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Whose Nation?

The Displaced as Victims of Development

Smitu Kothari

Efforts at minimising displacement or improving resettlement will only be marginal, palliative and temporary if they are not contextualised in a wider socio-political context. Three contentions support the argument: first, that the current patterns of economic development which are constantly invoked to justify the forced eviction of people all over the country, are themselves incompatible with the goals of creating wider conditions of equity and social security. Second, despite constitutional mandates, in an overwhelming number of cases, national and regional interests violate the interests of politically and economically weaker groups and individuals. Third, political and ecological solutions sought must recognise the need to both democratise the control over the resources and processes of production and regenerate the degraded ecological resources.

The total domination of nature inevitably entails a domination of people by the techniques of domination.

Andre Gorz¹

"I am most unhappy that development projects displace tribal people from their habitat, especially as project authorities do not always take care to properly rehabilitate the affected population. But sometimes there is no alternative and we have to go ahead in the larger interest...."

Indira Gandhi, 1984²

I Introduction

THIS paper, while providing an overview of developmental displacement, situates the debate on displacement and resettlement in a wider socio-political context. It argues that if this context is neglected, efforts at minimising displacement or improving resettlement will only be marginal, palliative and temporary. These efforts will not, except in a few rare cases, improve the socio-economic and cultural security of the communities who are displaced. Three contentions support the argument.

The first contention is that the current patterns of economic development which have been constantly invoked to justify the forced eviction of people all over the country, are themselves incompatible with the goals of creating wider conditions of equity and social security. Further, these patterns have been equated with national progress where "public purpose" and "national interest" have been used interchangeably and based on the political premise that nation states are sacrosanct political entities and possess exclusive rights to political sovereignty and the power of eminent domain.³

In the name of the Constitution, courts and governments, continue to justify large-scale acquisition of land supposedly "for the public good". For instance, as recently as 1994, the Supreme Court stated that,

The power to acquire private property for public use is an attribute of sovereignty and

is essential to the existence of a government. The power of eminent domain was recognised on the principle that the sovereign state can always acquire the property of a citizen for public good, without the owner's consent... The right to acquire an interest in land compulsorily has assumed increasing importance as a result of requirement of such land more and more everyday, for different public purpose and to implement the promises made by the framers of the Constitution to the people of India (emphasis added).⁴

Claims that local populations should be granted inalienable rights to their lands where state access is subject to a mutually defined process of negotiation are interpreted as 'sub-nationalist' or 'secessionist' and therefore, except in the rarest of rare cases, denounced.⁵ This issue gains greater complexity in societies like India where regular elections are held and it is thereby assumed that those who are elected to rule "represent" the people and have been thus vested with the authority to define what is and what is not in the national interest.⁶

These patterns and assumptions need to be challenged and rethought if any serious effort is to be made to reduce the number of victims of displacement and to widen the base of social and economic justice.

The second contention is that the issue of displacement and resettlement has to be viewed within the broad question of distribution of power. Despite constitutional mandates and an emphasis on favouring the underprivileged, in an overwhelming number of cases, national and regional (and increasingly global) interests – the primary beneficiaries of the developmental process – transgress from or violate the interests of politically and economically weaker groups and individuals. In decisions on who should be displaced and what should be the treatment meted out to them, the more powerful interests have continued to prevail, especially when they have encountered poor and politically weak populations. This question is therefore essentially linked to demo-

cratising the planning process itself and integrally involving the historically underprivileged and disempowered in decisions that so crucially affect their lives, livelihoods and lifestyles.

The final contention is that political and ecological solutions must be sought which recognise the need to both democratise the control over the resources and processes of production, and regenerate the degraded ecological resources of the country. Else, lakhs of people will continue to be consigned "to the dustbins of history" by the processes of planned and market-driven development.

POST-INDEPENDENCE DISPLACEMENT

Since independence, development projects of the Five-Year Plans have displaced about five lakh persons each year primarily as a direct consequence of administrative land acquisition.⁷ This figure does not include displacement by non-Plan projects, changes in land-use, acquisition for urban growth, and loss of livelihood caused by environmental degradation and pollution.⁸ Also not included are the substantial displacements that are resulting as a consequence of the "systems of monoculture" that are replacing the ecological diversity along the coasts, on the lands and in the forests.

Hydroelectric and irrigation projects are the largest source of displacement and destruction of habitat. Other major sources are mines (particularly open-cast mines), superthermal and nuclear power plants, industrial complexes as well as military installations, weapons testing grounds, railways and roads, the notification and expansion of reserved forest areas, sanctuaries and parks and the use of profit-improving technologies (causing large-scale displacement of traditional fisherfolk and handloom weavers). Most of these interventions also adversely affect artisanal communities and other self-employed people. For instance, since independence, over 1,600 major dams⁹ and tens of thousands of medium and smaller irrigation projects have been built with the attendant canal

systems and the invariable consequences of waterlogging and soil salinisation. As a result, between 100-120 lakh people have been forcibly displaced. Another estimate places the number closer to 210 lakhs by these dams from 1951 till 1985.¹⁰

In the absence of firm projectwise data, the estimates of the total numbers displaced by planned development interventions from 1951-1990 range from a conservative 110 lakhs to an overall figure of 185 lakhs.¹¹ These figures do not include the sizeable number of people who are not acknowledged as being 'project affected' (i.e., by loss of livelihood caused by natural resource extraction or degradation), those displaced in urban areas and those victimised by the processes of secondary displacement.¹² If these are tallied, the number of those displaced since independence would be as high as four crores.

A significant number of those displaced are tribals and other economically marginal rural populations who have historically depended on the natural resource base, particularly the commons, for their subsistence. The *29th Report of the Commissioner of Scheduled Castes and Tribes*¹³ notes that even though tribal people are roughly 7.5 per cent of the population, over 40 per cent of those displaced till 1990 came from these communities underscoring the fact that tribals are disproportionately affected by developmental displacement.

Walter Fernandes estimates that in the recent past the proportion of tribals among those displaced has been increasing.¹⁴ For example, of the 11.6 lakh persons to be displaced by 20 representative dams above 50 metres either under construction or being planned in the 1990s, 59 per cent are tribals. This figure will obviously increase for dams planned in predominantly tribal areas (Suvamarekha, Pollavaram, etc.). The Central Water Commission's 1990 *Register of Large Dams*¹⁵ is also instructive. Of the 32 dams of more than 50 metre height completed between 1951 and 1970, only nine (22.13 per cent) were in tribal areas. Between 1971 and 1990, 85 additional dams of similar sizes were either completed or were under construction. However, by now not only were they taller and more sophisticated, around 60 per cent of them were in the tribal regions.

A recent official report on the rehabilitation of tribals, based on a comprehensive study of 110 projects, concludes that of the 16.94 lakh people displaced by these projects, almost 50 per cent (8.14 lakhs) were tribals.¹⁶

This scenario is also true for mining. A majority of mines are located in tribal areas and in addition to direct displacement, mining activity severely affects the livelihoods of thousands more as water tables get disrupted, overburden is dumped on fertile agricultural land, and forests are cut.¹⁷ Not only are communities deprived of their vital subsistence

resources, the long-term sustainability of the resources themselves is jeopardised.¹⁸ In Singrauli,¹⁹ which is being developed as the energy capital of India, (and which has the largest open-cast coal mine in Asia), the growing number of super thermal power plants represent a new trend: instead of building power stations near industrial and urban centres, as was the practice in the past, they build near 'captive' coal mines, and feed the power into regional or national grids. Although lower transaction costs is one obvious reason for this change, the primary reasons for it are that dispersed and previously displaced populations are already fragmented and disempowered, and that, comparatively, pollution and environmental degradation remain less 'visible'. These processes also increase rural displacement, particularly of tribals, since a majority of coal mines are in tribal areas.

