DEVELOPMENT FOR WHOM AND AT WHOSE COST: DISPLACEMENT DUE TO DAMS IN INDIA

SUBHASH SHARMA

The construction of large dams is not desirable in India from the viewpoint of the original land owners, especially the tribals in remote areas who are the ultimate losers, whereas, upper crest industrialists, rich farmers (interested in cash crops) as well as urban water and electricity consumers corner most of the benefits of dams. This article is divided into four sections: rationale of the building of dams, process of land acquisition, procedure of compensation, and the package of rehabilitation of the oustees.

I
THE PERPLEXING SCENARIO

There is a large scale displacement of human beings due to construction of large dams in India, in general. A deeper analysis is needed on the issues of rationale of dam building, the processes and procedures of land acquisition from the original land owners, especially the tribals residing in the remote areas, either inside or adjacent to the forests, the ills of the so-called compensation, resettlement and rehabilitation. The following questions arise in such an analysis: Is it necessary to construct large dams? Why should small earthen dams not be constructed which are time-tested eco-friendly, cheaper, without bringing any negative consequences of displacement? Why should the State have the last say in land acquisition? Can one be compensated for one’s basic source of livelihood? If yes, how and to what extent? If no, then why is there the land acquisition process at a large scale? Is there any uniform policy of relocation, resettlement and rehabilitation of the land oustees in India? Development for whom and at whose cost? We will analyse these aspects in order to reach a better understanding of the problem of displacement due to large dams.

Jawaharlal Nehru talked of dams and industries as the ‘temples of modern India’. But the experience has actually shown otherwise. A large dam is defined by the Government of India as one with a command area of
more than 10,000 ha, while medium dam is one with the command area of
more than 2,000 ha but less than 10,000 ha, and a minor dam has a command
area of less than 2,000 ha. Whether a large dam is to be built or not, is a
controversial issue. Because large dams artificially change the natural
course of rivers and streams, on the one hand, and, on the other hand,
instead of local people, the outsiders like those residing in urban areas or
pursuing industrial-commercial operations or potential energy consumers
elsewhere are more interested in the building of dams in the name of
modernisation and development. In India as per one estimate about 4.4
crore persons have been displaced by dams over several decades after
independence. In fact, the scholars working on this issue are highly divided
and could be put into three categories:2

(a) Development optimists;
(b) Conditionalists;
(c) Negationists

The development optimists like Pearce, ‘World Bank economists are
essentially the neo-classical economists, liberal policy-makers, government
engineers and working administrators whose primary concern lies in the
dictums like “big is better”, “large scale is cost effective” “development
should be quantifiable, scaleable and visible”, “dam-building is multipurpose
encompassing energy generation, flood-control, irrigation of crops and water
supply in urban - industrial complexes. Thus dams are necessary for the
essential development of a society. They also argue that the new reservoir
would give a congenial habitat to water birds, fish and other animal species
as well as plants. Further it is emphahised by them that the degraded
catchment area gets restored and there is micro climatic change in terms of
lowering the levels of humidity and temperature. Further, there arises an
opportunity to develop tourist resorts, hence a new trade of “ecotourism”
could be easily realised. Again the price of land shoots up, hence the original
landowners get benefit. Finally, due to big reservoir ground water is recharged.

The conditionalists like B. Blackwelder, Philip Williams, B. Bramble
and B.M. Rich put several conditional recommendations as pre-requisites
for the construction of large dams.3

(a) an adequate environmental impact assessment (EIA) be
prepared and be available to the people concerned;

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1Bharat Dogra “The Indian Experience with Large Dams”, in E. Goldsmith and N.
2Subhash Sharma, “Why People Protest: An Analyysis of Ecological Movements in the
3E. Goldsmith and N. Hildyard, “The Social and Environmental Effects of Large Dams”,
only if it benefits large population, not merely the urban elite;

- it should have labour-intensive economic activities;
- it should help production of food crops for local people, not cash crops for exports;
- it would not affect people’s health and safety;
- it should not affect national parks, heritage sites, area of scientific and educational importance, rainforests, endangered species, etc.
- it should not silt up within 100 years;
- it should not salinise agricultural land;
- it should not displace sustainable long term resource enhancement;
- it should not displace indigenous people and compensation should not be inadequate;
- it should not be built in seismic zones and landslide areas;
- it should not cause significant damage to ocean fisheries, etc.
- it should not harm the environment of a neighbouring country without its consent.

