)	-60	-5.90
Lodha	2822 (10.52)	1707 (6.32)	2658 (9.71)	-164	-5.81
Total Rural	37565 (10.31)	22361 (6.18)	21173 (5.89)	-16392	-43.64
Total Urban	880 (15.18)	1337 (17.09)	1370 (11.34)	490	55.68
Total District	38445 (10.39)	24118 (6.52)	22543 (6.07)	-15902	-41.36

Source: Statistical booklet of Aligarh district (1995, 2005 and 2015)

Figures in brackets show percentage to total reported area

The total are under the CLR is calculated to be 6.07 per cent of the total geographical area of the district. It includes forests, pastures and grazing lands, cultivable wasteland, barren and uncultivated lands and fallow lands other than current fallow. The CLR of Aligarh district the largest share is occupied by wasteland (31.11 per cent) followed by barren land (26.19 per

cent) and other fallow land (23.59 per cent) as shown in figure 2. The CLR have shown a declining trend over the last decade. The CLR in Aligarh district have declined by 15,902 hectares i.e. from 38,445 hectares (10.39 per cent in) 1995 to 24,118 hectares (6.52 per cent) in 2005 to 22543 (6.07 per cent) in 2015. Thus, total decline in CLR was found to be -41.36 per cent. The maximum decline is seen in the blocks of Akrabad (-61.74 per cent) followed by Bijauli (-56.55 per cent) and Jawan Sikandarpur (-54.34 per cent). All the blocks have shown a decline in CLR. The Lodha block has shown least decline by -5.81 per cent. The table 1 shows the block wise change of CLR in Aligarh district during last two decades.

Employment Structure of Landless Households

Most of the landless people in Tejpur village were found to earn their livelihood by working as agricultural labourer but many other types of employment/occupations are also practiced by them. Most of them earn their livelihood from two or three types of activities during different periods of the year.

Table 2 Major Occupations of Landless Households in Tejpur Village (2014)

#	Landless Households			
	Occupation/Employment	Number	Percentage to Total	Avg. Annual Income (in Rs.)
1	Migrated to other places	12	10.90	75000
2	Shop Keeping	8	7.27	49680
3	Rickshaw Pulling	17	15.45	48000
4	Livestock Husbandry	23	20.90	46500
5	Business	11	10.00	45000
6	Private Jobs	4	3.63	30000
7	Labour	56	50.90	23232
8	Agricultural Labour	47	42.72	21600
9	NAREGA	39	35.45	14040
10	Other Occupation	13	11.81	13980

Source: Field survey (2014)

The main reason for this switch over between different occupations is the non availability of permanent employment throughout the year. The easiest available employment opportunity is to work as agricultural labourer but it is seasonal and remuneration is also less. Thus, a large number of landless people were found to be seasonal migrants as and when they get any better opportunity. They generally migrate to the nearby town of Aligarh. Most of the households were found to be engaged in two three types of employment activities. A few of them have migrated to Mumbai, Ludhiana and New Delhi for better livelihood. The table 2 shows the distribution of landless households into the major occupation/employment and their average annual income.

Cost-Benefit Analysis of Common Land Resources Utilization:

The field survey of 110 household revealed that 70 per cent households (77 households) are using CLR in some form. The maximum users of CLR are the landless people followed by marginal and small farmers. They were found to utilize the CLR in various ways for economic gains. Table 3 gives the landholding wise share of the respondents using the CLR under various modes. The respondents were found to utilize CLR's for more than one purpose also. Among the total 77 households utilizing CLR the most common mode of utilization was

grazing (93.51 per cent) followed by social forestry (79.22 per cent), agro-forestry (72.73 per cent), other uses (59.74 per cent) and crop cultivation (41.56 per cent). The other uses of CLR included the use of CLR as manure pits, cemeteries, storage grounds, playgrounds, temporary construction of sheds for animals, storage of fodder and agricultural produce etc.

Table 3 Annual Cost-Benefit Analysis of Common Land Resources Utilization

S. No.	Mode of Utilization	Average Input (Rs./Hect.)	Average Output (Rs./Hect.)	Average Income (Rs./Hect.)	Benefit (in %)
1	Agro-forestry	2500	6930	4430	177.20
2	Crop Cultivation	7500	18990	11490	153.23
3	Grazing/Pasture	0	3100	3100	100.00
4	Other Uses	0	2200	2200	100.00

Source: Field survey (2014)

The cost-benefit analysis for the CLR was undertaken considering the per hectare input and output for different modes of utilization. Therefore, the percentages of profit from various utilization modes of the CLR were also variable (table 3). The most profitable use of CLR was agro-forestry followed by crop cultivation, grazing/pastures and other purposes. The people utilizing CLR get benefit from 100 per cent to 177.20 per cent annually. This leads to competition among the resource users. Those who can invest a little amount prefer agro-forestry and crop cultivation while the poorer households prefer to use CLR for grazing their animals or for other personal purposes because it requires no input costs.

