

**DEVELOPMENT AND ITS CRITIQUE :
A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF
NARMADA BACHAO ANDOLAN**

*Dissertation submmitted to Jawaharlal Nehru
University in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the Degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY*

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1995**



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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation titled 'DEVELOPMENT AND ITS CRITIQUE : A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF NARMADA BACHAO ANDOLAN' submitted by Srijata Sanyal in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY, has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university and is her original work.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation and consideration.

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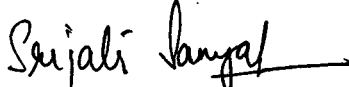
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The space allotted seems too small to express my gratitude to all those who have helped me to write this dissertation. To Dr. Avijit Pathak my supervisor, I owe my ability to express myself. Without his patient and creative support I would not have been able to write this Dissertation. To Dr. Pathak, I owe my sensitivity as a student.

I thank the faculty of the center for the study of Social Systems for helping me grow as a student and an Individual.

I would also like to thank my friends, especially Papiya, Soutrik, Ruchi, Advaita, Avantika and Nalini for going out of their way to help me during the frenetic days of typing the dissertation I would like to thank Jasjit, Naina and Kavita for being supportive when I needed them most. Bhanuda and Sreeladi are specially thanked for their valuable insight. Finally I would like to thank my mother and Bijit. Without their unflinching support I would not have been able to write my M.Phil dissertation, without whose help I would not have been who I am.

21st July, 1995


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INTRODUCTION

LOCATING THE PROBLEM IN THE CONTEXT OF DEVELOPMENT AND ITS CRITIQUE

In this dissertation our aim is to attempt a sociological study of Narmada Bachao Andolan. Narmada Bachao Andolan has perhaps for the first time drawn our attention to the 'other' side of development - the one that expresses doubts about the project of development. It is with this protest movement that one realises that perhaps an indepth study of the development experience in India is required. At one hand we have the official project planners touting the Narmada project as one of the greatest development projects and we have the anti-dam lobby decrying it as a planned environmental disaster. There are two diametrically opposite trends - one upholding development as a model and the other reiterating the pathologies of development. In order to understand the development experience in India on

has to skim through the meaning of development and the critique of development.

Given below is a brief note about the definition of development and its emerging critique.

I.I PERCEPTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT

Views of development are inevitably linked to some idea of progress, which involves a change or an evolution from one state to the other both of which may be real or idealised.¹ In economic literature development is unilinear movement towards a condition of maximum industrialisation, modern technology, highest material standards of living. Philosophically 'development' implies 'progress', which itself implies evolution towards some ultimate good.² Good development modes tend to be measured in terms of 'tidiness' as much as explanatory value and the bulk of

¹ David Harrison : 'The Sociology of Modernisation and Development', Heritage Publishers, New Delhi, 1989, p.153.

² Ernest Gellner : 'Thought and Change', Weidenfield and Nicholson, London, 1964, p.1-81

the theories of development rest on an evolutionary assumption that equates progressive development with material or/and technological advancement.³ Non development is described as some kind of impediment to the normal if inevitable process of development.

The first premise of development is that development follows a unilinear and progressive sequence. Any non-development is unnatural and carries its own cures - material aid, improving organisational skills etc. Alternatively it has been said that opportunities to develop, are there but not grasped due to inappropriate traditions or institutions or because they themselves are inappropriate and threaten the traditional system. The defining features of this class of theory is that development is progressive and good and it is normal if not inevitable.

³ Sandra Wallman (ed): Perceptions of Development, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977, p.3

The second class of theoretical perception states that there are limits to economic growth or goodness of growth and development should not become inevitable and infinite. This perception however does not give any alternative to the 'inevitable development' and as such does not take into account the possibility of redistribution to counter overgrowth and non development and of other inputs into the ecological or socio ecological system.

The third category that seeks to explain development is contemporary with the second. Here the effects of technical ecological factors are minimised and emphasis put on political economic relations. According to this theory the international system itself can be held responsible for non development. The development of some nations are responsible for the non development of other nations, as the resources necessary for development are kept away from the weaker nations by the stronger ones. In some cases this process of unequal growth is

automatic, or at least not 'directly intended' and, in some others it is conspired. ⁴

Clearly there is no agreed definition of development, it is a normative term which at various times have meant economic growth, structural economic change, autonomous industrialisation, capitalism and socialism, self actualisation and individual, national, regional and cultural self reliance.

Though most of the definitions regarding development have their sources in economics. Sociology over the past four decades has tried to evolve its own perspective of Development. In the years following second world war the concept of modernisation was accepted by the social scientists, planners and politicians in the west and in the third

⁴ Samir Amin, 'Neo Colonialism in West Africa', Penguin Books, 1968, p.257-274.

world. The unit of analysis was usually the nation state and the nations of the third world were placed on an evolutionary scale at the apex of which were the modern Western societies. These provided for a development pattern which, if followed in the third world would allow the developing societies to catch up with the West which was prepared to "assist by active diffusion of the ingredients necessary for development - especially modern technology, expertise, capital.

Within the Third world the most active agents in the process of modernisation were considered to be western educated elites whose appointed task was to 'wean' their people from tradition and bring them to the twentieth century'.⁵ Neo evolutionism, structural functionalism and diffusionism were the analytical frame work applied 'uncritically' to the third world.

⁵ David Harrison, *The Sociology of Modernisation and Development*, Heritage Publishers, New Delhi, 1989, p.149

I. II THE EMERGING CRITIQUE OF DEVELOPMENT

The theories of development like all other theories contained the seed of its critique. Development assured success, it seemed to indicate that its prescriptions were the panacea for all ills. It may be remembered that all analysis stemmed from theorists who belonged to the developed world and, as a result the perspectives of development were Euro - centric. They arose from a body of thought firmly located in the European experience and they were largely developed by theorists, intellectuals who had been socialised into the European tradition. Both the under development theory which talked of non - development as a result of the inequality of resource distribution and the modernisation theory which talked of the backwardness of the people as impediments to development belonged to the context of the first world.

Development was seen as an inevitable process - a process by which some will get more developed and

the others less so. In all the theories of development embodied a 'before' and 'after'. The third world was seen as the 'backward' or traditional societies on their way to becoming like the first world. In none of the development theories were the people to be developed taken into account. When they were taken into account it was often because they were opposed to the grand design of the social scientist. They were then termed as 'falsely conscious', 'politically unaware' or 'traditional'. The theories never had the time to concentrate on the people as their focus was the macro issues. Finally, development theories of all kinds have not been able to ascribe a central position to the gender relations. The lower class was ignored but the women's voices have been subdued. None of the theories have seen women as active participants of history.

The essentially normative character of development contains its critique. There are two distinct trends of development - a progression towards

a the better meetings of basic needs and the other a
progression towards a greater autonomy and
authenticity of self and nationhood. "The two trends
are mutually corrective deals not the way development
is but the way it should be."⁶⁶ This is true in case of
the third world, it has become an unwitting partner to
the politics of development - the politics which is the
manifestation of the aggressive attitude of the
developed nations.

The Critique of Development can be broadly
categorised into two areas - one is the question of
ethics and responsibility, and the other a feminist
critique of the logic of development.

I. IIa) Development and Ethical Questions :

The main criticism that development has to face
is that it has remained a narrow practice - there is a

⁶⁶John, L, Seitz, 'The Politics of Development', Basil
Blackwell, London, 1988, p.180

lack of any kind of ethic in the development projects.

The determination to make development a success story has led to the virtual marginalisation of the people for whom development is aimed. Development has taken on the stance of an inhuman exercise - a technical exercise where humanity plays no role.

There is a tendency among the developmentalists to ignore the human factor as far as possible. One is reminded of a factory where there are ingredients that would make a machine and, all the mechanics have to do, is to assemble the parts together. The logic of Development is almost the same, there is a recipe for success - development through means that had worked in situations particular to the first world become perscriptions that can be handed out to the whole world irrespective of individual situations. The people who had been living in the to - be developed areas are not considered as decisive factors who may have their own likes and dislikes based on their own culture and reasoning. The logic of

development feels that it is the area that has to be 'developed' and the people will accordingly follow suit.

But it should be remembered that development is not an isolated process but should also include human concerns and human organizations.

P.L.Berger talks about a non dogmatic approach to the problems of development, he has pointed to the need to consider the definitions of situations provided by those who are targets of development policy "not because their definition of situations are any better but they are entitled to respect, cognitive as well as moral. Also because policies that ignore the indigenous are prone to fail".⁷

For the last four decade there has been various development projects in the third world, they have been termed as 'development' as, their aim was to make the traditional societies at par with the

⁷ P.L.Berger, 'Pyramids of Sacrifice: Political Ethics and Change', Penguin Books, London, 1974.

developed nations. As a result there has been changes in the 'to - be developed nations, but can any change be termed development?

According to R.C.Tripathi there should be two criteria for considering any change development:⁸

a) A change in a condition should make the system more open than it was earlier before it could be considered development. The task is to identify a set of values in a given society which when fostered will lead the system towards more openness and make it more receptive.

b) A change in condition will qualify to be called development to the extent that it leads to a greater embeddedness of the members in a given system. In

⁸R.C.Tripathi, 'Aligning Development to Values in India', in Durganand Sinha & Henry S.R.Kao ed., 'Social Values and development : Asian Perspective', Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1988, p.327 -328.

other words it also leads to various subsystems to be integrated with the system.

We notice a curious lack of responsibility in the developed countries regarding the development of their underdeveloped counterparts. It is as if implementing project plans conceived in the west is enough to guarantee success in the third world.

Disregarding the fact that the world that is to be developed is different from the ones that have been developed. The idea is that technology, the new saviour will make the plans work even if the indigenous people feel oppressed by the development.

In Rajni Kothari's article⁹ we find a critique of this technological development and an exploration of an alternative mode of development. Kothari talks of a

⁹ Rajni Kothari, 'Environment, Technology and Ethics' in Engel and Engel ed., 'Ethics of Environment and Development: Global Challenge International Response', Belhaven Press, London, 1990, p.28

sustainable mode of development rooted in ethics and
not in monetary policies.

Kothari's plea for a sustainable mode of development is also a plea for a non colonized third world. He says that the present situations are governed by decisions taken in the metropolitan centres of the world, the decisions which in turn affect the people in far off places. " This calls for an alternative where there would be a different kind of consciousness - one which takes a total view of existence, empathizes with the weak, the unborn, the inarticulate, and intervenes in the legislative and administrative processes in the world without however degenerating into a brahminical class that arrogates to itself all knowledge and wisdom".¹⁰

There is therefore a need for localised intervention to create a network of sustainable

¹⁰ Op.Cit, p.29

development. There is the need for the intervention of humanity - as autonomous units and not as order bearers of 'development'. The critique of development thus introduces the question of identity of the people involved in the process of development. Their diverse entities should not be submerged into one but shall, remain free - the freedom of choice will be there and there would be due considerations for the local conditions.

There should be a shift from money based development to sustainable development - an ethical shift. A shift in values such that nature is valued in itself and not merely for how it can be converted into resources and commodities to increase economic growth.

✓ True development as Kothari would say should therefore be an amalgam of the dialogue between tradition and modernity. ✓ But as development is pursued this dialogic spirit is not seen anywhere. At

one extreme is science based values and at the other end are the values expressed in the folklores and more pejoratively superstition.