The negationists like E. Goldsmith and N. Hildyard, Smitu Kothari and P. Parajuli, S. Sanghvi (and others) are of the view that large dams are not desirable because they bring various environmental, social, economic, cultural, psychological and other insoluble problems. They also argue that the so-called development optimists compromise with all the equity issues by not going beyond the short-sighted goals of “here and now”. Further, they are of the view that if the above mentioned conditions posed by the conditionalists are complied with, large dams can not be built at all. For instance, in case of most of the large dams in India, like Sardar Sarovar Project (Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra), or Silent Valley dam (Kerala), Environmental Impact Assessment was not done at all. In fact, the Government of India’s Ministry of Environment and Forests had given conditional approval to the Sardar Sarovar project but those conditions were not fulfilled before the actual work started. Further in case of Suvarnarekha Multipurpose project (in Jharkhand, West Bengal and Orissa) restoration of mining and quarrying sites was not done, though it was recommended. Central Water Commission (CWC) has aptly remarked: “In majority of cases no action is being taken by the project

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authorities for restoration of construction areas with the plea that borrow pits are generally situated in the submergence area of the reservoir and as such do not need any restoration. This does not appear to be a fact….”

Similarly, Central Board for Irrigation and Power (Government of India) has reported that the annual rate of siltation from a reservoir is usually two or three times more than the assumed rate at the time of project planning. For instance, in Maithon dam (Jharkhand) the assumed rate of siltation was 9.05 ha.m. per 1000 sq.km. but actual siltation is 12.39 ha.m. per 1000 sq. km, thus there is an increase of 37 per cent. Similarly in Panchet dam assumed rate of siltation was only 6.67 ha.m. per 1000 -sq. km but actual siltation is 10.48 ha.m. per 1000 sq.km, thus an increase of 57 per cent is really worrisome. Further, many crop varieties and methods of cultivation are things of past due to submergence of lands.

In India, as per the data of Central Board of Irrigation and Power (Government of India) there are 429 large dams (including those under construction) and in the world about 45000 large dams were built till 2000. In 1967 an earthquake (in Maharashtra) of the magnitude of 6.5 on Richter scale killed 117 persons. It was induced by the Koyana reservoir (Maharashtra) whose dam height is 103 metres. In a study, it was found that 17 cases out of the 75 cases of Reservoir Induced Seismicity (RIS) reported in the world were from India. In addition, there has been waterlogging in the command areas of big dam projects. For instance, in Bihar, Gandak project and Kosi project caused waterlogging in 0.40 million ha and 0.12 million ha in command area respectively. Not only this, the failure of a dam may have catastrophic effect. Often the failure is due to faulty foundation, use of materials of poor quality, overtopping due to excess water, sabotage, or earthquake. World Bank in its study of dam failures during 1900-1975 (in excess of 15 m) found following major causes (Table 1).

In case any dam bursts, it would cause a heavy loss of humans, animals and property in a very large area. Further all the investment in such work would be lost in one stroke.

Some social scientists, therefore, have rightly raised the issue of equity at five levels regarding construction of the large dams:

(a) Some people are compelled to pay the cost while others corner

9Ibid, p.33.
11Ibid, p.4.
TABLE 1: CAUSES OF DAM FAILURES IN THE WORLD (1900-1975)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Dam</th>
<th>Cause of failure</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Concrete Dam</td>
<td>Over Topping</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seepage</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Fill Dam</td>
<td>Over Topping</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seepage</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. All types</td>
<td>Overtopping</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seepage</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


...the benefit (intra-generation class benefit analysis)

(b) The costs of dam are distributed among the adversely effected people (class benefit analysis among project affected people)

(c) The benefits of the dam are distributed among beneficiaries of project (class benefit analysis among beneficiaries)

(d) The costs and benefits are distributed among various generations (inter generation equity)

(e) The costs and benefits are distributed among species (inter-species equity)

However, in India as elsewhere, the issue of equity is not considered at all, since a situation of inequity and injustice prevails among the oustees.