Experience from across the tribal areas in the country illustrates the severe difficulties that displaced tribal communities have had in dealing with the market economy. Their low level of modern skills coupled with almost non-existent official efforts to facilitate an easier entry into the dominant economy, pushes a majority of tribals into conditions of servility and bondage. The need to avoid such large-scale displacement, particularly of tribals, and in the case of unavoidable displacement, their ultimate resettlement on fair and equitable terms, have become central issues of the developmental process itself.

For a majority of tribals, geographical space and an evolved relationship with it has contributed to their cultural identity and their complex patterns of subsistence which primarily depend on land, forests, water bodies, and animal and plant life. In addition, most do not live in discrete nuclear families but in extended ones that are integrally linked to a larger community fabric.

Despite the rhetoric to the contrary, best summed up in Pandit Nehru's famous statement on tribal policy,²⁰ planning devalues this complex interrelated integrated lifestyle and applies reductionist legal and economic categories to define how, if they are to be displaced, should they be compensated. Even for agriculturists, no titles existed and, as a rule, the letter of the Land Acquisition Act, 1894 (subsequently amended in 1984) which only made the state liable for cash compensation, in the process legitimising the gross injustice and social violence in reducing rights and interests into claims and complex systems into monetary compensation, was literally the final word. It also only recognised individual and not collective or community rights and hereditary usufruct rights were not even recognised.²¹

Additionally, the multiple and season-specific relationships with the ecosystem which played a critical role in supporting their lifestyle was neither recognised nor

compensated (assuming that much of this can be quantified). In most cases, since there is a fundamental gap in the lifestyles of the planner and the tribal, even where resettlement has taken place, little or no efforts have been made to ensure access to a similar ecological zone. Effectively, state intervention and the law have primarily served the interests of injustice rather than justice.

Ironically, much of this is conceded in official literature. For instance, a report of the home ministry acknowledged that, "In the tribal areas, where the displaced persons are given only cash compensation, the tendencies to spend the compensation amount by buying consumer goods and becoming destitute are common....In most of the projects, the tribal oustees become listless wanderers without a mooring."²² Soon after independence, the constituent assembly debates themselves acknowledged their vulnerability and their rights.²³ However, this recognition has rarely been followed up by state action that can even be called mitigatory.

A small caveat, lest there is misunderstanding: this paper does not propagate the view that no displacement is the preferred option or that tribal cultures in a specific geographical space need to be frozen in that localised context. After all, the process of acculturation with Hindu and Muslim practices and rituals has been a long and differentiated one, and these cultures have evolved complex relationships with the "outside world." What is being argued from a constitutionalist as well as ecological-political perspective is that no displacement is just unless the due process outlined here is respected and that developmental interventions need to internalise these social, economic, ecological and processual obligations to those who are displaced – obligations that may require the intervention itself to be altered or recast.

TRAUMA OF DISPLACEMENT

The experience of the post-independence period from projects across the country suggests that the long drawn out process of displacement has caused widespread traumatic psychological and socio-cultural consequences. These include the dismantling of production systems, desecration of ancestral sacred zones or graves and temples, scattering of kinship groups and family systems, disorganisation of informal social networks that provide mutual support, weakening of self-management and social control, disruption of trade and market links, etc. Essentially, what is established in the accumulated evidence in the country suggests that except in the rarest of rare cases, forced displacement has resulted in, what Michael Cernea calls "a spiral of impoverishments."²⁴ Cernea also points out that trade links between producers and their customer base (and systems of exchange and barter) are

interrupted and local labour markets are disrupted. In addition, there is a loss of complex social relationships which provided avenues of representation, mediation and conflict resolution. In essence, the very cultural identity of the community and the individual within it is disrupted causing immense physiological and psychological stress. In fact, one of the tragedies of forced displacement is that while in most cases, persons displaced by natural disasters or communal violence are able to return to their original habitat, this choice is not available to those displaced or those whose livelihoods are adversely affected.

These social and ecological impacts find little reflection in project planning and policy where the economic justifications of projects (particularly the cost-benefit analysis) are essentially reductionist and devalue or ignore basic socio-cultural and ecological processes (most of which in any case are non-quantifiable in conventional neoclassical economic exercises). How, for instance, do you value the complex social, cultural and ecological role of the forest? How can the cost of the destruction of biodiversity be quantified? Or the increase in incidence of reservoir-induced seismicity in many dam projects? Where do you acknowledge and respond to the multiple violations of rights to the displaced? While there may be some usefulness in evolving a more comprehensive cost-benefit analysis (making, in the process, many projects uneconomic), the danger in relying on this exercise is that even at its best, it "subordinates human values and interests to those of the market, and one that is distorted by vested interests to boot."²⁵

The process of displacement is also disempowering since it breaks up socio-political organisations articulating a critique of the project (and of the development process itself). In fact, in many cases, this process is fashioned in such a way that it furthers disempowerment. Activists of the Tehri Bandh Virodhi Samiti state that there was a conscious strategy of the project authorities and the state government to divide the united resistance to the Tehri project.²⁶ One group of those who would be displaced (selected from among the most active supporters of the Samiti) was resettled near Dehradun, almost a 100 kilometres from the dam site. (Tragically, many of them now face their second displacement as the lands that they have painstakingly regenerated are needed for the expansion of the Dehradun airport). While the Samiti was able to maintain some contact with them at their new settlement, it was impossible for it to sustain collective action across geographical space.

The other neglected dimension of displacement is its adverse impact on women. Their trauma is compounded by the loss of access to fuel, fodder and food the collection of which inevitably requires greater time and effort. Few resettlement sites have made

provisions for this. This is the experience even in the "model resettlement villages" (e.g., Malu), which were built for the Gujarat oustees of the Sardar Sarovar project. Additionally, when displaced, most women experience greater pauperisation and get confined to the margins of the labour market. Similarly, children are adversely affected since not only is schooling less accessible, in most cases there is also a disruption in the traditional socialisation processes.

APATHETIC PLANNING

An overwhelming majority of planners invariably see people who happen to live at or around the siting of a development project, as impediments to progress, as those who "must make sacrifices for the development of the nation."²⁷ Nehru was one of the first who legitimated this attitude. In a speech a few months after independence, at the foundation laying ceremony of India's first major river-valley project, the Hirakud dam in Orissa, he said to those facing displacement, "If you have to suffer, you should suffer in the interest of the country."²⁸ Dams and other large projects were, after all, also legitimated as symbols of independence and self-sufficiency.

In fact, in several cases, displacement itself was presented as development. It is this mindset that justifies the labelling of those who criticise these projects as not only anti-project or anti-development but also anti-national. As a consequence, the democratic activities of the critics of these projects are often treated as a public order problem.

Planners and administrators invariably capitalise on and manipulate the relatively weaker socio-economic and political position of most of the people facing displacement. Their numbers are underestimated, they are treated indifferently and only minimal cash compensation, if at all, is paid.²⁹ There is an extraordinary unwillingness to grant them clear rights, such as security of tenure on alternative developed land sites. A graphic and painful example is again that of the displaced of Singrauli who are part of the over two lakh people first displaced by the Rihand dam in 1964. Tens of thousands who in the absence of any resettlement programme, settled on the banks of the reservoir, cultivating the land which is exposed when the reservoir recedes in the summer season. They were subsequently displaced by thermal power plants, coal mines, railways, industries and urbanisation and now face displacement for an incomprehensible fifth time in a single generation as their temporary settlements are to be evicted to make way for urban, road and rail transport and afforestation projects. Since the dam was a foregone conclusion and, anticipating further 'development', could they not have been permanently resettled and given clear titles to land in 1964 itself?

Other studies across the country have documented multiple displacements of communities who had after a painful and traumatic period of transition, established a new lifestyle only to be informed that they are to be moved again. In addition to the plight of the oustees of the Tehri project mentioned above, two other recent examples are of fishing communities displaced for the New Mangalore Port in the 1960s and resettled as agriculturists, who are now being displaced a second time for the Konkan railway and those displaced by the Kabini dam in the 1970s who are being displaced again for a biosphere reserve.