There is the inevitable clash. Modern science takes into granted the fact that it needs no improvement and that it is right. But modern Western science may need altering. "It may have a loaded agenda, may focus on some aspects of experience and obscure or distort others. Science maybe infected by 'LUBRIS'- by the desire for power and domination, instead it should act as a praxis that looks to satisfy the human thirst for knowledge".¹¹

Science has discovered the community of life on earth not known before - through microscopes, explorations around the globe etc. But the same science which has theoretically and descriptively

¹¹ Holmes Rolston III, 'Science based versus traditional ethics' in Engel & Engel ed., 'Ethic of Environment and Development:Global Challenge International response', Belhaven Press, London, 1990, p. 70.

revealed the extent of biological diversity has practically and prescriptively often pronounced nature to be valueless except in so far as it can be used instrumentally as a human resource. "The greatest of science based values is exploitative resource use. This value is based on applied technological science and on a theoretical evolutionary eco - science that seems to conclude that nature is intrinsically valueless"¹². On the other hand though the traditional cultures don't have ecology as a science, they have what ecology essentially means : a logic of home. They have world views in which they are meaningful residues in a meaningful world.

The developmental view that triggered off the greatest losses of biological diversity did not arise from traditional cultural values - either primitive or classical. These losses began when science based models were exported to the traditional societies. The traditional world views were not acceptable to modern

¹² Op.cit, p.72

science. There was a missionary zeal by which the developmentalists sought to erase the signs of tradition and impose a foreign culture on the indigenous people.

✓ On the threshold of the 21st century, one requires to stand and think whether development has really occurred at all in the third world. What kind of development would it be if it has not allowed a second opinion to come to light? There has to be a dialogue between tradition and science, which would then lead to the using of traditional values as a catalyst for better life - not an ethnocentric one where a model of the First world is the blueprint of success. But a life where everyone has the space to have their say. ✓

I.IIb) A Feminist Critique Of Development:

"They tell us to farm the land - How dare you ask us to
cut our mother's hair,
They tell us to mine the land - How dare you ask us to
level our mother's breasts,

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There are certain factors that make this study a tentative one. There is a paucity of written literature on this subject, the few that are there are technical analyses of cost and benefit of the project. There are publicity journals that implore one to be a party to a glorious developed future, and there are protest pamphlets that urge us to look beyond the glamour of development.

Before embarking on the journey it will be helpful if we give a brief outline of our journey.

I.V CONTENTS

Introduction: LOCATING PROBLEMS IN THE CONTEXT OF DEVELOPMENT AND ITS CRITIQUE

In the introduction a brief discussion on development has been undertaken as a basis for the journey. Along with the conventional definitions of development, the critique has also been discussed.

The critique has been categorized into two broad strands - one dealing with the question of ethics in development and the other dealing with the feminist critique of development. The purpose of the dissertation being an attempt to study the sociological significance of the Narmada Bachao Andolan in the light of the critique of development.

Chapter One - THE NARMADA PROJECT : THE OFFICIAL ROAD TO DEVELOPMENT

In this chapter there is a description of the Narmada Project. It contains the history of the Narmada project, the basic outline of the project, and the official reasons of the project.

Chapter Two - ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF SEEING THE PROJECT : BEGINNING OF THE ANDOLAN

In this chapter we attempt to see the other side of the story where the project is guilty of causing great harm to the environment and the people in the project area. This chapter highlights the total difference between the two 'stories', and the fact that

with the Narmada Bachao Andolan, for the first time there began a national concern about environment.

Chapter Three - ANTI - DEVELOPMENTALISM : A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE NARMADA BACHAO ANDOLAN AND THE TEHRI STRUGGLE

This chapter attempts to study a similar history of protest in the Tehri Kumaun region. The purpose is to make a comparative analysis of the two movements and bring out the counter view of development that has been articulated in the two movements.

The purpose would also be to analyse the critique of development that has evolved in course of the movements, viz. the question of development and Ecology, The place of the tribals /marginals in the development projects, the place of women in development projects and, the necessity of a vanguard in these movements.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION: IN SEARCH OF
ALTERNATIVES**

This chapter summarises the points that have come up in the different chapters. After the two movements have been analysed there are a few points that come up, for instance the contribution of the Narmada Bachao Andolan in initiating a debate that seeks to offer an alternative to the existing mode of development viz. a new form of existence - the subsistence mode, a indigenous body of knowledge as opposed to the Western Scientific Knowledge and, a different kind of politics that speaks of the choice of the people - a politics of choice.

The issues will be dealt in a detailed manner in the following chapters.

CHAPTER ONE

THE NARMADA PROJECT: THE OFFICIAL ROAD TO DEVELOPMENT

2.1 A HISTORY OF THE NARMADA PROJECT

At the time the Narmada project was conceptualised India was about to enter a new era - the era of freedom. After 200 years of colonial regime India would be free. At the same time the rest of the world was well on their way to being modernised. India had nothing that could be called its own. There was perhaps no other alternative but to follow the well trodden path of the western big brothers to get developed. The path to development seemed a viable way to stabilise the tattered economy. There was an urgent need to be self sufficient as there was a vast population who had to be fed. Though Agriculture was the main occupation, still there was not enough to make India self sufficient. The need of the hour became intensive agriculture, heavy industries. As

industries had a fairly long gestation period, therefore agriculture became a mainstay for the economy for India at that stage. Harnessing of rivers for irrigation purposes as well as hydel power became a necessity. Damming rivers was already practised in the West and the other third world countries started following the method on an extensive scale. The West was fully prepared to give aid for development projects, India had no other option.

It was on the eve of independence in 1946 that the government of the Central Provinces and Berar requested the Central waterways, Irrigation and Navigation commission to investigate the potential of the Narmada River for multi purpose basin wide development. The reason being the recurring droughts, on an average there is a severe drought every three years. The area already being arid (due the proximity of Rajasthan and the presence of Little Rann of Kachch and the rann of Kachch) ¹

¹ P.A. Raj, 'Facts - Sardar Sarovar', SSNNL, GandhiNagar, Gujarat, 1992, p.2.

Several storage sites were identified and seven projects including the Bharuch weir scheme were recommended for further investigation. In 1948 the Government appointed the Khosla committee to prioritise this proposal, which it did; naming the Tawa Bargi Punasa and Bharuch for preparation of project reports. Meanwhile a parallel study of the hydro electric potential of the Narmada system identified 16 sites within a potential of 1300 MW (Mega Watt).² The Central Power and Water Commission completed a project report on the Bharuch weir project in 1956. The Khosla committee selected Gora a site for a weir with a pond level of 160 feet to irrigate 0.44 mha (million hectare area) in the Bombay presidency. Shortly after a more favourable site was about 3 km upstream of Gora was identified at Navagam village and the project was reformulated to raise the dam in a second stage from a full reservoir level (FRL) of 160 feet to FRL 300 feet with a high level

²B.G.Verghese, 'Winning the Future: From Bhakra to Narmada, Tehri, Rajasthan Canal', Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1994, p.120.

Level (FRL) of 160 feet to FRL 300 feet with a high level canal to command the additional areas. In 1959 however a panel of consultants proposed the raising the level of the dam to FRL 320 feet so as to be able to carry water towards the Rann of Kutchch.

The project as accepted by the Planning Commission on 5th of August, 1960 was known as the Broach irrigation project³. It envisaged construction of a low dam at Navagam on Narmada in Gujarat territory corresponding to a FRL 320 feet. A low level canal on the right bank was planned to irrigate 3.89 lakh hectares to be increased by another 3.64 lakh hectares after raising the height of the dam to 320 FRL. Power generation was also envisaged as 625 MW at 60% LF after Punasa and, other upstream storages came up in Madhya Pradesh.

³ Op.Cit. p.121

In 1960 the erst while state of Bombay was divided into two states Gujarat and Maharashtra. This changed the picture. A higher dam at FL 320 was found to submerge a potential hydel site in Maharashtra. Navagam being a terminal dam and the only site available to Gujarat, the Gujarat government took the view that a higher dam at FRL 460 feet would be desirable, though this would submerge further hydel sites in Maharashtra. The Union Government convened a meeting in Bhopal with the Chief Ministers of Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat in November 1963 to resolve outstanding issues. The outcome was the Bhopal Agreement which provided for a Navagam dam at FRL 425 feet in Gujarat; a Punasa dam in Madhya Pradesh at FRL 850 feet with cost and benefit sharing between Gujarat Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra and the implementation of the Bargi dam in Madhya Pradesh with some assistance from Maharashtra and Gujarat. Madhya Pradesh however declined to ratify the agreement stating that the height of the Navagam dam cannot be raised above 162

feet as the river bed level is at the Madhya Pradesh border. The Government of India then constituted on 5th of September, 1964, the Narmada Water Resources Development Committee commonly known as the Khosla Committee, headed by A.N.Khosla. The terms of reference for the committee were decided in consultation with the three states Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and, Gujarat. The committee submitted its report on 1st of September, 1965 and, gave a master plan for development of the Narmada. It also recommended a maximum height of FRL 500 feet for the Navagam Dam. It also recommended for covering areas of Rajasthan in the command of the Narmada canal.

While the State of Gujarat broadly endorsed the recommendation, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh rejected them. Ultimately on the 6th of October, 1969 the Government of India referred the matter for adjudication by the Narmada Water Dispute Tribunal under Section 4 of Inter State Water Disputes Act. The

tribunal gave its final decision on the 7th of December, 1979, duly taking into account the agreement dated 12th of July, 1974 reached in the meantime between the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan; setting apart 0.25 MAF for Maharashtra and 0.50 MAF for Rajasthan.

The Tribunal decided the FRL of 455 feet taking into consideration the carryover capacity required for ensuring 28 MAF at 75 % dependability requirement for re - regulation at Sardar Sarovar, for feeding the Navagam canal, space required for site disposition and the need to generate power at Sardar Sarovar in lieu of the generation at Jalsindhi dam which would get submerged. The level computed at FRL 453 feet was rounded off to FRL 455 feet.

The problem faced by the Khosla Committee when it started work on the preparation of a master plan for the Narmada Basin, was the limited availability of the discharge readings from 1948 to

1962. Being too short a time to arrive at a series of dependability, the committee resorted to the standard international practice of hindcasting on the basis of rainfall data which was available from a number of stations since 1915. The run off was thus derived at 28.92 MAF. Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh independently worked out a runoff hindcast at 27.14 and 27.17 MAF respectively. Controversy was stilled with the agreement by the four chief Ministers in July 1974 on a technically assessed run off at 28 MAF. The Tribunal adopted this figure. The Tribunal saw no reason to include the area already irrigated by the Mahi Project within the Narmada command. It also excluded the Ranns and the banni area in determining an equitable apportionment of water between Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. However it set aside 1.52 MAF and 1.06 MAF of water for domestic and industrial use for Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat respectively upto the year 2021. Madhya Pradesh plans to supply Bhopal, Indore and Mhow with drinking water from the Narmada while Gujarat seeks to ensure domestic

supplies to all of North Gujarat, Saurashtra, and, Kachch from the source.