II

After discussing the irrationality of the construction of large dams, let us discuss the second dimension of the problem, namely the complex process and procedure of land acquisition for the so-called development projects in general and dam-building in particular. For the entire India, except Jammu and Kashmir, a law of the land, namely Land Acquisition Act was enacted during British rule in 1894. It was inherent in this law that the land is to be acquired, not confiscated. Acquisition differs from confiscation because of three in-built conditions: the land owner is to be given a reasonable hearing under the basic principle of *auditeram partem* (let other party be heard) there should be a specific public purpose; and land owner should be paid compensation. In Section 3 of the Land
Acquisition Act 1894, the term ‘public purpose’ has been defined to include provisions for:12

(i) village sites including its planned development  
(ii) town or rural planning  
(iii) any scheme or policy of government  
(iv) a corporation owned or controlled by the state  
(v) residential purposes to the poor, or the landless or persons residing in areas affected by the natural calamities or persons displaced / affected due to any scheme of government or any local authority or corporation owned or controlled by state  
(vi) Carrying out education, housing, health, or slum clearance scheme sponsored by government or its authority or local clearance scheme sponsored by government or its authority, or local authority or society (registered under Societies Registration Act 1860) or other law or cooperative society  
(vii) Any other scheme of development sponsored by government or local authority  
(viii) Locating a public office (but does not include acquisition of land for companies)

From the above legal provision it is crystal clear that the term ‘public purpose’ is vast though under Section 3 (f) it does not include land for companies as public purpose yet indirectly the company gets land under the rubric of industrialisation policy of the State or when a company is to provide houses to its members.13 Under Section 5A of 40 purpose for a company is to be inquired only after issuing of notification under Section 4 as a court ruling says.14 Land Acquisition (Bihar Amendment) Act 1960 provides that public purpose includes provision for (i) sanitary improvements including reclamation as well as (ii) laying out of village sites or townships or extension or planned development or improvement of existing village sites or townships.

Regarding ‘public purpose’ following problems arise during actual task of land acquisition, as per author’s personal experience of working as a district collector in two districts: first, land required for State or ‘Government purpose’ is unfortunately considered synonymous with ‘public purpose’ though there is a vast difference between State and civil society, only the latter includes ‘public’ in letter and spirit. Often the interests of the State clash with those of the people at large due to difference

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13Keshav Pal vs State 1984, PL JR, P.779; AIR 1985, Patna, p. 70  
in their perception and conception of development as freedom.

Second, since this law was enacted in 1894, that is much before the implementation of Indian Constitution on January 26, 1950, its provisions can not be challenged as violation of Fundamental Rights (Articles 21 and Writs) of the Constitution.

Third, state has the right of ‘eminent domain’, that is, it shall assert its over riding power over any piece of land situated in the state on account of public exigency and for public good. This right of State has been always upheld by the High Courts and Supreme Court of India. But, unfortunately, this right has often been misused in the name of State’s discretion to choose any land, exclude any land, to take all lands of one or some families, to take even lands of places of worship, etc. Actually after the deletion of right to property through 44th Amendment to the Constitution, tendency to such misuse has multiplied.

Fourth, though under Section 4(1) of the Act, public purpose is to be particularised, otherwise various matters mentioned in Section 4(2) can not be carried out yet this is not done in practice either due to lack of knowledge, or pressure of work or political consideration, or irresponsible action or hidden agenda. Unfortunately some of the court rulings also help such reckless acts of State and its functionaries by stating that it may be practically difficult to specify the particular purpose for which each item of land is needed.

Fifth, it has also been interpreted by the courts that if the government contributes for acquisition of land, it is presumed to be a ‘public purpose’-even if it is for constructing residential houses of a company—and in such a case it is not necessary to go through the procedure laid down in part VII of the Act—land acquisition for companies.

Sixth, the emergency provisions (Section 17) do not require issue of notice to the land owners, thus depriving them of their main source of livelihood without being heard. Finally, even if notices are issued, or published in newspapers, due to illiteracy most of the farmers are not well aware and often notice show even the fertile land as waterlogged, barren or wasteland.