In an overwhelming number of cases, there is an almost arrogant assumption that the project that has been drawn up for implementation is socially and economically the most appropriate and that the development intervention cannot be challenged because it has been conceived by experts and is in the 'public' and 'national' interest. Alternatives that could have been more democratically conceived and more economical as well as more sustainable over generations have almost never been considered. Feasibility studies neglect this dimension. Also, older mentalities of 'doing development' and bureaucratic routines inhibit openness and sensitivity to listening, internalising and acting in the collective interests of victimised communities. In that sense we may argue that there continues to be a class bias in the planning and implementation process itself, which in turn sustains and often compounds the economic gap between the primary beneficiaries of these developmental interventions and their victims.

In addition to this, there is also a basic institutional weakness in comprehensively addressing the displacement of people. For instance, there is a continuing inability of government departments, ministries, corporations and development authorities to better co-ordinate their activities. For communities facing displacement, productive activities is an integrated whole. They do not separate water resources from agriculture from energy. The compartmentalisation of policy or the sectorally informed decision-making process has played havoc with this integrated system. Not only is there a critical lack of machinery to deal with the complex process of resettlement, in cases where some co-ordination is attempted, there are significant interdepartmental conflicts. One of the most graphic examples is again of the Singrauli situation where a plethora of agencies – Northern Coalfields Limited, National Thermal Power Corporation, the Singrauli Area Development Authority as well as district and state level administrators from two states – had differing commitments to the displaced. Almost 30 years after the building of the Rihand dam and the massive subsequent expansion of the coal mines,

power plants and a complex of urban and industrial developments, this co-ordination still does not exist.

This reality also points to the urgent need to institutionalise public hearings as well as for democratic decision-making coupled with legislation that facilitates this. It may be argued that more legislation does not guarantee the realisation of rights. After all, even with one of the most progressive Constitutions (despite critical flaws) and despite constitutional guarantees, violations (particularly of the rights of the disadvantaged and the poor) are galore. Yet, as a first step, there is no substitute to the more open access to information and to enlightened public discourse. This process must be an integral part of the planning, implementation and monitoring of the project itself and not an adjunct that is seen as a 'burden'.

INCOMPATIBILITY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE

While mitigatory strategies may be devised, it must be recognised that the scale of displacement and, to a large extent, the official attitude towards those facing displacement, is a direct consequence of the dominant patterns of economic development which continue to depend quite heavily on the intensive and extensive utilisation of natural resources. For communities who depend on these resources as the primary source of their livelihood, the extractive processes set into motion a destructive dynamic that forces them to either become migrants or move onto increasingly fragile lands. Despite growing evidence from projects all over the country, a host of environmental problems remain unacknowledged. For instance, this concentration of large numbers of people on increasingly fragile eco-systems most often leads to further unsustainable use of resources. All this leads to increasing economic marginalisation and cultural insecurity which compel most of the displaced to seek desperate means of survival – cultivating increasingly fragile lands, migration, bondage, contract, crime, even prostitution. The case of the Ukai dam where tribal women displaced by the project were regularly soliciting truck drivers on the national highway from Baroda to Ahmedabad is not an exception.³⁰

The experience of the past almost five decades of planned development demonstrates that large-scale displacement is inbuilt in the patterns of economic development which themselves are incompatible with social justice and genuine long-term environmental sustainability. The social impacts of the recent thrust towards a greater market-driven economic process point to a reality that as the national and global economies penetrate deeper into the interior areas of the country, the lives, livelihoods and lifestyles of those who critically depend

on the natural resource base will continue to be seriously threatened.

In 1988-89, a group of scholars, activists, lawyers and other concerned people,³¹ after consultations with community representatives and social movements all over the country, had drafted a National Policy on Developmental Resettlement. The policy stated that these development projects,

entail a massive investment in public money involving decisions on priorities related to public needs. Such projects not only involve the harnessing of natural resources such as land, water, minerals, forests, etc. but also alter the existing distribution, use, access to and control over natural resources among different sections of society raising in the process, vital issues concerning the fairness, equity and justice in the allocation and utilisation of these resources.

What was highlighted was the need to also do a class-benefit analysis of development projects, in addition to an analysis of their economic and ecological impacts. The policy draft also stated that,

Often the ill effects of displacement raise doubts about the very viability, desirability and justifiability of the project.

II Process of Resettlement

Despite the scale of displacement, resettlement of those displaced by developmental projects and processes has been minimal. Notwithstanding some efforts by the government and independent groups over the past decade, data on the number of people displaced since independence, their current location and the changes in their socio-economic status, is almost non-existent. Some indicative data highlights the severity of the apathy and indifference of official agencies and the government to take responsibility for those who, in an overwhelming number of cases have been forced to forgo their ancestral habitats and have experienced social and cultural disruption in the past four and a half decades of planned development. For example, 25 years after the building of the prestigious Bhakra-Nangal project, only 730 of the 2,108 families displaced in the early 1950s from the Bilaspur and Una districts of Himachal Pradesh, had been resettled. A majority of those displaced by other renowned projects, like the Hirakud dam in Orissa or the Rihand dam in Uttar Pradesh, have never been officially resettled.

The other illustrative example is that of the oustees of the Pong dam in Himachal Pradesh, who were displaced in the late 1960s. Out of the 30,000 families or more that were displaced, only 16,000 were found eligible for compensation and in the end only 3,756 were moved hundreds of miles to a completely different cultural, linguistic and ecological zone in Rajasthan. Some of

the land meant for their occupation was already occupied, while most of the other land was uncultivable. Compounding this, the host community was not prepared for their arrival and eventually over 75 per cent returned to Himachal only to find minimal support for their re-establishment. They migrated all over the northern part of the country, most of them in various stages of destitution.³²

Official indifference and callousness is also evident in the lack of data regarding the total number of persons displaced by different developmental interventions. The trend has consistently been one of underestimating or neglecting altogether the number to be displaced. Independent studies of the oustees of Hirakud placed the figure for those displaced at 1,80,000 while government figures were 1,10,000. Official data for the controversial dam on the Narmada river, the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) fluctuates between 10,758 families and 30,134 families. The Morse Committee Report³³ citing the World Bank and other research data places the figure of those who will be displaced by the dam and the canals at 1,75,000, while the Narmada Bachao Andolan has maintained that over 2,00,000 will be displaced by the dam and the canals. This figure does not include the sizeable number of people who face displacement as a consequence of dam-related activities, such as the sanctuary at Shoolpaneshwar, compensatory afforestation, and those dependent on the sites chosen for resettlement, etc. If these are included, the number of displaced persons would be above 4,00,000.

Compounding Uncertainty and Insecurity: The time it takes between the decision to initiate a project, through its design and implementation, is a period of escalating uncertainty and insecurity for potential oustees. Most often they lack even the basic information on the schedule and the extent of displacement and are at the mercy of officials, speculators and a wide variety of 'outsiders' who spread rumours frequently with the intention of pushing the oustee off the land. The lower the cost of doing this, the better it is. A climate of uncertainty sets in, distorting and altering the entire social milieu.

Additionally, tribals and dalit communities are extremely vulnerable. Too much is stacked against them. Even in highly publicised projects like the Sardar Sarovar, where years of struggle and public pressure has brought significant gains in the policy for resettlement, the actual practice of resettlement on the ground has been shoddy, grossly inadequate, and, in several cases downright insulting (model colonies notwithstanding) – and this too over a decade after construction of the dam began in full earnest.³⁴

The other policy that has been selectively applied since 1967 by the central government

is to provide one job per family to those displaced by industrial projects. While this sounds minimally just, in practice it has provided little succour to those displaced. Most oustees are unskilled and in the absence of training programmes eventually end up with the lowest paying and temporary jobs. Further complications arise when family sizes are not based on nuclear families, land records are in the name of an ancestor who is no longer alive, etc.