The decision of the Tribunal was announced in December 1978. The Tribunal's final orders determined the utilizable quantum of Narmada waters to be 28 MAF at 75% dependability. Of this Madhya Pradesh was allotted 18.25 MAF, Maharashtra 0.25 MAF and, Rajasthan 0.5 MAF. It was made clear that each state will be free to make such changes in the pattern of the water use and in the areas to be benefitted, within or outside the Narmada basin in its own territory, as it deems fit. Utilizable flows in excess of 28 MAF including the carry over flows will be shared in the ratios of 73 to Madhya Pradesh, 36 to Gujarat, 2 for Rajasthan and, 1 for Maharashtra. Shortages will be shared in the same proportion. The apportionment of the water will be reviewed after 45 years. The Navagam dam height will have a FRL of 455 feet with a maximum water level of 460 feet. The FSL (full supply level) of the Navagam dam was fixed at 360 feet with prescribed gradients. With regard to

sharing of costs and benefits the tribunal determined that the net power produced by the Navagam Dam (Sardar Sarovar) and canal shall be shared by the states in the ratio of 57% to Madhya Pradesh, 27% to Maharashtra, 16% to Gujarat and, that the cost of construction allocable to power shall be shared in the same proportion and shall be paid in annual instalments. Madhya Pradesh in turn was required to make regulated releases from the Narmada Sagar Dam to meet Gujarat's allocated supplies. The releases would be broken down into 10 day periods. For this Gujarat will pay Madhya Pradesh 17.63 % of the cost of the Narmada Sagar Dam in annual instalments from the commencement of construction.

In 1978 a Janata party coalition was in office in Madhya Pradesh and, the Congress party in opposition. The then opposition leader Mr. Arjun Singh spearheaded the Nimar Bachao Andolan or the movement for the protection of Nimar, a forest to be

submerged under the Narmada Sagar Project which the government was actively supporting.

At this juncture, Gujarat government played host to the first reconnaissance mission of the World Bank in November, 1978. The World Bank mission was a result of the request for funds to build the Sardar Sarovar dam made by the Gujarat government and the Government Of India. The mission recommended:

- a) Establishment of a high level Narmada Planning Group.
- b) Retention of private and independent consultants for various studies
- c) Retaining foreign experts for certain key areas through the UNDP (United Nation Development Programme).

Accordingly, the Narmada Planning group was founded in 1981, this was a multi disciplinary team of professional planners and experts. Later in 1992, the Narmada Planning Group was reconstituted and placed under the administrative control of the

Government. Consultancy organizations like the ORG (Operations Research Group) Gujarat, and the TECS (Tata Economic Consultancy Services) Bombay, were retained in 1979 - 1980 to generate various studies. In 1979, the Gujarat Irrigation Department received \$10 million from the World Bank for project formulation. In the same year the Narmada Review Committee was formed according to the ruling of the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal. In 1980, the Congress party came to power once more. The Nimar Bachao Andolan died a natural death as Arjun Singh became the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh.

It was in 1980, that the Department of Environment (later, The Ministry of Environment and Forests) was formed by the Centre. The Forest Conservation Act was passed and the Sardar Sarovar and the Narmada Sagar Project applied for environment clearance.

The project was cleared in 1987.

2.2 BASIC OUTLINES OF THE NARMADA SAGAR AND THE SARDAR SAROVAR PROJECT:⁴

Narmada Sagar Project:

The kingpin of the Madhya Pradesh master plan is the Narmada Sagar complex consisting of Indira Sagar Dam near Punasa and below it in a cascade the Omkareshwar multi purpose project in the Khandwa district and the Maheshwar hydel project in Khargone district.

Cost	Rs. 6,000 crores (1987)
Benefits	Irrigation - 1.23 lakh hectares Power - 1000 MW Installed capacity Pisciculture, Tourism, Urban water supply
Submergence	91, 348 ha (total area) {Forest - 40,332 ha Culturable land - 44, 363ha }
Displacement	1,29,396 (1981 census) - all in Madhya Pradesh {Tribals - 30, 948}

⁴ Ministry of Environment and Forests, New Delhi, 1987, in Kalpavriksh (ed). 'The Narmada Valley - A Critique', Kalpavriksh, New Delhi, 1988, p. 2

Sardar Sarovar Project

Location	Vadgam, Bharuch , Gujarat
Cost	Rs 11, 000 crores (1991)
Benefits	Irrigation - 18.7 lakh ha Power - 1450 MW Flood Control, Pisciculture, Tourism, Urban Water Supply
Submergence	39,134 ha {Forest - 13,744 ha Culturable land - 11,318 ha}
Displacement	1,00,000 Tribals and Scheduled Castes - {48, 250}

2.3 AN OFFICIAL VIEW OF A GLORIOUS FUTURE

The Sardar Sarovar project has attracted a lot of debate. There is a question as to whether the Project will really serve the needs of the people. The doubts and questions are justified in the sense that the project will entail a lot of changes. There would be massive displacement, a sizeable area will be submerged. The fear is that if the Sardar Sarovar is an experiment then it will be an expensive one.

The government of Gujarat has however has enumerated the benefits of the project in detail. A brief summary of the benefits from the project is being furnished below.⁵

Irrigation:

The Sardar Sarovar Project will provide irrigation facilities to 17.93 lakh ha. of land, covering 3393 villages, of 62 talukas, in 12 districts of Gujarat. It will

⁵ P.A.Raj, 'Facts - Sardar Sarovar', SSNNL, Gandhi Nagar, Gujarat, 1992.

also irrigate 75,000 ha. of land in the strategic desert areas of Barmer and Jalore in Rajasthan and 37,500 ha. in the tribal hilly area of Maharashtra through lift. About 75% of the command area in Gujarat is drought prone and the entire command area in Rajasthan is drought prone. Assured water supply will make these areas drought proof.

Drinking Water Supply:

A special allocation of 1.06 MAF of water has been made to provide drinking water to 135 urban centres and 8215 villages(45% of total villages in Gujarat) within and outside the command area in Gujarat for present population of 18 million and the prospective population of over 40 million by the year 2021. All the villages and the urban centres of arid region of Saurashtra and Kachch and all 'no source' villages and the villages affected by the salinity and the fluoride in North Gujarat will be benefitted. Water supply

requirement of several industries will also be met from the project giving a boost to all round development.

Power

There will be two power houses viz. River bed power house and the canal head power house with an installed capacity of 1200 MW and 250 MW respectively. The power would be shared by the three states - Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat. A series of micro hydel power stations are also planned on the branch canals where convenient fall are available.

Flood Protection:

The project will also provide flood protection to riverine reaches measuring 30,000 ha. covering 210 villages and Bharuch city and a population of 4.0 lakh in Gujarat.

Wild Life:

It is also proposed to develop wild life sanctuaries viz. Shoolpaneshwar wild life sanctuary on the left bank, Wild Ass Sanctuary in the little rann of kachch, Black buck sanctuary at Velavadar, Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary in Kachch, Nal Sarovar Bird sanctuary and Alia Bet at the mouth of the river.

2.4 SPECIAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PROJECT

**** The ratio between the areas getting submerged and the areas benefitted is only 1.65% against the ratio of some of the existing schemes of 25%**

**** The ratio between population affected and population benefitted is only 0.3% against the normal ratio in the existing schemes of about 4% in the country.**

**** The norms of rehabilitation and resettlement of adopted in this project are the most liberal, perhaps not only in this country but also in the world.**

**** For every tree submerged there would be 100 trees added.**

****A regular system of evaluation and monitoring by independent expert organizations for the works of rehabilitation and environment protective works is provided.**

These are by no means the only highlights of the project. However these have been selected because they are directly linked to the human factor which this dissertation intends to study. It may be noticed that there no special arrangements made to make the people of that area involved, because the logic of development assumes that the people will be happy at the change. What is surprising is the certainty with the which the governments make plans for their electorate without consulting them. Consequently, these assumptions on the part of the governemnt about the people form the basis of a deep rooted discontent against the project.

(Note: It was difficult to collate data for this chapter, as the data was very technical. An effort has been made to keep the data simple.)⁶

⁶ Books have been referred to not in an individual manner, but all the books have been taken together to provide a holistic over view of the facts about the project, books referred to are :
P. Seth, - Narmada Project: Politics of eco Development, Delhi, 1994.
B.G.Verghese, Winning the Future : From Bhakra to Narmada, Tehri, Rajasthan Canal, Delhi, 1994.
Radhyeshyam, Doria, Environmental Impact of Narmada Sagar project, New Delhi, 1990.

CHAPTER TWO

ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF SEEING THE PROJECT : BEGINING OF THE ANDOLAN

It is not surprising that the Narmada project being the first mega development project of its kind in India has evoked two extreme reactions - one hand the government has painted glowing pictures about the project. On the other hand there has been a gamut of protest from the people who would be affected by the project.

In the earlier chapter the official view of the Narmada project revealed a plan of a super dam. The reasons behind the dam as given by the authorities were numerous, it is doubtful whether the authorities had taken the opinion of the people living in that area, but the euphoria over a mega development project sought to gloss over that fact.

There was a certain unrest among the people as soon as the work for the project started. There was no apparent reason as the project authorities had made alternative arrangements.

No man feels more threatened than when his home is taken away from him. In the case of the people in the project area, generations of traditions, customs were being threatened. They were asked to leave their homes and live in other places that were alien. They were being asked to give up their identities for the sake of a project that might not do them any good. It was not a few families like in other projects, who could be hushed up. The Narmada project would displace nearly 1 lakh people, it is not as if the project authorities were unaware of the facts, their claim was that the rehabilitation package is the best offered so far. A more detailed study of the rehabilitation package would throw more light on the reasons behind the protest.

3.1 REHABILITATION

The issue of rehabilitation is perhaps the most publicised and emotional aspect of the Narmada project. The Rehabilitation factor has been looked after by the states - the respective states contend that the Rehabilitation packages are the best offered in planned economic development in India. In fact it is difficult to cull out the criticisms against Resettlement and Rehabilitation separately. The critique of the rehabilitation package has developed along with the inception of the package. The states have changed the terms and conditions of the package to quieten the critics and there has been a new spate of criticism. The debate about the fate of the people who will have to be resettled has not been concluded. The reason being that while the other problems regarding the project could be smoothed out by saying that "once the project is complete there would be equitable distribution of water, there would be compensatory afforestation" and, so on so forth, but in this case the project authorities are dealing with the fate of human

beings, their dwelling places. So it is necessary to study the rehabilitation package along with the criticism.

Before one can assess the rehabilitation factor in the Narmada project it is necessary to recall the resettlement and rehabilitation experience in India prior to Narmada. While Irrigation control, large scale compensatory afforestation will be conducted by the project authorities for the first time, Resettlement and Rehabilitation has a long history. The earliest legislation on land acquisition was the Land Acquisition Act of 1860. This was replaced by the Land Acquisition act of 1874 which even today as amended from time to time forms the basis of acquiring land for public purposes. The Philosophy underlying the act seems to be that since governments have to acquire the private lands for certain reasons they need to follow certain rules to do so. No justification is necessary for the government as to why the land is being acquired. Following a publication of the initial notification a mandatory 30 days are allowed for

interested persons to raise objections. Once the objections are heard by the collector or any other authority, a declaration is made to the government by the Secretary. The act states that : "the said declaration is conclusive evidence that the land is required for official purposes"¹ The compensation for the land acquired is calculated on the basis of the market price of the land as on the date of publication of the notification. In addition a sum of 15% on such market value was to be given in consideration of the compulsory nature of acquisition. In 1984 the percentage was raised to 30%.

There was a provision in the 18⁹4 Act that the appropriate authority can award land as compensation. This was more convenient as cash compensation posed a problem for the rural poor who normally comprised oustees. They did not have the expertise to take up any occupation rather than agriculture and the cash was often squandered away

¹ Ministry of Law, Justice and Company India, 1981, p.4, in B. G. Verghese, 'Winning the Future - From Bhakra to Narmada, Tehri, ~~and~~ Rajasthan Canal', Konark Publishers, New Delhi, 1994, p. 136.

and the oustees ended up as refugees in urban centres.