III
THE COMPLICATED ISSUE OF COMPENSATION

Under Section 11 of the said Act, on any objection raised after the serving of notice regarding measurement, value and interest of the persons in the said land, the collector (under the Act) is to give award with the
prior approval of the appropriate government (state or Union Government). Further, such award is to be made within a period of two years from the date of publication of the declaration, otherwise the proceeding shall lapse on its own. After such an award, under Section 16 of the Act the collector would take possession of the land, which will then vest in the government ‘absolutely’. However, in urgent cases, at the direction of the appropriate government the collector, even without making award, may take such possession (under Section 17) after 15 days from the publication of the notice. Land Acquisition (Bihar Amendment) Act 1960 has amended and widened the scope of the Section 17 further: either after 15 days of publication of the notice for persons interested under section 9(1) or at any time after the publication of preliminary notice under Section 4 with the consent, in writing, of the persons interested, take possession of any waste or arable land needed for public purpose or for a company. Such a vast power is violative of one’s rights to equity and right to life, on the one hand, and a symbol of arbitrariness on the part of the collector (State Power), on the other.

However, under Section 18 of the Act, if someone does not accept the award, he may request the collector with grounds within six weeks of award who will refer the matter to a court for determining the measurement of the land or amount of compensation, or the persons to be paid or apportionment of compensation among persons interested. However, due to legal illiteracy, this provision is often not used by the landholders. Further, under section 23 of the Act, the referred court shall take following points into consideration:

- market value of the land on publication of preliminary notification under Section 4(1);
- damage of standing crops/trees at the time of taking of possession;
- damage of severing such land from one’s other land at the time of possession;
- damage, at time of possession, by affecting one’s other property (moveable or immovable) or earnings;
- if, due to acquisition, one is compelled to change residence or business place;
- damage resulting from diminution of profits of the land between time of publication of declaration and taking possession.

In addition to market value, interest of 12 per cent per year from the date of publication of preliminary notification to the date of award or of taking possession whichever is earlier (as per amendment in 1984) in case
of compulsory nature of acquisition a sum of 30 per cent on such market value is to be paid.

Actually under the law the term ‘market value’ has not been defined. Hence for every case the court uses its discretion in awarding compensation. However, several judgements of High Courts and Supreme Court point out following guidelines for consideration:

(a) location of land, its importance, prospect of being developed, purpose for which it was used and purpose for acquisition
(b) potentialities of the land
(c) Sale deeds of pre-notification period of adjoining lands
(d) The price which a willing vendor might reasonably expect from a willing purchaser
(e) Income derived at by taking the gross income and deducting there from his expenses and the net income is to be multiplied by 20 years’ purchase
(f) Land includes things attached to earth (like trees), so its value is also to be calculated and allowance of 15 per cent be given
(g) Its condition, suitability for building, proximity to residential, commercial and industrial areas and educational, cultural or medical institutions, existing amenities like water, electricity and drainage and possibility of future extension
(h) Average price in different sale deeds of relevant time
(i) Continuous rising inflation and rising land values.

However, the lower courts, due to the pressure of a large number of cases, insensitivity as well as malpractices hardly decide cases judiciously.

Further, since in most of the cases, the land records are not up-to-date, hence the landowners suffer because their total lands and category of valuation (‘maliyat’) are not properly shown. Their oral statement and actual possession do not weigh against the government land records. Moreover, some local cronies, in connivance with local government staff, often succeed in wrong measurement and evaluation. In addition, payment of compensation is often delayed due to red tapism and some sort of cuts (commission) are also practised in some cases.

22Ram Chandraraih vs Land Acquisition Officer, Sagar (1973) BBCJ, IV-105.
24Collector Rajgarh vs Harisingh Thakur (1979) 1, Scc, p. 236.
25Harbans N. Singh vs State of Bihar 91974) PLJR, 80.
26State of Bihar vs S.K. Thakur (981) AIR, Patna, p. 81.
IV
THE PANGS OF DISPLACEMENT AND REHABILITATION

The displaced persons suffer on various counts, especially social, economic, psychological, cultural, spiritual deprivation. First most of the large dams are built at agricultural lands, hence the displaced families lose their permanent sources of livelihood forever. People also lose various varieties of seeds and techniques of cultivation.

Second, loss of land is ultimately loss of social security in case of natural calamities or other contingent situations. Further a displaced person being landless cannot get loan from banks or traditional moneymakers.