Compensation: It would not be an exaggeration to say that very few resettlement programmes in the country have adequately compensated all those who are dispossessed. The question of how oustees will make a living after displacement has been a matter of lowest concern to project planners. The little interest that is taken is more a consequence of wider public awareness and local resistance or the high profile of the project concerned. In fact, in most cases, the Land Acquisition Act is used to pay an insultingly low cash payment that is grossly inadequate to restore and enhance standards of living. The experience even with compensation for potential oustees reflects persistent ad hocism where the oustees continue to be perceived as a burden.

Dependency: The low amounts of compensation and, in rare cases, land-for-land, reinforce dependency on officials and official agencies as those who face displacement hope to secure a better alternative. The trauma of displacement is unfortunately compounded by the disproportionate amount of energy and time that the displaced have to expend in 'dealing' with the agency. It also makes for a wide range of corrupt practices where the oustee is exploited by government officials, lawyers, and even voluntary agencies. The Srisaillam and Ukai cases adequately reflect what are not unique cases. It would make for a more sane and just policy to involve the displaced in the entire process of their shifting (if the project is inevitable), handing over clear titles to the land along with adequate support facilities (including grants or other forms of aid that can tide the family over the first period of the first harvest) that would permit communities to manage their resettlement in an open and transparent manner.

This points to the clear need for an independent institutional arrangement. This is all the more necessary since the project implementing agency is, after execution, keen to move on to the next assignment. This institutional arrangement should be vested with the responsibility of ensuring that the process of resettlement takes place with the least possible social, economic and environmental disruption.

Transition Stage: One of the most traumatic stages of resettlement is the process of transiting from the original habitat to the resettlement site. If there is a commitment to minimising the trauma of the overall

process of displacement and ensuring that conditions are provided at the resettlement site where the community can improve its livelihood, this phase needs the most attention. Past experience has shown that this phase is inordinately long, and fraught with a diversity of 'adjustment' problems.³⁵ Again, what requires attention is a strategy that ensures the social and economic security of the displaced.

One of the few cases where efforts were made to implement a land-for-land policy was with the second of the two dams of the Upper Krishna Irrigation II Project in Karnataka. The World Bank funded part of the project and then realising that pressure for a better plan was building from local communities who had seen the experience of those displaced by the first dam, withheld its funds pending a detailed resettlement plan. This led to the involvement of a state-based social action group, MYRADA, in two phases of the plan – surveys and implementation.³⁶ While several families were provided plots in the command area, others were resettled on unirrigated land or given the choice of an income-generating project. But even here, experience showed that those with assets and power prior to displacement cornered most of the benefits while most of those belonging to poorer communities were left with unproductive lands and a few temporary jobs.

The case of the Jawaharlal Nehru Port in New Bombay illustrates how lands were acquired far in excess of what was needed for the present and future needs of the port, that these were then sold to private builders and contractors, that those who had assets prior to displacement were able to corner most of the compensation and jobs and that marginal peasants and fisherfolk received almost no benefits, even the mandatory one job per family. The experience of economically and socially underprivileged people (sharecroppers, landless labour, fisherfolk, etc) displaced by the Upper Krishna project has been identical.

These two cases underscore what is generally the rule all over the country where for most fishing communities, the process of displacement also increases social tensions as they transit from a predominantly collective and equitable economic situation to one where individual based employment widens economic disparities.³⁷ Dam reservoirs also adversely affect river-based fishing communities who are unable to afford and adapt to reservoir-based fishing. Communities living downstream are also adversely affected. For the SSP, for instance, thousands of downstream families dependent on fishing will be made destitute as a consequence of salt water ingress owing to a reduction in the flow of the river.³⁸

Conflicts with Host Community: A multitude of problems arising out of conflicts with the host community have been

encountered at the resettlement sites. Experiences from the Srisaillam, Pong and Narmada dams, from the Kaiga Nuclear Power Plant, from Singrauli and elsewhere have highlighted problems ranging from conflicts in the sharing of commons, jealousy of the host communities arising out of the special services provided to oustees, etc. Much of this is unavoidable as most sites of resettlement are in ecologically fragile areas and in India, where every ecological niche is occupied or sustains some families and communities, new populations place additional pressure. Inevitably what has resulted is an inability to adjust and manage and the consequent marginalisation, compounding the migration towards urban centres.

Additionally, resettlement, wherever it has taken place, has always been on lands where no detailed surveys of the social, ecological and physical characteristics were made. The land and water use, socio-economic patterns as well as access to commons (to name just three) of the host communities have rarely been studied, which invariably have led to conditions of animosity and conflict both with the government and the host community. It is precisely this reality that also points to the need to locate the displacement problematique in an ecological and political critique.

III Protests and Resistance

The growing awareness among communities who face displacement, has given rise to a wide range of protests all over the country. This resistance is not new. In numerous parts of the country, by the middle of the 19th century itself, communities had mobilised to oppose colonial policies of resource extraction. This opposition was significantly manifest in tribal areas where these communities did not acquiesce quietly in the face of external intervention. There were protests and rebellions against colonial laws such as the Forest Act of 1876 and tribal peasants were waging struggles against state intervention in forest resources based on their own moral economy. Guha and Gadgil have aptly described this conflict as between the political economy of profit and the moral economy of provision.³⁹

Protests against dams were evident as early as the 1920s, when, for instance, Senapati Bapat launched an organised resistance against dams in Maharashtra. In the post-independence period, progress, national self-sufficiency, industrialism, and the large development project were seen as synonymous. Carried by the euphoria of nation building, most 'sacrifices' sought by the rulers were widely seen as legitimate, justified as being for the 'national good'. This is not to say that there were no protests, no resistance. The first major protests against

displacement as well as against the logic of large technological interventions in nature were in the mid-1960s, primarily in tribal areas arising out of an immediate perceived threat to their livelihood and lifestyle.

The voices of conscientious engineers like Kapil Bhattacharya,⁴⁰ who painstakingly documented the critical fallacies in the Damodar Valley Project, inspired other political activists, including political leaders like Ram Manohar Lohia, and collective resistance (at least seeking better resettlement) grew in several parts of the country. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, communities facing displacement were mobilising and agitations were visible, particularly in Maharashtra which became the first state to promulgate an overarching law protecting some of the rights of the displaced.⁴¹

However, after nearly three decades of protests by political parties,⁴² social movements and other forums of the displaced, projects still lack a detailed comprehensive blueprint for resettlement. A common question from people facing displacement is that while precise details exist regarding the technical and economic aspects of the projects, backed by scores of professionals, why is there never a plan for them? Why are they never consulted, even post-facto? "If detailed blueprints exist for every bolt and every bag of cement", why is comprehensive rehabilitation seen as such a burden at best to be reluctantly handled as an act of benevolence?

Today's struggles – from the Narmada valley to coastal Kerala, from south Bihar to Thane – are part of this historical tradition.⁴³ They are contesting the dominant patterns of economic development with their inherent propensity to displace and uproot communities from their sources of subsistence and meaning. They are asserting the need to both democratise the dominant patterns of economic development as well as to seek alternatives to them. They feel that these patterns which threaten their cultural and social fabric and which seek their 'sacrifices' for a 'public good' that is both disputable and dubious, are fundamentally flawed. The protests by tribal and other vulnerable communities are also challenging the use of development programmes which sustain dependency on the governmental apparatus as well as resettlement exercises which legitimise greater control by this apparatus over the lives and livelihoods of those dispersed by development interventions.