✓ In 1902 Sir M. Visvesvaraya put forward the principle that those whose lands were being submerged should be resettled in the command of the irrigation project. The oustees who were resituated in the command areas were to be given an equal share of the water. This was however never followed up due to political reasons ²

Till date only two states viz. Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra have adapted the 'land for land' mode of compensation. The Maharashtra Resettlement of Project displaced persons act, 1976 (Section 46, 1976) and the Madhya Pradesh Pariyojana Ke karan vishthapit Vyakti Adhiniam, 1985 (Section 10, 1985).

Both the acts state that the government is duty bound to provide land if the displaced persons demand in writing with 30 days of the publication of the

² B.G. Verghese, 'Winning The Future : From Bhakra to Narmada, Tehri, Rajasthan Canal', Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 1994, p. 121 -130.

notification. The act of Maharashtra states that "the state shall resettle as many displaced persons as possible on land in the benefitted zone or in other villages or areas"(Section 10, 1976). In the Madhya Pradesh Act of 1985, the provision is that the government shall resettle the displaced persons in the benefitted zone or at the periphery of the submergence areas (Section 18 of the Madhya Pradesh Act, 1985).

However there are lacunae in the land for land policy of both Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, both the acts state that the value of the land that the oustee shall receive is the same to the land that has been acquired. The result therefore is that the ousted family gets less land than what it had as the knowledge of an irrigation project results in the hiking of prices in the command areas and the value of the compensation is calculated at the time of the publication of the notification. The decrease in the land holdings result in the small farmers leasing their land to the big farmers as they cannot make two ends

meet with the reduced culturable land. The Lal Nishan Party, a regional left party in Maharashtra had documented the fact that in the irrigation commands of the Ahmad Nagar District of Maharashtra the resulted in small farmers having to lease out their land to the local big farmers. Instead of small farmers tilling small parcels of land the landlord's holding the landlords become tenants of numerous small holdings.

It must be remembered that when the rehabilitation package for the Narmada project oustees were created, the compensation package of Maharashtra already been created and Madhya Pradesh had started formulating its policy. There was therefore a model to work on. The rehabilitation package was created by the Narmada Water Disputes tribunal (NWDT). The tribunal defines as oustee any person who one year prior to the issue of the notification under the Land Acquisition Act was ordinarily residing, farming or working in the submergence area upto FRL 455. For the Sardar Sarovar Project Gujarat will pay Maharashtra and

Madhya Pradesh compensation for all government lands acquired, the costs of rehabilitation of oustees within their own territories and the expenses incurred in the related establishment required to execute this task as well as the costs of relocating any ancient or historic monument places of worship or idols likely to suffer submergence.

The tribunal stipulated that every major son will be treated as a separate family and on that basis a rough count of oustees should be made. It held that displaced persons in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh desirous of resettlement in Gujarat must be rehabilitated there. Ousteas were entitled to a 60 x 90 feet home stead plot. a prescribed scale of grants and civic amenities (such as school, panchayat ghar, dispensary, seed store, children's park, village ponds, drinking water, places of worship and road links). Every displaced family from whom 25% of his holding is acquired shall be entitled to a minimum of 2 ha. of irrigable land the price of which will be payable in 20 interest free installments, 50% compensation received

will serve as initial deposit. It was provided that no area in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh be submerged until compensation is paid and arrangements for resettlement and rehabilitation is made. Gujarat was required to schedule of submergence to Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh 18 months in advance. The residents will however be allowed to stay there till 6 months before submergence. While the award is binding, the tribunal held that amendments, alterations, and modifications may be affected by agreement by all the party states.

The world bank found the NWDT's resettlement and rehabilitation package to be an advanced one but falling short of it's(World Bank) evolving standards. The \$ 450 million loan agreement that it entered with the Government of Gujarat and Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh included landless labourers and encroachers and agricultural labourers eligible for 2 ha. compensation in respect of all SSP project affected persons in all three states. It also made loan

disbursements conditional on time bound completion of more detailed environmental impact assessments and remedial plans.

The Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal enabled Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh to ahead with detailed project designing and related studies on the basis of stipulated parameters. The World Bank recommended the formation of a Narmada Planning Group as well as number of independent studies for Sardar Sarovar Project.

✓ The movement against The Sardar Sarovar Project had started by the time the world bank had stepped in. The major thrust at that time was the impossibility of satisfactory rehabilitation. Though the ^Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal had chalked out a _^detailed rehabilitation plan, the Gujarat rehabilitation plan was seen as unsatisfactory. The NWDT norms regarding resettlement was resolved by the three states by identifying scattered islands for the oustees,

oustees, there was no provision for the rehabilitation of the inhabitants of the forest villages.

The question the protesters asked was how will the three states get land for rehabilitation. Especially in Maharashtra where there was a ban against diverting forest land. Yet in the loan agreements that the Government of India had entered with the World Bank there was a commitment to let the forest villages be relocate in the forest lands. The Ministry of Environment and Forests had reminded the three states about the prohibition at the time of clearing the project in 1987.

At that time Anil Patel of ARCH Vahini had protested against the inadequate rehabilitation measures. Though there was a lot of commitment on paper the state governments had done nothing to relocate the project affected persons. It was due to the pressure of the protestors that the World Bank constituted the Independent Review Mission.

The NWDT did not recognise encroachers on forest or non-forest lands and the landless as entitled to land benefits and till the Independent review Mission and the World Bank pressed the matter, none of the states were willing to consider the matter. The Independent Review Mission along with ARCH Vahini emphasised on the absence of land titles among the tribals, theirs was a customary right and with reservation of the forests they were treated as encroachers.

The NWDT provided no land benefit to the major sons of landholders even while defining them as separate households for the purpose of homestead plots and calculation of community benefits to be provided on relocation in accordance with the number of families in any cluster. The Independent Review Mission contested this and insisted that the major sons be given land benefits. As a result Gujarat granted major sons full entitlement to land benefits. Madhya

Pradesh agreed to recognise major sons as separate families entitled to cash compensation. Maharashtra recognised major sons and major unmarried daughters as entitled to land entitlement of 1 hectare each. Cash compensation which was vaguely alluded to by the NWDT was finalised due to the insistence of the Independent Review Mission. Maharashtra promised Rs. 500 as grant in aid as well as Rs.150 for 300 spread over one year after resettlement. Gujarat promised a cash compensation of Rs. 750 per family with 1980 as the base year and Rs. 500 as the grant in aid. Additionally each family will receive Rs 10,000 to build houses and Rs.5000 for the purchase of productive assets. Madhya Pradesh offered to give the scheduled caste, scheduled tribes and the marginal farmers Rs.11,000 and the small farmers Rs.5500. Apart from this the Scheduled castes, tribes and agricultural labourers were to receive Rs.40,000 for the purchase of

productive assets. Transportation charges to the new relocation sites would be met by the three states. ³

Yet there was a murmur of protest among the project affected persons. ARCH Vahini was joined by Medha Patkar and the ^NArmada Dharangrast Samiti. In spite of the promises by the states there was no progressive in rehabilitation programme. especially in the case of the tribals. The protestors demanded for the release of degraded forest land (Taloda forest land) besides the submergence area in Maharashtra for the purposes of resettlement and rehabilitation. Medha Patkar sought the release of Taloda forest, as the forest tribal link cannot be forsaken by the project authorities. Maharashtra refused to open the forest for the tribals as it was a reserved one. In June the ARCH Vahini organised a seminar on the problems of project affected persons and the state of rehabilitation and resettlement. The Narmada project from this time onwards began to draw the attention of a large

³ B.G. Verghese, *Winning the Future: From Bhakra to Narmada, Tehri, Rajasthan Canal*, Konark Publishers Pvt Ltd, Delhi, 1994, p. 149 -151

number of environmentalists, public activists and intellectuals. In April 1987 about 300 leading environmentalists, public activists and intellectuals of India sent a memorandum to the Prime Minister of India and the world bank. They asked for the immediate seizure of work on Narmada project.

In June 1988, a seminar held by Baba Amte at his Anand Van brought together for the first time leading grass roots workers and environmentalists. It was at this point that a nation wide environmental lobby with the Narmada Project in focus emerged. Anti Narmada Valley Project movement, either on the grounds of resettlement and rehabilitation or environment took shape. From it emerged the Narmada Bachao Andolan -the national body of anti project NGOs(nongovernmental organizations).

The NGOs put forward their case before the media, the Government of India, the Planning Commission and the World bank. The Indian NGOs

forged a link with other non governmental organizations through out the world.

Meanwhile the Maharashtra Government released the Taloda Land, and a shift in the leadership emerged. ARCH Vahini clearly stated that their interest lies in arranging for the proper resettlement of the project affected persons and that as the governments were willing to relocate the displaced people so the aim before them was the supervision of the resettlement and rehabilitation policy. The Anti Dam leadership thus moved on to the hands of Media ^{he} Patcher and Baba Amte.

The fight now started against a super dam that will be expensive and yet not yield long term benefits. The Anti dam lobby understood that the governments of the three states had no land to compensate, the poor tribals may not be given any money and yet their land would be taken away for 'public purposes'. A large question loomed in the minds of the protestors - Dam - but what cost? Dam - for whom?

Over the past eight years the Narmada Bachao Andolan has systematically opposed the Sardar Sarovar Project, not just on the grounds of rehabilitation. The struggle was not for a better rehabilitation site but for the right to live in the place they chose. The question of rehabilitation that had made the oustees determined to fight against the project, led them to oppose the project at every count. There were many other factors that the protestors have raised .

✓ The Sardar Sarovar project has been debated in depth on four counts. ⁴

- i) Cost and benefit ratio and economic viability
- ii) Environmental degradation
- iii) Inequitable distribution of irrigation benefits among region and region and classes .

⁴ Kalpavriksh. 'The Narmada Valley Project - A Critique', Kalpavriksh, New Delhi, 1988, p. 18 - 26.

A brief outline of the criticisms as well as the government's reply to the criticism are given below.

Economic viability : The main thrust of the criticism is that the cost of the SSP (Sardar Sarovar Project) is going to be too high for it to become economically viable. The cost of the project was estimated to be about Rs. 4,877 crores (TECS, 1981), the total cost is however a much debated figure. The cost rose to Rs. 6500 crores in 1985. In 1991 Shri Babubhai Patel, The ^hNarmada Minister for Gujarat stated that the cost of the project was Rs. 9,000 crores. In 1992-93 the Gujarat budget stated that the cost of the project was Rs.9,400 crores. All the cost estimates refer to the base cost and not the total project cost. In 1985 the World Bank estimated the cost of the project to be Rs. 13,640 crores in 1985. This included a base cost of Rs.6,264 crores, price contingencies of Rs. 6,574 crores and physical contingencies of Rs. 803 crores. In other words the total cost of the project is double the base cost. Hence

if the base cost in 1992-93 was Rs. 9400 crores then the total cost in 1992 would be Rs. 20,470 crores.

After the withdrawal of the World Bank, the question arises that who is going to fund the project. The government does not have the money to fund the project. The possibility therefore is that the project might be left incomplete or that the government might incur a heavy debt in order to finish this project.

A mega project like the SSP will obviously be expensive, but can a country like India be able to furnish the cost of a big dam ?

The answer by the government is that India's population will probably be 170 crores by 2050. There would be the need of more agricultural produce. There is no other way to increase agricultural produce but to increase irrigated agriculture as the culturable land is likely to dwindle due to industrialization and urbanisation. Also about 90% of the available water is

from rain fall and therefore storage is necessary. Lastly Hydro electric power is safe and does not endanger the environment unlike nuclear, thermal. With the increase in the fuel cost and increasing pollution large scale hydro - power generation is inevitable. Small dams cannot be built across large rivers and the upkeep of such small dams will be more expensive than a large dams. Though there is a need for small dams as they act as necessary supplements to large dams.

ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

Of all the aspects of environmental degradation that have evoked concern, the loss of forests occupy a primary position. No official estimate seem to exist of the amount of forest to be submerged by the Narmada Project as a whole. The submergence area of Sardar Sarovar is smaller than that of Narmada Sagar. The government has made plans for compensatory afforestation, the point however remains - can compensatory afforestation replace a forest evolved

over a million years. In compensatory afforestation the tendency is to plant commercially useful species and not necessarily ecologically useful. A point of particular significance is that the project authorities have valued forests solely in terms of their timber, firewood and minor forest produce yield. This ignored the much more crucial ecological functions of a forest, including soil preservation, water replenishment, micro climatic stabilisation and storage of genetic pools. In the case of SSP the estimated environmental cost is Rs. 8,190 crores.

The loss of forests will inevitably lead to the loss of wild life. 'Wild life' does not only mean tigers and deer but also the insects, amphibians, reptiles and birds. There is no listing of flora and the fauna of the areas to be submerged hence it is not possible to develop alternative habitats for rare and threatened species.

The government's answer is that there will be 100 trees in place of 1 submerged tree. The SSP authorities also say that the green foliage produced by irrigation will help in lowering the level of Co₂ (Carbon Dioxide).

INEQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF IRRIGATION BENEFITS AMONG REGIONS AND CLASSES

If SSP were to be built, the first areas to receive irrigation would be Bharuch, Khera, and Baroda districts. Already economically strong and politically powerful their regional clout would increase tremendously with irrigation. According to the World Bank Staff Appraisal report, the earlier reaches will be given more water since the canal system will not be ready to carry the water beyond the Mahi. This practice in all probability will become a permanent one as the farmers who will get more water will switch on to water intensive cash crops like sugar cane. There are sugar factories that are coming up, in the SSP command despite the fact that there is no sugar cane at present. In the Ukai project in Gujarat sugar

cane now amounts for over 75% of the command area though the planners had decreed that it would only occupy 30% of the command area. The critics of the SSP also feel that the project authorities are deliberately forgetting the political reality. The SSP ^{4/21} aims to supply water to farmer's irrigation cooperatives instead of the individuals on a volumetric basis for which farmers will pay per litre.

These irrigation cooperatives will arrange for rate payment will line canals beyond the minors, will carry out ground - water pumping whenever necessary, will maintain the drainage systems at micro level. However the decision to supply water to them will be a central decision. This may be termed as irrigation control. However irrigation control has not been applied anywhere else so its success is doubtful. The SSP seeks to decentralise the irrigation system by setting up irrigation cooperatives but there has been no participation from the beneficiaries. the SSP

authorities have not asked the potential users of irrigation whether they like this cooperative system, whether they think it is at all feasible or not. There is a vast amount of expense involved if the government has to set up thousands of irrigation cooperatives and look after their welfare.

The SSP authorities say that the project will help small the marginal farmers. The different sections of farmers who will benefit from the project are:*

Small farmers (>1ha)	28.0%
Marginal farmers(1 - 2ha)	24.4%
S.C.	8.7%
S.T.	9.1%

* (source: 'Facts' by P.A. Raj, Sardar Sarovar Nigam, Gujarat)

When one looks at the protest that the project has generated and the official answer to the questions raised by the anti dam lobby, it becomes apparent that the two wave lengths do not match. At one hand we have the anti dam protestors who are lobbying against the loss of their homes, at the other hand we have the project authorities who project a future that the people do not want. We see a development with out any dialogue, the lack of dialogue is inevitable as the two horizons belong to two different contexts - one being the modern western scientific context where there are set patterns of success and development and the other a traditional context where familial ties, community ties are far more important than development.

The Andolan comes as a turning point in history. The system of logic that believes in the supremacy of science and technology and the dispensability of the

human factor is forced to encounter a counter argument in favour of the human factor.

(Note: The Documentation of the protest against the Dam has been done in many books, to make a systematic documentation of the protest we have consulted various books and have prepared the trajectory of protest)⁵

⁵ Books consulted : 1) Billorey, Ramesh. 'Damming the Narmada, India's greatest planned Environmental Disaster, Natraj Publishers, Dehradun, 1988., 2) Vijay, Paranjypte, 'High Dams on the Narmada : A Holistic Analysis of the River Valley projects INTACH, New Delhi, 1990., 3) Pravin Seth. 'Narmada Project : Politics of Eco Development, Haranand Publications, New Delhi 1994., 4) Rama Chandra Guha (ed) 'Social Ecology, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1994.

CHAPTER THREE

ANTI - DEVELOPMENTALISM : A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF NARMADA BACHAO ANDOLAN AND THE STRUGGLE IN TEHRI

The previous chapter gave a brief outline of the history of protest against the Narmada project. It is a protest against the homogenising development. The struggle emphasised a point that developmentalists had not considered as relevant - the question of choice. The people in the project areas were robbed of the right to choose their future.

In this chapter we seek to analyse the significance of Narmada Bachao Andolan as an articulation of anti developmentalism. This task would be incomplete if we did not take the example of another instance of protest - the Tehri chapter. Both Tehri and Narmada Bachao Andolan are instances where the local people had fought the state, yet the

trajectory of protest in these two cases have followed a different path.

As we proceed through the analysis we realize that though the content of the two protest movements are not exactly similar, the form has certain common points.

4.1 IN SEARCH OF A METHOD

To attempt a sociological analysis of these protest movements the first point that has to be decided is the methodology. There are two distinct approaches through which they can be studied.

The first approach is the Structural Organisational Paradigm. This approach is concerned with analysing large scale historical processes eg. Capitalism, Imperialism, the rise of the nation state -

what Charles Tilly calls "the master processes of social change"¹. It investigates the impact of these changes on different social classes, identifying those classes as adversely affected and the classes most likely to revolt against their superiors. This paradigm studies the role of the political parties in organization of the affected people, the state as a mechanism of social repression and finally in the historical outcomes of movements of social protest.

The second approach is termed as the Political - Cultural paradigm. This paradigm accepts the importance of large scale economic change. It argues however, that if economics is the only important determinant of collective action many people living at the margins of subsistence would be rebelling all the time. While the Political - Cultural Paradigm accepts economic deprivation as a

¹ An observation of Charles Tilly in his book 'Big Structures Large Processes, Huge Comparison' as quoted in RamaChandra Guha's 'The Unquiet Woods', OUP, India, p.2.

necessary condition for resistance, it however suggests that protests will take place only when there is an erosion whether partial or complete, of the patterns of legitimate authority. Lastly the Political Cultural approach has a more sophisticated view of the role of the political organisations, arguing that the rank and file far from uncritically accepting the ideology of the leadership often reshape and rework it to suit their own purposes.²

There are methodological differences in the two approaches, the Structural Organisational paradigm is prone to view protest as oriented towards some specific economic and political goal. In this paradigm the success is the gauge for measuring the significance of the protest. In contrast the Political - Cultural paradigm is more likely to emphasise the expressive dimension of social protest - its social and religious idioms, the language in which the social actors express their discontent.

² op.cit, p.4

Implicit in the Structural Organisational Paradigm is a unilinear progression from 'spontaneous' forms of protest with the individual activity at one end and the organised party activity at the other end. The Political Cultural paradigm however does not accept the inevitability of historical progression from unorganised to organized forms.

Therefore the practitioners of the Structural Organisational Paradigm look for underlying structural, draw large generalisations and, adhere to strict notions of causality in the analysis of social protest; they are in fact closer to the science end of the social science spectrum.

The political cultural is closer to the interpretative spectrum of Social science, as it stresses on the difference in the language and mechanism of protest between different social protests relating the difference of particular social and cultural contexts.

As a sociologist one encounters the problem of deciding the right methodology of studying the social protests like Tehri and Narmada. At one hand there is the grand history of Societies that is awesome, its universal nature making it more convincing. At the other end is the Political Cultural Paradigm that concentrates on the individuality of each movement.

In the case of the Tehri andolan and the Narmada Bachao Andolan perhaps a closer look at the individual incidents, the reaction of the people would be helpful in analysing their nature.

The balance thus tilts in favour of the Political - Cultural Paradigm - the need for an alternative analysis of movements. However one has to be careful about being over interpretative as there are certain points in every movement that corresponds to the macro history of that time.

We now attempt to study the Narmada Bachao Andolan with the struggle in Tehri Kumaun acting as a reference point. In the Tehri Kumaun the history of protest goes a long way. This fact has been taken into account in a partial manner where we read about the peaceful hillmen exhibiting spurts of rebellion, resorting to incendiarism etc. The reason behind the rebellion does not take into account the view points of the hill men.

It comes as a surprise when we hear the sounds of protest from them. This surprise is due to the fact that we realize that history, sociology, anthropology has not given us ample insights about all our societies. We had forgotten that the history, sociology and the anthropology we refer to are products of the First world. Where there are only broad categories viz. 'developed', 'under developed', 'organized', 'unorganised' that are applied indiscriminately to every situation. The 'third world' with its diverse traditions, folk lores, seem like a problem child who

refuses to belong to strict compartments. To deal with overwhelming diversity of this world, the theories relegate them into a slot that is universal and homogenous³ - this world is called a developing world. To the theoreticians India as a developing nation is not different from the other third world countries, all the individual nuances of different cultures are subsumed under the universal categories.

The chapter has been divided into two sections - one dealing with the Tehri Kumaun and the second section dealing with an analysis of the Narmada Bachao Andolan.

³ The reason behind this lies in the imperialism of categories which dominates the structure of Knowledge. As Ashish Nandi puts it "under such imperialism conceptual domain is sometimes hegemonised so effectively by a concept produced and honed in the West that the original domain vanishes from our awareness. intellect and intelligence become IQ, the oral cultures become the cultures of the primitive or the preliterate, the oppressed become the proletariat, social change becomes development. After a while the people begin to forget that IQ is only a crude measure of intelligence and some day some one may think of another index to assess the same thing; that social change did not begin with development, nor will it stop once the idea of development dies a natural or unnatural death". Ashish Nandy, 'The Politics of Secularism and the recovery of religious tolerance' in 'The Mirrors of Violence' ed. Veena Das, OUP, 1990, p. 69

The Tehri struggle can be said to be a predecessor of the Narmada Bachao struggle. Here we find a path of continuity not perhaps in a macro sense but in the two protest movements the language of protest is similar and the context - local. Hence a brief outline of the history of the Tehri Kumaun movement would help in understanding the underlying continuity and help us in analysing the movements on a comparative basis.

4.2 THE TEHRI CHAPTER

In the Tehri region though the social structure was polarised between the 'raja' and the 'praja', the village structure was very egalitarian. In theory the 'raja' possessed the proprietary right over the soil, the cultivating body which formed the bulk of the population enjoyed the privileges of the ownership except the right to alienate land. This relative autonomy was strengthened by several factors chief among them was the absence of an intermediary

rentier class between the king and the subjects. The king enjoyed the status of being the incarnation of God Badrinath on earth.