CLR Share in Total Income:

The income generated from the use of CLR is additional income over the income from different source. In general, the landless households engaged in business, shop keeping, private job and migrated to other places do not use CLR. The table 4 gives the share of CLR income of the landless households. It is seen that in general the landless households obtain an average 21.53 per cent of their total annual income through CLR. The maximum share of CLR in total income for people employed through NAREGA was maximum (32.95 per cent) followed by livestock husbandry (26.00 per cent), other occupation (22.33 per cent) agricultural labour (22.11 per cent), labour (19.52 per cent) and 12.57 per cent for people involved in rickshaw pulling.

Table 4 Occupation wise Share of CLR Income in Total Average Annual Income of Landless households Using CLR

S. No.	Category	Income of Landless Households (In Rs.)			Share of CLR Income (In %)
		Main Occupation	CLR	Total	
1	NAREGA	14040	6900	20940	32.95
2	Livestock Husbandry	46500	16340	62840	26.00
3	Other Occupation	13980	4020	18000	22.33
4	Agricultural Labour	21600	6130	27730	22.11
5	Labour	23232	5635	28867	19.52
6	Rickshaw Pulling	48000	6900	54900	12.57
Average Landless Households		27892	7654.167	35546.17	21.53

Source: Field survey (2014)

CLR Utilization and Emerging Problems

The share of landless households using CLR is 70 per cent. Among these households the share of income from CLR amounts to an average of 21.53 per cent in total income. The landless people are mainly using the CLR's for grazing their animals. The users are also engaged in agro-forestry, crop cultivation and other uses. They generally keep cattle and buffaloes for domestic and business purposes. The landless people are sometimes even dependent upon the drought animals for their livelihood and utilize the CLR for grazing and pasture land to feed them. This also has an economic significance for the landless people. The present study indicates that CLR have become an integral part of their livelihood due to their dependency upon CLR for feeding their animals. The milk obtained from them is one of the major sources of their daily income. They also use the cow dung as fuel. The declining quality and size of CLR makes the landless people prone to loss of their livelihood.

The study reveals that there are many problems in managing these resources. The common land resources have an open access to all. This has led to the problem of its preservation and management. There are no laws for those causing degradation or misuse of these resources. Until the people are not punished for their undue activities and rampant use there is a meager chance for the betterment of these resources. The people are unaware of the environmental problems caused to degradation and depletion of the soil. They are not well aware of the processes and factors which lead to loss of land resource. The people do not participate in the programs of land conservation. The lack of interest of the local people has an adverse effect on many government schemes of land reclamation, afforestation and soil conservation. The common land resources are not given to the needy people and often encroached upon by the wealthy and large farmers who do not care for its proper management. There are many political issues related to the allotment, management and control of the common land resources. Everyone who has a political influence tries to get the benefit out of these common resources. Thus the proper management is lacking.

The CLR are declining. The decline in forest and grazing/pastures is much larger than other categories of CLR. The landless people obtain their livelihood from utilizing them. With the increasing population there is a threat to their degradation and extinction. Thus there is an immediate need to save them from degradation. The problems faced in managing CLR are open access, ignorance, lack of suitable laws, social injustice and political problems. Therefore proper survey, suitable laws, protection from encroachment and allocation of CLR to poor and landless people is need of the time.

Considering the present situation of the need of preservation and management of CLR and the problems associated with it there is an emergent need for thorough survey of the CLR by the government and formulation of laws regarding their protection. There is need to educate people regarding conservation of the resources and environment with the help of mass media. The local administration should be vigilant to check the encroachment upon CLR. This can be easily done by involving the local people for protection of forests and pastures by giving some incentives. The poor and landless people should be allotted these lands for small period of time. Sustainable use of CLR through agro-forestry should be encouraged to protect and conserve the CLR in the study area. The role of common land resources in the sustenance of

the landless people is quiet evident. Thus, there is a need to manage these resources for providing a better livelihood and economic benefit for its users. The management of these resources will not only lead to social change and social harmony but also lead to sustainable development.

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