As far as tribal subsistence systems are concerned, there is also a wider awareness and recognition that these systems represent greater community control and collective management of economic and ecological resources, with, in most cases, due respect to and balanced interaction with nature. The tribal understanding of land has,

encompassed territory, habitat, base of social organisation, political viability, cultural identification, myth, symbol and religion, and included not only the territory but a living entity with the environment, spirits, cosmos and all else in a reciprocal relationship, linking the present with the past and future generations of humans, animals and plants.⁴⁴

Threats to this relationship have directly contributed to tribal militancy to recover access to land. In many parts of tribal Maharashtra, for instance, these efforts are now encompassing struggles to recover alienated lands or unutilised lands acquired for projects, reverse the manipulation of records, regularise the rights over cultivated forest and government waste land, etc. In most parts of the country, these protests have met with either forms of co-option or outright repression.

In addition to highlighting the extent of displacement, the inadequacy of resettlement efforts as well as a critique of development projects themselves, movements are also challenging the limited democratisation of the Indian state where the strategies of nation building and national security and of integrating into the national mainstream continue to be predominant. An entire body of literature based on communities regaining control over their lives and life processes has recently emerged.⁴⁵

IV

Displacement and the Social Sciences

Historically, social scientists have been better at recording tragedies and the trauma of evictions and displacement than at generating the conditions that would prevent these from happening. There also has been an inability of social science research to acknowledge the full implications of the processes of displacement primarily since this has to be grounded in a larger and structural critique of development. Cernea argues that,

involuntary population displacement and resettlement are widespread enough, big enough, frequent enough, complex and consequential enough to merit the full mobilisation of the conceptual, analytical and operational tools available to address it.

Two areas where there is still considerable weakness is in the identification of the range of disruptions and the strategies to deal with the politics of displacement itself. It is the contention of this paper that this is primarily due to the weakness in defining the deeper causes and the full range of displacement in India today.

So while the multiple displacements in Singrauli are reluctantly acknowledged, the fact that a complexity of factors militate against any just resolution for the families facing these repeated displacements (in a single generation), receive little attention.

Inevitably therefore, the policies and strategies suggested are unable and, will remain unable, to provide lasting security of livelihood and tenure to the oustees of Singrauli. This situation prevails in practically all areas where people have been displaced by development projects.

Similarly, the range of injustices that are visited upon people who face displacement in what one may call the project planning and pre-implementation period as well as the variety of disruptions that are caused in the implementation and the post-implementation period are inadequately acknowledged. While it is not possible to dwell on these issues at length here, it is important to recognise some ground realities that continue to be neglected. The list below is not exhaustive but only indicative of the complexity of the developmental process and the social and cultural trauma that oustees face. In the pre-implementation phase, we may point to:

- 1 The desirability and justifiability of the project or developmental intervention itself. Therefore, at the outset, the need to ensure a debate on the patterns of development that are legitimated by the intervention concerned and whether the intervention is the most just, appropriate and sustainable. To also simultaneously demand and work towards ensuring transparency and access to information about the intervention.
- 2 Consultation with representatives of the local population, particularly and predominantly those who are more vulnerable and the institutionalisation of this process.
- 3 The justifiability of reducing or winding down development programmes and resources for the area facing submergence (or occupation or acquisition).
- 4 The harassment, intimidation and repression of potential oustees.
- 5 If displacement is inevitable, then the full participation of the affected communities in defining a comprehensive rehabilitation package.

In the implementation phase some of the neglected impacts are:

- 1 Efforts to bribe community leaders with the intention of seeking the consent of the community;
- 2 A wide range of human rights violations including threats, harassment, police actions, firings on peaceful protesters, forced entry into villages and homes, destruction of private property, etc;
- 3 The disruption of nomadic routes which are crucial to the survival of nomadic communities, and
- 4 Land acquisition that in turn displaces those dependent on the acquired land.

The post-implementation stage which, for those displaced, is among the most traumatic and undocumented experiences, since project authorities 'move on' to the next assignment and government machineries are not oriented

to undertake long-term monitoring. Here we can point to:

- 1 The condition of the displaced in the existing resettlement sites;
- 2 Tracing those who were paid cash compensation and who dispersed over a vast geographical area (as was the case with some of the Pong dam oustees).
- 3 Responsibility to those who were displaced by earlier projects but who continue to face a grim economic and social predicament.
- 4 The displacement caused by the intensive developmental activity that inevitably follows an initial developmental intervention.

Considering that the development, displacement and resettlement processes have complex political, economic and social dimensions that most often transcend the local context, there is a need for greater and more sustained multidisciplinary social science intervention that goes beyond the recording of the trauma that displaced persons face in a specific locale.

This challenge is even more urgent since the New Economic Policies are going to impel a greater demand for land, in turn compounding the displacement of people.

FALSE SHORTAGE OF LAND

One of the main contentions of planners is the paucity of land available for resettling the thousands of people displaced by developmental interventions. An ecological and political approach demonstrates how the often heard claim that 'land is not available' is just a part of the official attitude of evading responsibility towards the less powerful.

Over half of India's land, capable of biotic production is in various forms of degradation.⁴⁶ While a substantial proportion of it is still used, the paucity of water and other resources for maintenance, result not just in productivity remaining acutely low but in some of it going out of production. In addition, there are substantial lands under the forest department which are critically degraded.

The acquisition, distribution and regeneration of this land could play a dual role: of giving the displaced community clear titles to land that can become productive and of gradually restoring degraded ecosystems (which would also mean bringing degraded land fully back into production or regenerating forest lands).

Secondly, in almost all parts of the country, landowners hold lands that are in excess of ceiling or are managed in absentee situations. Surveys in the command area of the Sardar Sarovar Project in Gujarat have shown that a significant amount of land is available with absentee landlords (primarily patidar) whose offsprings have moved to industry. However, this land is both expensive and often hard to acquire owing to the political clout of the patidar and other powerful landowning communities who want to either retain control or charge extremely high rates. The only

explanation for the lack of any effort in this direction by the Gujarat government is that they lack political will, or do not want to set a precedent.

Project authorities across the country have also acquired land that is far in excess of their requirements on the plea that it is required for future expansion plans. Significant lands would be released if the land held in excess which has not been used despite expansion is distributed among the oustees. For instance, the NTPC in Singrauli has lands under its control that can adequately resettle displaced populations. What must be held illegal is the practice of selling these lands to private builders and contractors as the already mentioned case of the Jawaharlal Nehru Port⁴⁷ so graphically illustrates.

If major gains are going to accrue from the project concerned, those who will be adversely affected need to be given a share of the benefits. For instance, in the case of dam projects, clear titles should be given in the command area. This is rarely done since lands become perennially irrigated and the dominant interests want to retain control. In Ukai, for instance, the Patidar farmers benefited substantially as a result of the transition from labour intensive rain-fed coarse grain cultivation to cash crops. Employment opportunities declined for the traditional landless and marginal peasant both because of the new agricultural practices and an escalation of competition with the arrival in the area of the oustees of the dam.

WORLD BANK POLICY

As a direct consequence of growing protests, popular resistance and criticisms of its insensitivity to social and cultural impacts of the projects it has supported, the World Bank has, over the past 15 years, acknowledged the scale of displacements and tried to define a comprehensive policy.⁴⁸ With the notable exception of the International Labour Organisation's policy for tribal and indigenous people, no other international organisation has attempted to spell out and define policy regarding the complex socio-cultural impacts of displacement. A recent institutionwide review, was also completed last year. It acknowledges that:

When people are forcibly moved, production systems may be dismantled, long-established residential settlements are disorganised, and kinship groups are scattered. Many jobs and assets are lost. Informal social networks that are part of daily sustenance systems – providing mutual help in childcare, food security, revenue transfers, labour exchange and other basic sources of socio-economic support – collapse because of territorial dispersion. Health care tends to deteriorate. Links between producers and their consumers are often severed, and local labour markets are disrupted. Local organisations and formal and informal associations disappear because of the sudden departure

of their members, often in different directions. Traditional authority and management systems can lose leaders. Symbolic markers, such as ancestral shrines and graves, are abandoned, breaking links with the past and with peoples' cultural identity. Not always visible or quantifiable, these processes are nonetheless real. The cumulative effect is that the social fabric and economy are torn apart.⁴⁹

The report also accepts that, comparatively, women are more adversely affected than men, "...since they are more likely to earn their living from small businesses located at or near their residences. Woman may also be affected disproportionately in rural areas since they are more often dependent on common property resources". When compensation is paid to heads of households, most of whom are assumed to be men, it converts, "the collective assets of the family to cash in male hands".⁵⁰

Other policies adopted by the Bank allow for the retention of a large measure of tribal autonomy and cultural choice.