There was no apparent tension between the king and the subjects but there were recurrent peasant unrest that were directed towards the state functionaries. The demands of the state were an obscure reality and the peasant discontent was directed towards the immediate enemy, the state functionaries. There was an age old custom of going to the monarch for the resolution of their discontent. This was known as the dhandak. 'Dhandaks were never directed towards the king or the institution of kingship rather they emerged as a response to what was perceived as oppression by the minor officials. On punishment being meted out by the king, the dhandak usually subsided, only to flare up when fresh cases of tyranny occurred'⁴. The dhandak did not believe in physical violence - "the rebels did not mean any harm

⁴ Ramachandra Guha, *The unquiet Woods*, OUP, India, 1989, p.67

to the king, rather they thought that they were helping the king restore justice.”⁵

The officials deputed from the British India could not comprehend the social context of dhandak and they termed the dhandak as a hostile demonstration. This attitude became stronger after the colonial rule decided to use the Tehri and Kumanun forests for commercial purposes. The extensive railway network built by the British in India required wooden bunks, the government decided to use the hill forests for that purpose. As a result the forests were reserved by the forest act of 1878, these forests were leased from the king and from 1902 onwards the king was paid 80% of the profit from the forests.

The leased forests were were divested of the existing rights that were being enjoyed by the surrounding population. The villagers were stopped

⁵ K.N. Panikkar, *The Ideas of Sovereignty and State in India in Indian Political Thought*, Bombay, 1963, p.22,54

from gaining free access to the forests. In 1907 regulations fixed the amount of timber each family could have, free grazing were allowed in some areas of the forests.

The prohibition created a problem for the villagers in the Tehri and Kumaun. They had the traditional practice of burning the forest floor to get rid of the pine needles which were an impediment to the grazing cattle. The government stopped the annual burning of the forest floor as it interfered with their commercial forestry. The protest of the peasants against the restrictions placed on their activities took the form of the contravention of forest laws. The villagers burned the forest floors, lopped trees as an assertion of their traditional rights.

In the Kumaun region the forest regulations were restricting for a population that had always enjoyed proprietary rights over the forests. Added to that was the system of 'bardaish' and 'utar'. Bardaish

would mean a royal treatment to the colonial officers and utar would mean indented labour. This was one of the grievances of the people of Kumaun against the colonial state.

In both Tehri and Kumanun the root of conflict between the hill villagers and the state over forest rights lay in the differing conceptions of property and ownership. There did not exist a developed notion of private ownership among the peasant communities, a notion particularly inapplicable to communally owned and managed forests. The reservation of forests led to a resentment and to make matters worse the officials often sought to force 'utar'.

The villagers in Tehri and Kumaun resorted to the age old custom of dhandak. The rebellion was still against the 'wicked officials' in the durbar and not the king.

The different dhandaks had the same characteristics, one was their localised nature and the

second was their total isolation from the political developments anywhere in India.

Though the villagers were still persisting with the dhandaks it was apparent to them that their king was no longer their saviour. In the dhandak of Rawain in 1930, the police fired on the peasants when they were following the age old custom of going to their king to state their grievances. This proved to a water shed in the social history of the hilly regions. The villagers waited for the king to exert his authority, but the king remained silent. The breakdown of the traditional authority structure was complete. Gradually there started a kisan andolan with the formation of the Tehri Rajya Praja Mandal in 1939. The target once more was the state official and not the king. The mode of protest was the dhandak - albeit more spread out.

The peasant unrest in Tehri and Kumaun cannot be called a fight against development. Yet the unrest

based itself on a factor that embodies a major critique of development. The reasons behind the determined resistance to the British government by the peasants were directly linked to scientific forestry. The reservation of forests led to a feeling of alienation among the peasants. What had been their right was being taken away by outsiders. The territorial space was being curtailed and with it the identity of the peasants.

In Tehri there was always the custom of approaching the king in case of a problem. There was a strong paternalism where the king would see that the source of evil was removed. With the advent of the British the traditional dhandak was seen (by the British) as hostile - to be subjugated. The state control which stopped the farmers from using the forests led to a sense of alienation, because not only did the forest constitute an important means of subsistence, but their products were treated as in other peasant societies as a free gift of nature to which

all had access. The assertion of state monopoly ran contrary to traditional management practices.

In the Tehri Kumaun region the alienation took various forms. In Eastern Kumaun reservation of a large tract of forest adjoining the land for cultivation and the constant harassment by forest patrols had led to the villagers losing interest in their cultivation. The forest now appeared as an entity that was no longer familiar to them, infact, it appeared as an entity opposed to them.

In the present Chipko Andolan we see a direct link with the earlier protest movements. Under the aegis of Sunderlal Bahuguna, Chipko has raised the same questions regarding the relation between the state and the peasants. This time however the state was not a colonial one but the national government. The Chipko represent the perpetuation of the long struggle of the peasant community against the state - earlier the colonial state which sought to get developed through the resources generated by

exporting raw materials and at present the national government which has continued commercial forestry thereby depriving the villagers of their sustenance.

Though the Chipko Andolan carries the traces of the earlier peasant struggles, a broader canvas has been included - the Andolan has two spheres. One is the private struggle of the peasant community against fragmentation, uprooting. The other is the wider struggle against ecological degradation. Especially in the wake of the Tehri Dam construction.

The Tehri Dam if it comes into existence will be one of the highest dams of the world and will harness the water flows of the two important Himalayan rivers, the Bhagirathi and the Bhilangana.⁶ The larger plan envisages three storage schemes viz. a reservoir on the Bhagirathi, another at Kotli Bhel and, the third at Utyasuon, another tributary of the Ganga,

⁶ Vijay Paranjpye, *Evaluating the Tehri Dam :an extended Cost Benefit Analysis*, INTACH, New Delhi, 1988, p. 22

the Alaknanda. The project was conceived in 1949 by the Geological survey of India, but was confirmed in 1965 by the then Minister of Power, K.L.Rao.

The local people have been opposed to the dam from its inception. They feared that a lot of the holy places would be irreparably damaged by the dam. Moreover the record of the Uttar Pradesh Government has not been good in the case of rehabilitation. They fear that the dam might result in the whole valley being washed away. The project was started in 1977 and has progressed in fits and starts. The work has been stalled many times as the planners were undecided as to what the reservoir limit would be.

The dam has evoked a lot of fear in the minds of the people, though they are being allowed to cultivate their lands in the valley, they might be asked to leave their lands any day.

The people had to leave, the project authorities used brute force to evict the people out of their lands. A study done on a resettlement colony (Baniawala) in 1985 - 1986,⁷ has shown how dismal the living conditions are. The land is dry and stony so is not productive, the landholders of the Baniawala colony have no land deed as the government has not given them one. The oustes have been accepted at the bottom rung of the labour market as they have no qualification other than farming.

It is disconcerting to know that the people of Tehri who have fought so long for their rights have at last been vanquished. The land for which they fought the British, the agents of Commercial Forestry is beyond their reach. Why did they accede to the demands of the State? The most plausible reason would be the poverty, Tehri, a land of rich pine and teak has been plundered by modern industrial culture.

⁷ Vijay Paranjpye, Evaluating the Tehri Dam : An extended cost Benefit Appraisal, INTACH, New Delhi, 1988, p. 102

The inhabitants have been forced to leave their lands for work in the urban areas as the fertile lands have been taken away for commercial forestry. The forest that they had loved had become an alien entity, the land where their traditions had flourished has become a strange one. On their land there would be a dam. They did not want a dam.

“We asked the Sarkar to raise the water level a bit as for the last thirty years we have had to climb down a steep hill to get our drinking water. We told the Sarkar that we do not want anything more. But the Sarkar built us a dam instead, Sarkar said that it would be good for us. We were asked to leave our homes, our childhood play grounds, our souls behind. Then, we do not want dams, we want our life back”.⁸

History tells us that the British had not understood the social context of the dhandak. It was alien to them, dhandak being the custom of hills. In the present circumstances too the dhandak was not considered. It was not that the language was

⁸ A part of a speech by Sundar lal Bahuguna at the Gandhi Peace Foundation, January, 1995. He was stating the inability of the project authorities in understanding the needs of the peasants.

different or the culture alien. The reason was that the logic of the two parties has an irreparable breach - akin to the breach between tradition and western science.⁹

4.3 NARMADAI - A SAGA OF STRUGGLE¹⁰

“ How full of tragedy, how full of inexpressible agony the instant is when it dawns on one that one’s country does not exist any more, neither as an idea nor as a physical reality. What becomes of those who are incapable of creating another country out of a sense of displacement? What happens to people who cannot return to the hypothetical reality of their homes nor to their actual residences? Is this the clay out of which the refugees are moulded?”

Nuruddin Farah¹¹

⁹ The method followed by the protestors in the case of the Tehri dam was a traditional one. It becomes apparent ince we look at the speech given by Sunder lal Bahuguna. The speech contains an entreaty to the ‘ruler’.

¹⁰ Narmada[✓] is another name for river Narmada, a name that means ‘mother Narmada’, a gesture of love that the people of the valley feel for the river.

¹¹ Nuruddin Farah, Speaking Tree: Womenspeak : Asia Pacific Public Hearing of Crimes Against Women Related to the Violence Of Development, Asian Women’s Human Rights Council & Vimochana, Bangalore, 1995

This is true of any situation where people are rendered homeless. Refugees are not only the ruined vestiges after a military war, but also the cowed residues of another war, the war that is development.

In the previous section we had a glimpse of a people ravaged by a development project, in the case of the Narmada Bachao Andolan we see a people fighting for their rights - as yet.

The struggle against the Narmada Project continues. The experience of the Tehri people has made the mass at Narmada valley more wary and at the same time more determined. With the imminent threat of being rendered homeless the protest intensifies into a 'do or die' situation.

In April 1987, three hundred eminent personalities sent an appeal to the Prime Minister of India to stop the Sardar Sarovar Project, quoting the the precautionary words of the Ministry of Environment and Forests. In September 1989,

thousands demonstrated at Harsud (in the Sardar Sarovar Sumergence area) in a rally against the Narmada Project. In March 1990, there was a 'rasta roko' (road blockage) in the Bombay - Delhi highway and two months later a dharna (protest sit - in) of oustees an activists outside the Prime Minister's residence.¹²

In June 1992 The Independent Review Mission appointed by the World bank in its report cautioned the project authorities that the project should be stopped. The project officials and World bank which was funding the project were advised to step back from the project as rehabilitaion of such a large population is impossible, human rights of the tribals are being and must necesarily be infringed and, that on account of lack of water in the Narmada the project will in any event not perform as planned.

¹² B.G. Verghese, Winning the Future: From bhakra to Narmada, Tehri, Rajasthan Canal' Konark Publishers Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, P.161.

The project continued inspite of the withdrawal of the World Bank. The protestors took the extreme step. They pledged not to move from the submergence area. A camp was set up in Manibeli and the oustees as well as the activists pledged 'Jal Samarpan'(voluntary immersion in water).

The incidents stated above reveal a basic difference between the movement in Tehri and the Narmada Bachao Andolan. The difference between a largely unorganised movement and a sustained effort. The organized nature of the Narmada Bachao andolan has led to its constructive intervention for a rethinking of the development process.

As stated earlier, the basic aim of this chapter is to attempt a comparative analysis of the two movements. While recording the events of the respective movements it became apparent that a comparative analysis would not do full justice to the movements. Each movement has its own essence, own

success and its own failure, so a fixed pattern would hide a lot of factors that add up to the character of the movement. For this purpose a Political - Cultural Paradigm had been stated as a better method of studying the social aspects of the movements. Yet at the same time there is a vein of commonality in the movements that have been studied here, commonality by virtue of having a common enemy. The common enemy is the modern scientific development. In the Tehri region as well as in the Narmada valley we see a spurning of modern development, a plea for an alternative to the present model that threatens and does not reassure.