Third, due to displacement people lose common property resources like forests, rivers, fields, grazing grounds, ponds, etc. hence their supplementary source is lost and they cannot do fish-catching or cow, camel, sheep and goat-rearing or rope-making. This is not compensated in any way (by payment or providing alternative).

Fourth, displacement destroys their educational institutions which were also used for other community purposes like meeting, stay of marriage party, festivals, feasts, etc. but these losses are not compensated and simply money is not sufficient.

Fifth, due to micro climatic changes in the level of humidity and temperature at the sites of relocation they are unable to adjust and are unable to get their preferred foods. So this results into malnutrition and morbidity among them. Moreover, they are not provided adequate hospital/health centre at new places.

Sixth, at new sites the previous neighbourhood set is not maintained, nor previous sizes of houses and homestead lands are given. Therefore, there often arise individual and group conflicts between the newcomers and hosts or between the newcomers themselves. Moreover, the collective identity lost is not replaceable.

Seventh, due to displacement people lose their age-old religious places like temples, mosques, gurudwaras, churches and ‘Sarnas’ (of Jharkhand tribes). They are not given compensation for these. Again the graves, tombs, burial grounds, etc. are also lost and many festivals and rituals revolving around agriculture are also lost. This uprooting from their ancestors often becomes a bone of contention between the local people and the administration. At new places, either sites for religious structures are not provided or given only symbolically.

Eighth, in most of the cases, only cash is given, in some cases house sites are also given, in very few cases built houses as well as agricultural land are given and only in rare cases all these cash, house sites, houses and
agricultural lands are provided. Wherever cash for home is paid, it is too meagre to construct a house. For instance, in Majalgaon, Warna and Hirakud rates were Rs. 105, Rs. 500 and Rs. 3000 per house. Even if so-called agricultural land is provided, it is usually barren, unirrigated, waste, degraded or desert land which is of not much use. In Suvarnarekha Multipurpose Project (two dams constructed at Icha and Chandel in West Singhbhum, Jharkhand) revised rehabilitation package provided that every oustee of 18 years or more owning less than five acres of land was to get two acres of land or Rs. 10,000/= for buying land and in addition Rs. 15000 was given for preparing the land and Rs. 20,000/= was given for house construction. In case of Maithon dam (Jharkhand) even for paddy lands only Rs. 600/- per acre was paid.

*Ninth*, for rehabilitation purpose family is the unit but ‘family’ is defined in the way suitable to the project management. In some cases, all the persons living under one roof or kitchen are considered as only one family (e.g. in upper Kolab), thus many adults in joint family are at a disadvantage. In other cases, only the male head of the family, in whose name land is recorded, is considered (Tehri), thus it is against females. In third category, only married males (Lok Tak) or adult males only (Almatti, Srisailam) are considered, hence it is anti-women. In fourth category, all adult sons and only unmarried adult daughters are considered, hence married daughters, widows, and divorcees suffer. Yet this category is best available option.

*Tenth*, in almost all cases there is lack of information and transparency, leading to various kinds of rumours and malpractices. Therefore, the oustees are unable to participate at various stages from land acquisition to rehabilitation, hence a sense of alienation prevails there.

Now let us discuss some concrete cases of displacement due to large dams in Jharkhand. Table 2 gives the profile of area submerged and population displaced:

From Table 2, it transpires that these dams took very long time to complete, a large area (including forest) sub-merged and a large population was displaced and out of them the maximum oustees were the poor tribals! Usually, on an average, 1.5 to 2.5 persons per ha are displaced in large dams in India and the sub-merged area per dam is about 8000 to 13000 ha. This itself speaks volumes of the misery of the land oustees. During the author’s field posting as Deputy Commissioner of Singhbhum (West) in 1992, he keenly observed following tendencies and problems among the

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28 Ibid, p. 77.
Table 2: A Profile of Area Submerged and Displaced Population Due to Some Dams in Jharkhand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of dam</th>
<th>Year of Completion</th>
<th>Area submerged (ha)</th>
<th>Displaced population (No.)</th>
<th>Tribal population displaced (No.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telaiya</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>7500</td>
<td>13455</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Konar</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>2800</td>
<td>5747</td>
<td>1224 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maithon</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>10700</td>
<td>28030</td>
<td>15837 (57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masanjore</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>6950</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchet Hill</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandan</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>6372</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandil</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>17409</td>
<td>48500</td>
<td>46075 (95%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Icha</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>16769*</td>
<td>30800</td>
<td>26640 (80%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Displaced persons of Chandil and Icha dams under Suvarnarekha Multipurpose Project:

(a) The houses constructed were small and of poor quality – these did not have provision for cattle keeping, storage of articles, front spaces and community spaces;

(b) The cash compensation often put them under the clutches of local thugs, moneylenders and traders;

(c) Availability of a large sum suddenly led them to drinking heavily, and consequently males used to beat their wives and children unnecessarily. In some cases, they deserted their wives and remarried other women, leading to family tension;

(d) Many tribals changed their lifestyles by purchasing costly ornaments, clothes, transistors, goggles, etc. as symbols of consumerism;

(e) The dowry rates went up alarmingly;

(f) Some non-oustees (about 600) managed illegally to get jobs; some oustees cornered more jobs than prescribed in the package (husband and wife, two brothers, two sisters, father and son/daughters) so the district administration provided jobs
to more than 100 oustees after due verification in 4th grade in different offices;

(g) old pattern of relationships changed; old neighborhood set changed and old connection with weekly markets disappeared;

(h) there were no adequate facilities of school, health centre, roads, drinking water, electricity, sanitation, drainage, etc.

The author’s keen empirical observation at Chandil and Icha dams (West Singhbhum in Jharkhand) found not only differences but contradictions in the perception and conception of the local people, District administration, state government and the project authority of Suvarnarekha multipurpose project (SMP). This is shown in Table 3.

Needless to mention here that the Suvarnarekha Multipurpose project (SMP), a joint venture of the united Bihar (including Jharkhand), Orissa and West Bengal governments, was planned in 1973 at a cost of Rs. 129 crore but it ultimately crossed Rs. 2500 crore over two decades (completing in 1995). Local people, especially the tribals, protested strongly against it but during emergency period (1975-76) the work was carried out forcibly. But, in 1978, the protest took the shape of a full-fledged movement; four protesting persons were killed in the police firing and many others were badly beaten up and arrested. Further several activists of anti-Icha dam were also killed, injured and arrested by the police-mass leaders like Nirmal Mahto, Ganga Ram and Sidiu Tiyu were also killed. In July 1991, the protesters sat on fast and then project authorities gave assurance to fulfill their demands. But they were falsely implicated in theft and arson cases. However, their long protests pressurised the authorities to revise the rehabilitation package, by adding ‘land for land’, increasing the amount of house-construction, and providing jobs to oustees.29

Another Koel Karo hydel project was started in Ranchi (Jharkhand) in late 1970’s but on a petition of a tribal leader Supreme Court of India stayed the project work. Planning Commission of India had cleared this project in 1973 for promoting lift irrigation, electrification and industrialisation with an allocation of Rs. 175 crore that escalated to Rs. 17000 crore in 1994. Two large dams on the south Koel river at Bansi and across north Karo river at Lohajini were proposed to be built. It was to sub-merge 10522 ha of cultivable private land, 5666 ha of barren land and 364 ha of government land. It was to displace about 4500 families in Ranchi and Gumla districts (about 25000 persons) to submerge 150 ‘Sarnas’ (tribals’ places of worship) and more than 300 ‘sasandiris’ (burials of