Such a policy of self-determination emphasises the choice of tribal groups to their own way of life and seeks, therefore, to minimise the imposition of different social or economic systems...

This policy also stresses that,

...national governments and international organisations must support rights to land used or occupied by tribal people, to their ethnic identity, and to cultural autonomy and that national governments or non-tribal neighbours should not compete with the tribal society on its own lands for its resources.

More recently, anthropologists and sociologists have accompanied Bank missions and have identified the wide range of immediate impacts on communities displaced.⁵¹

While there has undeniably been progress in policy statements and efforts to seek the compliance of governments, there has been a critical lack of implementation on the ground. Thus, there remains a wide gap between intent and implementation. It is evident that this is primarily due to a much weaker recognition of the structural causes of displacement and the systemic constraints to ensuring that a comprehensive resettlement plan is drawn up and implemented.

Additionally, the Bank's structural adjustment policies as well as its support to a wide range of displacement generating projects and policies overwhelmingly contradict its stated commitments to those who are displaced. The 1994 review indicates that globally, over two million people are threatened by Bank-funded projects. In India, the study on resettlement conducted by its Operations Evaluation Department, states that, "The overall record is poor to the extent of being unacceptable."⁵² It can be argued

that an institution that has been responsible for so much social neglect should not interfere in domestic policy-making. Furthermore, the primary responsibility for citizens of an individual country, is to seek accountability from the government in power. Nonetheless, given that global economic institutions are increasingly playing a central role in defining economic and other policy, it has become incumbent on representatives of the affected communities as well as other concerned people to demand and secure the accountability from both the government as well as, in alliance with citizens groups in other countries, global institutions.⁵³

It is also clear from the experience with other World Bank funded projects that the degree of its capacity to enforce its policy is linked to the nature of the regime in power, the strength of the economic and political interests behind the regime, the nature of the countervailing pressure of organisations of the affected people as well as the Bank's own structural incapacities. These are interlinked factors. For instance, strong vested interests prevail over community mobilisation as in the SSP, in spite of the widespread local, national, and international support for the Narmada Bachao Andolan. On the other hand, the Krishna Project in Karnataka was more effective in rehabilitation because the regime was amenable. In the context of the SSP, during the period that the Bank was directly involved,⁵⁴ the furthest it went was to push for the implementation of the resettlement policy on a *pari passu* basis - as and when displacement was imminent. The Bank has recently argued that if it had not withdrawn from the SSP, its presence would have facilitated better resettlement.⁵⁵ For an institution that abets destruction through displacement on such a large scale, this is indeed a poor public relations statement that exposes an objectionable desire to play a moral and policing role in countries like India.

ABSENCE OF A RESETTLEMENT POLICY

Despite the magnitude of displacement and the longevity of the multiple trauma that most oustees face, one of the most glaring examples of successive central governments shunning their constitutional responsibility has been, till recently, the lack of a national policy for those that have to be forcibly displaced "in the national interest".

In the past two years, there has been a virtual flurry of policies⁵⁶ and even though the "policy of tribals displaced by development projects" has been in the drafting stage for the past five years, it is only now that a range of different policies have emerged. Some like the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) and Coal India Policy have been prepared with a view to serve as a guiding document across their range of operations.

All these policies, assume that since displacement is inevitable, the need is to "deal" with the trauma, not to question the project or the process that is causing the displacement. In addition, many officials (as well as academics) have argued that communities and individuals have a remarkable system of adaptability, a resilience that can see them through a period of temporary loss. Still others have stated that development projects that generate displacement play a useful social role in that they release labour for industry and other 'useful' jobs.⁵⁷

Undoubtedly, there is an urgent need for a national policy and, more importantly, a national legislation. Some concern has been expressed that expending energy in securing the formulation and adoption of these official documents may detract from the more important task of ensuring that a public debate or the viability and justiciability of projects themselves be held. In fact, this is precisely why what has become urgent is the *process* of formulating and drafting a policy and legislation - a means to engage a wider cross-section of society to debate, not just the processes of displacement and resettlement, but the very patterns of economic development.

The recent policy drafts acknowledge the importance of a land-for-land approach. However, there are so many escape clauses that the drafts end up ensuring the provision of land in only the rarest of cases.

Historically, the trajectory of the land-for-land policy has followed an inverse course to that of the economic value of land. The more the value of land (and the per capita pressure on it), the more reticent officials have been in providing land for resettlement. In the years after independence, land was provided in several instances though in most cases it was dry land which the oustees had to nurture and expend resources on towards its upgradation. In the process, many became paupers. In most cases, only those got land who either made a collective claim or who used political patronage. By the 1970s, even this became rare as the normal official propensity was to avoid the land question altogether and offer cash compensation instead.

By the mid-1970s, however, wider public awareness, the demand for greater transparency in project implementation, as well as the more organised movements of the middle farmer as well as the landless and marginal peasants grew, making the land-for-land demand more urgent. The new policy drafts acknowledge this urgency but shirk away from making any direct commitment. In fact, it can be demonstrated that these policies seriously violate the Constitution since they do not guarantee an alternative that ensures the right to life with dignity.⁵⁸

CONCLUSION

The extent and range of displacement, the signal failure to comprehensively rehabilitate those displaced by development as well as the critical inability of policy-makers to successfully provide higher levels of social security underscores two levels of addressing the situation - palliative and structural. If any intent of the government has to be taken seriously, it must immediately take the following palliative steps: comprehensively resettle those who have been displaced in the past as well as those whose displacement is imminent. Land-for-land needs to be provided as a rule while also offering the choice of skill upgradation and permanent absorption in the projects that are displacing them.

So far, the dominant thinking in government has been that legislative consent or discussion (on projects and lands that are acquired for them) is not required or even thought to be necessary since all decisions are within the sphere of executive authority. In the context of development projects and displacement and the politics of development itself, the crucial issue that needs to be more sharply raised is: should such broad powers be vested in the executive? This issue gains all the more importance since we now have almost half a century of project planning and, as is conceded in several governmental evaluations themselves, the experience of so many public projects that have proven to be economic, social and ecological failures or near failures.

In the context of the recent policy drafts, while several detailed critiques are available,⁵⁹ let us highlight some basic principles that must be reflected in any exercise to frame national or state legislation. First of all, these exercises have to be based on the question of accountability - both public and judicial. Also, beyond the palliative and, as argued throughout this paper, the primary decisions to build projects are developmental. Displacement and resettlement follow. Therefore, legislation must have the capacity to challenge the constitutionality of projects themselves - the projects and the process of resettlement must meet the constitutional guarantees of ensuring the right to life with dignity of those who are adversely affected by the developmental intervention.

The need is for creating conditions where if displacement is inevitable, resettlement can become an opportunity, a mandate for reconstructing production systems, raising standards of living, restoring community and kinship relations and minimising the conflict with the host community. Resettlement must also take place in the same ecosystem and in a similar cultural-linguistic zone. It must take place without breaking the community as a cluster of villages representing crucial kinship

relations. The experience so far has been the fragmenting of communities and families themselves sometime across hundreds of kilometres. It is only such a comprehensive approach which guarantees resettlement in a similar socio-cultural-ecological space that can minimise the trauma of displacement.