4.4 ATTEMPTING AN ANALYSIS

Here the attempt is to analyse the Narmada Bachao Andolan as a sociological phenomena. A proper analysis would be possible if a number of other movements of the same nature are taken. Due to the

lack of time and space we take Tehri as the second example.

Narmada Bachao Andolan has initiated a debate in the following areas in development :

- a) the question of ecology and development,
- b) the place of tribals / marginals in development programmes
- c) the place of women in development
- d) there is a fourth aspect that has also been raised by the movement, that of the necessity of a vanguard in a movement like this.

In the following pages we would like to analyse the debate that has been highlighted by the Narmada Bachao Andolan. The questions had been raised by the people in Tehri and have been carried on further by the andolan in the Narmada Valley.

4.4a Ecology and Development

Long back our ancestors worshipped nature. There was a rain god who would give succour to nature, there were trees that were worshipped because of their medicinal qualities, or merely worshipped as a gift from nature. They used to celebrate a good harvest. In other words nature was their religion. Even today in primitive societies nature is worshipped. But they are few and do not occupy a central position in today's world.

With the development of modern science there developed an urge to demystify the mythical. The urge to find a reason to everything, the need to categorise life in neat compartments. Science has created a hierarchy, a hierarchy where the highest position goes to the most 'secular'. Secular not in the sense of being a non - fundamentalist but in the sense of assuming that whatever is mysterious must have a cause, beliefs must have a scientific base. In this world of secular existence, material advancement is

sought after and technology becomes the new religion.

The Secular hierarchy¹³ creates identities, one either follows its path or becomes the 'other'. The other is bad, in fact all the things that a secular is not. There is no space for ambivalence, one is either 'good' or 'bad'.

In this world of secularism the key to success is development. The more developed a nation is the more secular it is. The road to development is resource utilisation, the resources that are utilised are those of a less developed country. India for a long time was in a 'less developed' state and hence the history of resource manipulation too is a long one.

¹³ Ashish Nandy in his article 'The Politics of Secularism' attempts to define Secular "The word secular has been used in the sense of secular trade or economics in the English speaking West for more than three hundred years. This secularism chalks out an area in public life where religion is not admitted. Implicit in the ideology is the belief that managing the public realm is a science which is essentially universal and that religion, to the extent that it is opposed to the Baconian world-image of science is an open or potential threat to any modern polity", Ashish Nandy, 'The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance' in Veena Das ed. 'Mirrors of Violence' OUP, 1990, p.75.

Under the British rule India had to give up her resources because Britain had to enter the world market. As a result forests were plundered, crop cycles were changed.¹⁴

The resource manipulation has not abated. The resources or the residue of the resources are being used to make India a member of that magic circle - the secular, developed world.

The Narmada Bachao Andolan has forced the developmentalists to rethink the whole issue of development and the resultant ecological degradation. Development that is synonymous with industrialisation and technology has led to an acute shortage of resources. The Chipko movement in Tehri has made a vast contribution in countering the plunder of natural resources. One of the few things that led to the Chipko movement was the refusal of the Forest Department to supply the villagers with Ash

¹⁴ In Bengal the crop cycles were changed to accommodate the cultivation of Indigo which the East India Company exported to the west.

wood that is traditionally used to make ploughs whereas the same wood was being supplied to a sports goods manufacturer.

A determined struggle by the villagers against commercial forestry yielded results. The commercial forestry that had started afresh in 1965 threatened to leave the hillside bare. The people in Tehri went into a spontaneous protest. They camped in the forest, refusing let the contractors cut trees. At the same time they appealed to the higher officials of the state to intervene in their favour. Here again we see the familiar shadow of dhandak - the belief that the higher officials were sympathetic whereas the root of all evil are the wicked officials.

In the case of Narmada project there was the same picture of a people being rendered homeless for commercial gains. The main aim of the planners was to provide water for sugarcane and cash crops. This would rejuvenate the economy. For this thousands of

acres of forest with myriad flora and fauna will get submerged. The grazing lands will be destroyed. The destruction of the grazing lands would mean disaster for the poor people especially the nomadic people.

The entire tribal people depend on the forests for their existence, the destruction of forests would mean their social, cultural and economic destruction.

There are enough examples of development leading to the destitution of people depending on natural resources. 'Social Activists in Saharanpur point out to the state of the 'baan' makers who have now been deprived of their earlier source of the 'bhabhar' grass.

The Uttar Pradesh Forest Development Corporation discriminates in favour of the paper mills and this policy has turned thousands of 'baan' makers into landless labourers, urban migrants.'¹⁵

¹⁵ Anil Agarwal, 'The Politics of Environment', Gandhi Marg, vol 8(1), 1986, p.145

The planners have to remember the fact that ecology not only means nature, it also means a relationship between nature and man. To destroy one would destroy the other.

4.4b The lost woods - the space of tribals / marginals in development

'After finding a stable place on the back of the fish ragal masa, for the world and its creatures made out of clay, Veelubai ponders

"I have shaped everything but my creatues don't have life", Veelubai said and started thinking. As she thought she rubbed the dirt off her chest. With the dirt form her chest she made a letter to God and sent it to God's house, God was sleeping, God sleeps for twelve years and stays awake for thirteen. The letter fell on his chest and he woke up. Started reading the letter and replied "I am great god ; your name is Veelubai. You have made such big creatures, tell me the name of your mother and father and I will give life to your creatures". Wrote the letter and sent it to Veelubai's house.

Veelubai picked up the letter and started reading went into great thought "Tari mani chudu, my mother has a name, but I don't know my father". She wrote another letter and sent it to God's house

God asked Veelubai to send her clay creatures. He said that they have have life put into them and blood put into them.

Now God did not really know how to put life into the creatures. God sent his aunt Banglatrani a letter. She picked it up . Her daughters Lakharia and Zukharia were studying. Their mother told them “beti, God is the supreme King. And he has sent a letter asking how life can be put into these creatures”.

Lakharia and Zukharia set about looking for life. There is an ocean - vanthar - where the wind blows and makes the ocean speak. Lakharia and Zukharia set about stealing the ocean. When the wind blew for the ocean to speak they quickly put it in a box

They then released the wind and the creatures came to life, God agreed to put blood into them’

(As translated by Amita Baviskar and published in Lokayan, August 1991)

This is part of a GAYANA, myth of creation of the Bhilalas. This epic poem speaks of the creation of the Bhilala universe consisting of human, beasts, plants, gods and goddesses and their musical instruments: Throughout flows the river Narmada bestowing life to all whom she meets, naming and making sacred the geography of the land along her banks.

This poem will not be found in the mainstream history as the creators of the poem have long been rendered silent. The Bhilalas like the other tribes

have pushed to margin for decades. A large population of the area to be submerged are tribals. They have not been included in the development policies for a long time.

The Narmada Bachao Andolan has brought the silent forward. The tribal culture for most of the developed countries is a drawing room culture where the different artefacts gathered from tribal areas are proudly displayed. Beyond this there is a void, the tribals are not given the space to live. Since Decades they have been cultivating forest land but they do not have a patta (title deed). After the forests are submerged they will have no land.

In the Narmada Bachao Andolan we see tribals taking 'shapath' to fight the project with their lives. We see them patiently sitting at dharnas waiting for a chance to speak their piece. It is to the credit of the Narmada Bachao Andolan that they can articulate before a 'civilised' urban milieu.

In the case of Tehri the villagers enjoyed a close relation with nature. They had drawn a protective circle around their forests so as to nurture them. They drew their sustenance from the forests. The well nurtured forests in Kumayun are an example of the people's love for their forests. As the commercial forestry set in the people were barred from using the forests. They saw the trees being cut down, young saplings destroyed. Till they could not bear anymore, they fought against the contractors. The commercial forestry ceased. Then came the dam, the lands that they love will be submerged forever. They tried to fight but the opposition was too great. Broken, they watched development depriving them of their homes. They pledged that they will fight the dam, fight the encroachment on their space.

One is reminded of the statement of S.C. Verma, ex chairman of the Narmada Valley Development Agency.

He had said "No trauma could be more painful for a family than to get uprooted from a place where it has

lived for generations and to move to a place where it
may be a total stranger. And nothing can be more
irksome than being asked to switch over to a vocation
which the family has not practised before. Yet the
uprooting has to be done. Because the land occupied
by the family is required for a development project
which holds promise of progress and prosperity for
the country and the people in general. The family
getting displaced is making a sacrifice for the sake of
community. It undergoes hardship and distress and
faces an uncertain future so that the others may live
in happiness and be economically better off".¹⁶

It is expected that development will assume that
it has a right to plan a future without considering the
people involved. For the sake of development and the
well being of others the people have to make sacrifices.
With the tribals and the peasants coming out with

¹⁶ Claude Alvares & Romesh Billorey, Damming the Narmada:
India's greatest planned environmental disaster, Natraj
Publishers, DehraDun, 1988, p.18

protests, it is for the first time that secular western development is forced to reckon with a new side of human existence - a hitherto marginalised, repressed existence. When the people are asked to sacrifice, do the developmentalists know that for most people it is their life that they are forced to sacrifice. In the case of the tribals the community is the quintessence of their life. "Enabling the tribal people to live according to their own genius" was the central point of the Panchsheel established by Jawahar Lal Nehru to deal with the tribal matters. The Fifth Schedule of the Constitution notes down the fact that nothing formal should be allowed to compromise the tribal interest. The provisions in the Fifth Schedule made sure that the community spirit must be protected for that is the only protection that the tribal understands and can look forward to for protection in adverse situations.

The community for the tribals act as their identity and faced with the breakup they have no

alternative but to fight the modern system. Similar fate was shared by the hill people, taken for granted by the project authorities, they had no alternative but to fight. In both Tehri and the anti Narmada movement there is the fight for space - not just territorial but the space that means the whole fabric of their lives. This is not to say that only the tribals stand the threat of displacement, but that their fate is more precarious. A tribal does not have anything but the forest - a forest that is state owned. They will not receive land, nor money, as for jobs, they are not equipped.

In the Tehri many areas have been taken over by the project authorities. The people have been put in the resettlement colonies. They exist in harsh conditions, there is no land to till, no forest nearby.

In the Narmada Valley too there are people who have been resettled. Their existence can be best judged by excerpts of a report :

“ The small holdings awarded by way of compensation to those whose lands have been acquired for the reservoir does not take into cognisance the quality of the soil and the supplement received by the oustees from the proximity of the river vis a vis the old habitation. The herds of animals that every adhivasi family owned stands in danger of being lost for ever, as there is no pasturage in the new settlements. With the livestock vanishing an important source of income to the families will disappear. Manual or mental labour is virtually absent. I have heard the heart breaking account of the farmers of Kothi who have been reduced to coughing T.B. patients in the vocation of manual labourers, loading and unloading cement. Even this alternative is not always available, and when and where it is available yeilds a pittance.”¹⁷

The greatest tragedy of development therefore is the ‘disembedding of social institutions. The lifting out of social relations from local context and

¹⁷ A part of the report prepared by Retd. Justice Daud

their rearticulation across indefinite tracts of time - space. The inevitability of the breaking down of protective network of small community and tradition and replacing these with much larger, impersonal organisation'.¹⁸

4.4c We Are The Miracles By Which We Survive :
Voices of the Women

The destruction of the environment clearly poses a great threat to marginal cultures and occupations like that of the tribals, nomads and, fisher folk who have always been heavily dependent on their immediate environment for their survival. But the maximum impact of destruction has to be borne by the women. Women in all rural cultures are affected, especially from the poor landless and marginal farmer families. Seen from the point of view of these women

¹⁸ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and self identity: self and society in late modern age*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992, p. 17

it can be argued that all development is ignorant of women's needs at best, and anti women at worst.¹⁹

Given the culturally accepted division of work, fuel, fodder and water are the concerns of women. As the environment degrades, the women have to spend extraordinary time looking for these as well as look after the household work. This should not be the only reason behind the participation of women in the anti dam struggle. The dam to women is yet another evil that development had imposed on them. With development has come in the cash economy, affecting their relationship with men in their families. There is now a real dichotomy in the man woman relationship.