TABLE 3: DIFFERENT VIEWS ON DAM-BUILDING, DISPLACEMENT AND REHABILITATION IN SMP (JHARKHAND)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Large dam-building</th>
<th>Displacement problems</th>
<th>Rehabilitation Package</th>
<th>Sensitivity level</th>
<th>Transparency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Project authority</td>
<td>Essential for irrigation, electricity, water supply and flood control (Orissa and W. Bengal)</td>
<td>Inevitable</td>
<td>Cash of 10,000/- for land or two acres of agri-land, cash of 20,000/- for house and jobs</td>
<td>Very low</td>
<td>Very little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. State Govt. (Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal)</td>
<td>Essential as above</td>
<td>Inevitable</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Very little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. District Administration</td>
<td>Partly essential</td>
<td>Reducible</td>
<td>Insufficient scope for improvement</td>
<td>Above average</td>
<td>Above average (partial)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Local Community</td>
<td>Not required</td>
<td>Avoidable</td>
<td>Negligible -- market value of land not given</td>
<td>Highly sensitive</td>
<td>Full transparency demanded</td>
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ancestors), thus of quite significance for nature-worshipping tribals. Hence tribals protested by arguing that land, water and forests belonged to them. They were happy with their traditional irrigation system of ‘ahar’ and ‘pyne’, manki-munda-Parha Raja system of customary rights of jurisprudence. There was communication gap about the submergence, displacement and rehabilitation. The Koel Karo jan Ssangathan, backed by Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, put forth 18 demands which were not considered by the government. So the local people imposed ‘Janata curfew’ and ploughed the roads to prevent the project officials. Hence the National Hydel Power Corporation withdrew from it and ultimately government of Bihar had no alternative but to close it in November 1997, though by that time it had spent about 18 crore of rupees.30

Thus from above, following points of departure emerge as policy implications:

First; Small dams, especially earthen ones, as in China (87000 dams in total) are more economically useful, people-friendly, egalitarian as well as ecologically sustainable sound, because there is no question of mass displacement, nor soil erosion, nor siltation, nor deforestation and nor desertification. It clearly implies that local people actually need water conservation, not large concrete dams. Hence the so-called development model conceptualised and ‘planned from above’ and market-driven should give way to an alternative model of developing need-based ecologically sustainable agriculture, with water and soil conservation to be ‘planned from below’ where the local community should be fully involved at all stages of works.

Second, displacement should be avoided in the first place, only in the rarest of the rare cases minimum displacement should be tolerated and the oustees should be fully rehabilitated with equal quantity and quality of land, houses with necessary amenities, suitable jobs for oustees as well as adequate infrastructure development at the new sites of relocation and resettlement be provided as a human right.

Third the multilateral agencies like World Bank, Asian Development Bank, etc. should not finance large dams which are ‘in the ultimate analysis’ anti-people. Actually, Sardar Sarovar Project on Narmada river was initially financed by the World Bank but when its own Morses Committee submitted an adverse report, the Bank withdrew from it. But this lesson should be learnt by all financial institutions while financing large dams.

Fourth the hide and seek tendency of development projects, especially dams, leads to all kinds of rumours, misinformation and disinformation.

This lack of transparency gives birth to distrust by the people on the one hand and malpractices by staff on the other. Therefore for any development project the community concerned should be treated on equal footing with other stakeholders, especially at par with the concerned authorities, sharing all relevant information including the experiences of other schemes/projects of similar type and magnitude. This will ensure that the assumed, potential and real unequal and exclusive power relationship will finally give way to the egalitarian and inclusive process of decision-making at various stages of formulation, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development schemes/projects. It requires scrapping of the age-old colonial law, namely, Official Secrets Act, 1923.

Finally, in the present age of globalisation, privatisation and liberalisation, market has cornered the largest space of the civil society, and the State has encroached upon the arena of civil society. State, and its machinery, is withdrawing from its social responsibilities to its citizens’ education, health, employment, and so on. Consequently the cruel hands of the market are ruling the roost. Hence the radical conception of progress of the entire community on the basis of equity, liberty and justice needs to be applied in all development works. This view recognises that the local community has full rights over the lands forests, rivers and other water bodies in real sense. Hence the very principle of ‘eminent domain’ of the State should be derecognised. It is really ludicrous that when the local people, to be adversely affected by the development projects imposed from above, protest against these, the State aggressively fights tooth and nail at various fora of legislature, executive, judiciary and the media. In a parliamentary democracy the so-called ‘representatives’ of the people have unfortunately made and got implemented various laws against the interests of the people, they claim to represent. This hiatus between the people and their representatives (who often see things from the viewpoint of the power) need to be removed fully, only then real social development could be planned and practised. This will be real self-reliance and empowerment of the community, as Tarun Bharat Sangh, under the leadership of Rajendra Singh has done in parts of Rajasthan by building earthen dams and recharging and ensuring conservation of dried rivers. Such real social development needs to be culturally acceptable, economically viable, ecologically sustainable and socially equitable.