The commitment therefore has to be not just for resettlement but for rehabilitation which should be an entitlement and not an act of reluctant generosity. In case of irrigation and hydroelectric projects, there should be clear strategies so that those who have had to give up so much are able to substantially share the benefits of the developmental intervention.⁶⁰

Given the grossly unequal power exercised by the planners, politicians and the nexus of interests that develops around any large project – compounded now with the advent of the New Economic Policies – it would require a clear institutional commitment on the part of the governments and project authorities to be transparent and accountable. Projects and processes that cause displacement must be open for public debate. This would also facilitate those potentially facing displacement to make informed choices. For future projects, it is imperative that the full costs of rehabilitation be internalised into the project cost. More comprehensive means of compensating non-quantifiable losses will also have to be devised. Finally, alternatives that cause minimal displacement, that benefit a majority and that are ecologically sustainable will have to be sought. If, after due public process, displacement is inevitable, a comprehensive package that will enhance the social and economic security of displaced communities is the least that should be offered to those who are being forced to forgo and sacrifice so much.

Notes

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- 1 Quoted in Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. Worster's book is also an important contribution towards explicating the correlation between the evolution of hydraulic societies and the domination of political power by an elite.
- 2 Letter from Indira Gandhi to Baba Amte, August 30, 1984. Cited in Edward Goldsmith

- and Nicholas Hildyard (eds), *The Social and Environmental Effects of Large Dams*, Vol II, p 245.
- 3 The power of eminent domain confers on the government the right to take private property for a "public purpose." This power has been described as the "highest and most exact idea of property remaining in the government, or in the aggregate body of the people in their sovereign capacity". For a more detailed explanation see, *Black's Law Dictionary* (6th edition), p 523, 1990.
- 4 Ram Chand vs Union of India, 1 SCC 44, pp 49-50.
- 5 In fact, courts have held that public purpose is not even a justiciable issue. See, e.g. *Jagaveera Rama Muthukumara Zamindar of Ettayapuram vs State of Madras*, SCR 761, 1954.
- 6 Nehru was among the first who elevated massive technological interventions in Nature from the profane to the sacred. In what has now become an oft-repeated quote, he said while inaugurating the Nagarjunsagar dam in Andhra Pradesh, that, "...dams are the temples of modern India."
- 7 Clarence Maloney, 'Environmental and Project Displacement of Population in India, Part I: Development and Deracination', Universities Field Staff International, Field Staff Report No 14, 1991. Also see Smitu Kothari, 'Vikas Aur Visthapan', *Udvasit* 2, Lokayan, 1988.
- 8 It also does not include displacements caused by communal and other conflicts as well as natural disasters though some of the latter may be engendered by developmental degradation. It is important to recognise that in some cases, communal and social conflicts have their roots in the loss of livelihood and the resultant insecurities caused by iniquitous economic development.
- 9 During the First Five-Year Plan period, projects costing more than Rs 5 crore were classified as major. This level was maintained in the Fourth Plan document while projects costing between Rs 25 lakh and Rs 5 crore were classified as medium with those costing less than Rs 25 lakh being called minor. Another classification of large dams is that they have a cultivable command area (CCA) of more than 10,000 hectares while medium dams have a CCA between 400 and 10,000 ha.
- 10 Vijay Paranjpye, *High Dams on the Narmada: A Holistic Analysis of the River Valley Projects*, New Delhi: Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), 1990. For an overview of the social impacts of large dams see, Smitu Kothari, "The Damming of the Narmada and the Politics of Development" in William Fisher (ed), *Working Towards Sustainable Development: The Damming of the Narmada River*, Boston: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Also see, Society for Participatory Research in Asia (ed), *People and Dams*, 1989.
- 11 For detailed tables see, Walter Fernandes and Enakshi Thukral (eds), *Development, Displacement and Rehabilitation*, New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1989 and Clarence Maloney, op cit. The present author's own estimates made on the basis of extrapolating data from state and central governments places the number of displaced by development projects, since 1950, at over 20 million.
- 12 Secondary displacement refers to those whose livelihoods are adversely affected either as a

direct or indirect or as a short-term and long-term consequence of the developmental intervention but who are not acknowledged as "project affected people (PAPs)". In several cases, their numbers exceed officially recognised PAPs.

- 13 *Twenty-ninth Report of the Commissioner of Scheduled Castes and Tribes*, New Delhi: Government of India Press, 1990. Also see B D Sharma, 'Scheduled Castes and Tribes: A Status Report', *Lokayan Bulletin* 8:6, pp 27-38, 1990.
- 14 Walter Fernandes, 'Power and Powerlessness: Development Projects and Displacement of Tribals', *Social Action* 41, pp 243-70, 1991.
- 15 Central Water Commission, *Register of Large Dams in India*, New Delhi: CWC, 1990.
- 16 Government of India, Working Group on Development and Welfare of Scheduled Tribes during the Eighth Five-Year Plan (1990-95), 1993.
- 17 For a recent account of the process of tribal displacement, disempowerment and impoverishment see, Carol Sherman, *The People's Story: A Report on the Social Impact of the Australian-Financed Piparwar Coal Mine, Bihar, India*, Sydney: AID/WATCH, 1993. Also see, L K Mahapatra, 'Development for Whom?: Depriving the Dispossessed Tribals', *Social Action* 41, pp 271-87, 1991.
- 18 Smitu Kothari and Pramod Parajuli, 'No Nature Without Social Justice: A Plea for Cultural and Ecological Pluralism in India' in Wolfgang Sachs, *Global Ecology*, London: Zed Books, 1994.
- 19 Deriving its geo-cultural identity from the once princely state of the same name, Singrauli is a long stretch of valleys surrounded by the Kaimur hills that lie between Sidhi district in Madhya Pradesh and Mirzapur district in Uttar Pradesh.
- 20 "We must approach the tribal people with affection and friendliness and come to them as a liberating force. We must let them feel that we have come to give and not to take something away from them. That is the kind of psychological integration India needs. If, on the other hand, they feel you have come to impose yourselves upon them or that we go to them in order to try to change their methods of living, to take away their land and to encourage businessmen to exploit them, then the fault is ours, for it only means that our approach to the tribal people is wholly wrong...The Government of India is determined to help the tribal people to grow according to their own genius and tradition." Jawaharlal Nehru cited in *The Tribal People of India*, Government of India Press, 1973, p 5.
- 21 While the 1984 amendment streamlined the procedures for the payment of compensation and gave a few additional rights to those to be displaced, it strengthened the power of the government to displace people in the interest of "public purpose." In case of urgency, such acquisition could be done with a 15-day notice with courts having no right to question the merits of the urgency. For a detailed critique of the implications of the Act see, Multiple Action Research Group, *The Land Acquisition Act and You*, New Delhi: MARG, 1991. Also see the discussion of the Act in the 'Draft Policy on Developmental Resettlement,' op cit. For a more conventional and detailed critique, see, V G Ramachandran, *The Law on Land Acquisition and Compensation*, Vol 1, 1990.