The women have continued to look after the non monetised aspect of the household, whereas the men have become more alienated from the eco system.

Ind There is a mass exodus to the cities and the women are

¹⁹ Anil Agarwal, Politics Of Environment, Gandhi Marg, Vol 8 (1), 1986, p.149.

left with additional work - household as well as agricultural. This has on the other hand strengthened the relationship between women and nature. The experience of Chipko shows that the women are willing to plant trees and look after forests even after their house hold work.

Chipko Andolan unlike the earlier struggles in Tehri Kumayun region saw the participation of the women on a large scale. It must be remembered that social conditions during the colonial rule did not encourage women to step out of their hearth. So there is no evidence of women participating in the dhandaks. In the Chipko Andolan however there were women leaders who were most vociferous in their demands for a clean environment.

In the case of the Narmada Bachao Andolan the women came out on the streets. It is a difficult task, more so in the case of rural, farming women who have to tow a brutal male line. Any deviance is punished

harshly. It was in that situation that Champa Behn, Budhiben Indiya and many others have braved the state assault. They have defied government order and stayed on in their dwellings. The State Punishment was harsh and violative - rape, physical torture. There are stories of immeasurable courage where women have tolerated immense atrocities and have still come out to fight development. Their stories will not differ diametrically from the one given below.

“On the 4th of April 1993, a group of about ten persons including police men, the Sarpanch and the Patel of Antras village came into our house at midnight. The Patel is my nephew. They started beating me and my son - in - law and told us that they had come to arrest us. There was no police woman with them. They took us out on to the road where they stripped me off my clothes. They were beating me all the time. The two policemen and the Patel, my nephew, raped me.

. I was kept in Naswadi jail for a night. At the Baroda jail I was stripped and beaten up, the police said that I was with Medhaji so that is why I was beaten up.

I have faced this injustice but I will not give up my struggle. I have gone to jail, I have been tortured but I will not leave my land. Even if the police kills me.”²⁰

²⁰ Account given by Budhiben at the 5th National Women's Conference in Tirupathi, January 1994.

The women do not expect anything from development. They want to preserve their control over the subsistence base, their common property resources : the land, the water, forests and the hills. As said earlier, development has done nothing for women. it has only perpetuated the violence against them. For example, 'In India's green revolution areas like Punjab, women's death due to dowry killing increased with increased affluence'.²¹

The involvement of the women in the anti dam struggles is a reaction to the patriarchal nature of development. The body of knowledge that reigns is embedded in a culture that relegates the women to their home and hearth. "The women were defined out of so called social production and placed within - or more accurately demoted to - the realm of nature. And with the advent of capitalism nature was termed backward. Women and subjugated people

²¹ Vandana Shiva & Maria Mies, 'Eco-feminism', Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1993, p.305

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are not treated as if they belonged to society proper. Instead they were treated as if they were means of production or the natural resources. The economic logic behind this is that women (as means for producing people) are goods that can in no way be produced by capital. Control over women is therefore the foundation of any system based on exploitation."²² Development belongs to this system. The logic of development is therefore defined by that of modern science, economics - who believe in the colonisation of women.

²² Mies et. al. (ed), Women The Last Colony, Zed Books, London, 1988, p.5

4.4d Vanguard²³ : An Essential factor?

Every movement has the possibility of becoming political. Especially a movement about self identity. When one asserts to define his/her identity the personal issues no longer stay so, they become political. In the case of the Chipko Andolan we have seen a largely unorganised leadership. Issues that have risen in the Chipko andolan were not very dissimilar to those of the Narmada Bachao Andolan. Yet in the latter we see a more sustained effort. A tentative suggestion is that the presence of active leadership is perhaps very necessary for articulation of demands.

²³ When defining the word vanguard we take into account Gramsci's words when he said that "All men are intellectuals ... but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals". When we speak of leadership here we talk of that section of intellectuals who follow the 'philosophy of praxis', that leadership whose mode of development comes from "active participation in practical life as constructor, organiser, permanent persuader and not just as an orator". (Sections quoted have been taken from Antonio Gramsci, Selection From Prison Notebooks, (ed. & translated by Quintin Hoare, Geoffrey Nowell Smith), International Publishers, New York, 1973, p.10.

In the Narmada Bachao Andolan we see the presence of an educated middle class leadership²⁴ - Medha Patkar, Baba Amte, Amita Baviskar, Ashish Kothari. They might be called the intelligentsia - the indigenous elite. The formulation of demands, mobilising people, strategising show the mark of a coherent leadership.

While the leadership in the case of Chipko is not uniform, the case of Narmada Bachao Andolan is different. In Chipko there are two divergent trends in the leadership - one belonging to the Gandhian school which spurns modern development, the other not averse to benevolent development. In the case of Narmada Bachao Andolan, the leadership took up a single agenda - opposing development projects that ignore the demands of the people. In Chipko the

²⁴ By Leadership, here we mean, the factor that is responsible for converting a spontaneous movement into an organized expression of protest. Effectivity of a leadership also depends on its ability to communicate with the people or the rank and file of the movement.

methods used were traditional²⁵, one that the development could afford to ignore and later suppress.

The method used in the Narmada Bachao Andolan was a curious mixture of the old and the new - there were shapaths, the threat of Jal Samarpan and also media publicity, lobbying.

In the introduction we had stated the aim of this dissertation. The objective was to locate the analysis of Narmada Bachao Andolan in the critique of the existing development paradigm. Along with the Narmada Bachao Andolan we had included the case of Tehri where the people have fighting for their forests and their lands. The analysis has revealed that both the movements especially the Narmada Bachao Andolan have successfully articulated the problem areas that surround development viz. development

²⁵ Similar sentiment can be seen in Gramsci's statement when he says that "Intellectuals of the rural type are for the most part traditional that is they are linked to the mass of the country people and town (particularly small town)..... not as yet elaborated and set in motion by the capitalist system..." Antonio Gramsci, 'Selections from Prison Notebooks' (ed. & translated by Quintin Hoare & Geoffrey Nowell Smith), International Publishers, New York, 1973, p.14.

and ecological degradation, development and the space of the marginals, women in development and lastly the role of the vanguard in these kind of movements.

In the last area the Narmada Bachao Andolan has differed from Tehri. The leadership in Tehri was unorganised and had contained many differing ideologies. Whereas in the Narmada Bachao Andolan we have seen the burgeoning presence of an efficient leadership. It has been established without doubt that an efficient leadership is a necessity for any movement to achieve its goals.

The Sociological significance of Narmada Bachao Andolan lies in the fact that it has been able to articulate an alternate social reality comprising of the marginals of the prevalent reality. It has also catalysed a process whereby a dialogue between development and the human factor becomes necessary.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION
IN SEARCH OF ALTERNATIVES

At the end of a journey one remembers unfinished task and this case is no different. The journey began with a definition of development and its critique. The purpose of the dissertation was to study the Narmada Bachao Andolan, to find the critique of development that it contained.

In Chapter One we have looked at the official perspective. Faced with the official truth, with its statistics, it is difficult not to believe in the glorious future that it indicates. The official vision however did not contain any space for the human factor. The aim of the project seemed to be a better tomorrow. But for whom?

In Chapter Two the alternative perspective questions this attitude of the project planners of

undermining the human factor to the extent of implying that people might have to sacrifice for the sake of a development project. The alternate view questions - development for whom?

In Chapter three we have analysed two movements - Tehri and The Narmada Bachao Andolan. We traced the social history of protest in the Tehri from the colonial state to the present. We saw a people defeated by the logic of development. On the other hand in the Narmada Valley we saw a determined struggle against yet another mega project. The struggle that has articulated several counter arguments to development.

We saw a movement which gave the marginals space to speak. We saw the Narmada Bachao Andolan herald new era of life politics among the people who feared to dream - the project affected people. There is also a rise of a traditional elite who spurn the Euro centric bodies of Knowledge, who

adapt, contextualise knowledge so that it may no longer seem alien.

The Narmada Bachao Andolan while initiating an active debate in the development process, has provided us with an insight about India's journey to modernity. Development as is understood by the West was a progress without any consideration about indigeneous social and political realities. It was more of an euphoric exercise that emphasised on the inevitability of progress.

As various development projects were tried out, it became apparent to the planners that somehow development was not producing the magic that it had promised. The native planners who had adopted the development projects had done so without acknowledging the fact that the cultural ethos of the people in their countries differed from the west. There were protests from the people against an alien development, but none had articulated the protest as

the Narmada Bachao Andolan. It's sustained critique of Development has led to the discussion about alternatives to the present development.

And The question then arises what alternatives could there be to development? The Struggle by the people in the Narmada Valley and Tehri has provided us with a notion of a plausible alternative. The alternative lies in the demands of the two protests - the demand for subsistence as against development and the demand for the recognition of an alternative view point that belongs to an alternative knowledge structure. The first demand argues for an end to development's predatory relationship with nature and a return to the balanced relationship that the people enjoyed with nature. This does not seem like an impossible demand as the people have lived in harmony with nature for a long time. The second demand or the demand for a recognition of an alternate structure of Knowledge reiterates the fact that modern science perpetuates violence against body

and mind. The modern science differs from the older sciences as the latter had organic linkages with their culture. Modern science on the other hand “pretends to operate a system independent or out side the frame work of culture”.¹

The protest against this has served the purpose of bringing to notice the alternative of an indigenous body of knowledge, that is embedded in its cultural ethos. An indigenous knowledge structure does not necessarily mean a tribal knowledge structure but one that includes the essence of every section of the indigenous population.

The Narmada Bachao Andolan has acquired a political character. We see the advent of a new kind of politics, a non electoral politics. At one hand there is a burgeoning emancipatory politics where the aim is ‘to release the underprivileged from their unhappy

¹ Claude Alvares, ‘Science, Development and Violence’, OUP, New Delhi, 1992, p. 151.

conditions, to eliminate relative differences' and on the other hand there is the dominant play of life politics in the Andolan. One can say that the Narmada Bachao Andolan is an embodiment of all the characteristics of life politics - 'emancipation from the fixities of tradition and from the conditions of hierarchical domination. Life politics is the politics of life decisions affecting the self identity. It is a politics of choice.'²

In the Narmada Bachao Andolan we see a linking up with the world wide critique of development, a commonality of identity with the other third world movements and at the same time a fierce fight to assert the individual identity of the actors.

In this 'politics' lies the significance of the Narmada Bachao Andolan. It's counter arguments to

² Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991, p.211 - 215.

the logic of development, its passionate appeals for an alternative to the existing paradigm, will perhaps lead India to a modernity whose context lies in the ethos of an 'underdeveloped' world.

The significance of the Narmada Bachao Andolan as a turning point in the social history requires a much more detailed study. Herein lies the limitation of the dissertation. It is but an exploration of a situation pregnant with possibilities. We propose to take up a detailed analysis of the topic in the future.

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