- 22 Government of India, *Report of the Committee on Rehabilitation of Displaced Tribals due to Development Projects*, New Delhi: Ministry of Home Affairs, 1985. This important study is almost impossible to get. (For copies, write to Lokayan, 13 Alipur Road, Delhi 110054).
- 23 *Constituent Assembly Debates*, Book IV, p 975.
- 24 Michael M Cernea (ed), 'Involuntary Resettlement: Social Research, Policy, and Planning' in *Putting People First: Sociological Variables in Rural Development*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2nd edition, 1991, p 195.
- 25 Philip Hirsch, *Dammed or Damned?*, in Society for Participatory Research in Asia, op cit.
- 26 Personal communication with Sundarlal Bahuguna and V DSaklani, both office-bearers of the Samiti. This has also been recorded in the petition of the Samiti filed in the Supreme Court in 1985.
- 27 Government of India, op cit, 1985.
- 28 *The Bombay Chronicle*, April 12, 1948.
- 29 The people to be displaced, at times in the hundreds of thousands, are almost always missing from the detailed feasibility reports, project reports, evaluation reports, even the official *National Directory of Dams*.
- 30 Personal communication with Ashok Choudhry, an activist working among the displaced communities of Ukai.
- 31 The decision to form the National Working Group on Displacement was taken at a gathering of activists, academics and policy-makers organised by Lokayan in 1988 in Chitrakut, UP. The group, under the joint convenorship of Medha Patkar and Smitu Kothari subsequently held a number of consultations in different parts of the country. *Udvasit*, a journal on the politics of displacement and rehabilitation, was published by Lokayan and a legal subgroup with Girish Patel, B D Sharma and others drafted the "National Policy on Developmental Resettlement" which was then discussed at several workshops. The various government drafts have been selectively drawn from this but have refrained from including aspects that challenge conventional developmental practice. For a partial text of the draft see Fernandes and Thukral, op cit, 1989.
- 32 For a case study see, Renu Bhanot and Mridula Singh, 'The Oustees of Pong Dam: Their Search for a Home' in Enakshi Thukral, *Big Dams, Displaced People: Rivers of Sorrow, Rivers of Change*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1992.
- 33 Resource Futures International, *Sardar Sarovar: The Report of the Independent Review*, 1992.
- 34 Extensive empirical studies of the resettlement sites are now available. The single-most comprehensive documentation was presented by the Narmada Bachao Andolan as well as independent researchers and activists to the Review Committee set up by the Ministry of Water Resources in 1994, whose Report was made public by the Supreme Court in December 1994.
- 35 Scudder, Thayer, 'A Sociological Framework for the Analysis of New Land Settlements' in Michael Cernea, op cit, pp 148-87.
- 36 J P Nayak, 'Resettlement Anthropology and the Upper Krishna Irrigation Projects', *Current Science* 59:2, 1990.
- 37 S Parasuraman and C Sengupta, 'Socio-economic Condition of People Displaced by Jawaharlal Nehru Port', Report for the JNP Trust, 1992.
- 38 This was the experience in dams all over the country. For case studies from Bihar, see Ganga Mukti Andolan, *Ganga Ko Aviral Behne Do*, 1989; for Karnataka, see the various studies of the social impacts of the Upper Krishna projects; for the Narmada river see the extensive documentation on the Bargi, Tawa and the Sardar Sarovar dams.
- 39 Madhav Gadgil and Ramchandra Guha, *This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- 40 For two excellent documents on the destructiveness of large technological interventions in the water regimes of Bihar, both of which also document the signal contribution of Bhattacharya, see, Lok Jagriti Kendra, *Jab Nadi Badhin*, 1990 and Ganga Mukti Andolan, *Ganga Ko Aviral Behne Do*, 1990.
- 41 The Maharashtra Project Displaced Persons Rehabilitation Act, 1976, amended in 1986. Madhya Pradesh also enacted a legislation and while both these laws are primarily intended for dam oustees, they have been applied to other projects. However, ironically, in the Sardar Sarovar Project, even though there is displacement in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, these laws do not apply since they are not valid for inter-state projects. The Karnataka Assembly passed a bill in 1987. It is still awaiting the president's approval. It needs to be acknowledged that other legislation preceded the Maharashtra Act which also addressed the rights of those displaced by specific projects. See, for instance, the Nagarjunsagar Project (Acquisition of Land) Act, 1956.
- 42 Among the earliest post-independence protests against developmental displacement were the agitations led by Ram Manohar Lohia in the late 1950s and 1960s. One of the most notable struggles sought justice for the 3,00,000 people to be displaced by the Rihand dam. A day before submergence, over a 100 political activists and community leaders were picked up and imprisoned. There was no effort to rehabilitate those displaced and the fate of over 70 per cent is not known while the remaining have faced the repeated trauma of multiple displacement. For more detailed studies on Singrauli see, *Vikas Ki Kimat*, New Delhi and Ahmedabad: Lokayan-SETU Publication, 1986 and *The Price of Power*, Delhi: PIRG, 1994.
- 43 For a representative listing of the range of these initiatives located in a historical and political context, see, Gail Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution*, M E Sharpe, 1994. Also see, Smitu Kothari, 'Social Movements and the Redefinition of Democracy' in Philip Oldenburg, *India Briefing*, Westview Press, 1993.
- 44 Kashtakari Sangathna, *Fifteen Years of Struggle*, unpublished manuscript, 1994.
- 45 See perspective documents and recent statements issued by *Jan Vikas Andolan*, *Bharat Jan Andolan*, *Kashtakari Sangathna* and the Indian Council of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples.
- 46 B B Vohra, *Land and Water: Towards a Policy for Life-Support Systems*, New Delhi: INTACH, Second Impression, 1988.
- 47 H S Verma, 'Land as a Resource for Developing a New City: Rhetoric, Operationalisation and Lessons from New Bombay', National Institute of Rural Development, *Nagarlok*, 13:3, 1994.
- 48 William Partridge, *Design and Implementation Considerations for Human Resettlement in the Narmada Sagar Project*, Madhya Pradesh, India, World Bank, 1984.
- 49 World Bank, *Resettlement and Development. The Bankwide Review of Projects Involving Involuntary Displacement, 1986-1993*, Environment Department, April 8, 1994, pp iii-iv.
- 50 Ibid, pp 2/9.
- 51 See, World Bank, *Early Experience with Involuntary Resettlement: Overview*, and the projectwise assessments, in particular, the assessment of the Maharashtra Irrigation and Karnataka Irrigation Projects, Operations Evaluation Department, June 30, 1993.
- 52 Ibid, p 2.
- 53 This point has been developed at greater length in the editorial of the Special Issue of the *Lokayan Bulletin*, 'Enough! Fifty Years of Bretton Woods Institutions', 11:3/4, 1994.
- 54 Despite its withdrawal in 1993, it is still legally bound to the project since the government has yet to pay back the loan amounts that had already been disbursed.
- 55 See the text of the speech made by the president of the World Bank, Lewis Preston, in Madrid on the occasion of the fifty year 'celebrations' of the Bretton Woods institutions, Washington: World Bank, 1994.
- 56 Government of India, Ministry of Rural Development, *Note for Cabinet: National Policy for Rehabilitation of Persons Displaced as a Consequence of Acquisition of Land*, 1994; Government of India, Ministry of Water Resources, *Draft National Policy for Resettlement and Rehabilitation of Persons Affected by Reservoir Projects*, 1994; National Thermal Power Corporation, *Resettlement and Rehabilitation Policy*, May 1993, and, Coal India, *Resettlement and Rehabilitation Policy*, undated. Only the NTPC document is also available in Hindi.
- 57 This view was reiterated recently by officials of the Central Water Commission at a conference on alternatives to the SSP held at the Nehru Memorial Library, New Delhi.
- 58 For a detailed analysis of the policies in the context of the Constitution see, Smitu Kothari, 'Developmental Displacement and Official Policies: A Critical Review', prepared for the National Workshop on Rehabilitation Policy, Delhi, February 19-21, 1995 and Usha Ramanathan, 'Displacement and Rehabilitation: Towards a National Policy', paper presented at the Workshop on National Policy on Rehabilitation, Centre for Development Economics, 1995.
- 59 Smitu Kothari, op cit and Walter Fernandes and Samyadip Chatterji, 'A Critique of the Draft National Policy for Rehabilitation of Persons Displaced as a Consequence of Acquisition of Land', both prepared for the National Workshop on Rehabilitation Policy, Delhi, February 19-21, 1995; Usha Ramanathan, op cit, and Jai Sen, 'National Rehabilitation Policy: A Critique', *EPW*, Vol XXX, No 5, February 4, 1995.
- 60 This was one of the main recommendations of one of the few academic-activist-policy-maker dialogues held in India on the issue of displacement and resettlement. See, Institute for Social and Economic Change, *Workshop on Rehabilitation of Persons Displaced by Development Projects*, Bangalore: ISEC, 1990.