

Evolving texture of environmentalism and submergence of justice: a critical note on the Narmada Valley protest in India

Suresh Babu

Abstract

Environmental movements, over a period of time, have articulated the conceptual universes such as justice, equality, citizenship, eco-sensitivity; not only to challenge the dominant paradigm of development, but also to inform alternative strategies for sustainability. Moreover, their persistent usage as a tool for collective consciousness and mobilization in the realm of protests has created a new epistemic site for organizing theory that is necessary for those who participate and study the trajectories of movement. Once they become part of everyday practice, movements acquire new cultural identity among its participants. Similarly, their reflections and translations in different context connect the protestors from local to global.

This study seeks to examine discursive/non-discursive formations of the people's protests in the Narmada Valley in central India. Despite persistent resistance and thereby generating critical discourses on environmentalism globally for the last three decades, people in the dam site were to be uprooted as the dominant paradigm of development submerges the idea of justice. This paper critically examines the dialectics of generic discourses on environmentalism: the movement known for its global strategies on the one side and the displacement that the nation-state required for harnessing the greater common good on the other. In fact it is the new properties of social situations derived from the political culture and their practices that inform and determine the theoretical validity of a universal language of justice as realizable.

Keywords: discourse, protest, environmentalism, displacement justice

Introduction

Scholarship in social movements in general and environmental movements in particular the world over have been conceived of within new theoretical reflections by incorporating conceptual universes such as justice, equality, citizenship, eco-sensitivity. The appropriation and conceptions of such languages by the participants and activists create more intellectual space, not only to mediate the link between local protest and macro institutions nationally and globally, but also oscillating ideas and resources to realize their desirable goals. Reflections derive from the movements; if morally tenable, they will

become new political culture and practice. Eventually, such cultural practices and characterization may become potential conceptual tools for those who stand for social transformation and for a just society (Flacks, 2004). While closely observing the movement trajectories in our times, one needs to examine how often participants appropriate and use certain conceptual categories to relate the problem they encounter and translate in the movement field for collective consciousness and mass mobilization. During the course of mass mobilization, they have recourse to meanings for the participants engaged in collective action in one form or other. Subsequently, those who are in the movements – participants – can engage in producing new discourses that may become reliable inputs for movements' sustenance in the long run. In other words, movements themselves, at times, internalize certain objective conditions by evoking conceptual universes as a reflexive process to negotiate with the state on the one side and to reclaim citizenship rights on the other. This new sensibility brings about a collective identity as a new culture among the movement's participants (Jamison, 2001) in the post-colonial societies.

It is a widely acknowledged fact that environmentalism became a powerful discourse in the movement scholarship; however, for analytical purposes the former is different from the latter. Environmental movements are considered to be one of the vibrant movements in our time as they set the agenda of macro-social and political change. Beginning in the late 1960s, they have acquired unique characteristics of post-industrial society to mobilize varieties of symbolic and material resources that are available both locally and globally; to challenge the destructive logic of market and the state; and to recast civil society at large. The growing number of membership in environmental organization is testimony to the fact that people began to trust movement participants more than governments or corporations. The development of ecology as a new discipline for academic practices, reporting and telecasting environmental issues through mass media and establishment of environmental ministries within the state have led to institutionalization of the environmental issue. Moreover, the student revolt and the New Left opened up new political space for environmental movements. Unequal distribution of environmental burden across societies and groups gave rise to discourses on environmental justice in the 1980s. Ever growing environmental degradation has been attributed to the adverse effect of existing structures of social organizations driven by industrialism and global capitalism (Rootes, 2004: 608-616). However, in third world countries, access to resources, deforestation, unsustainable agricultural and industrial practices become relevant issues centered on environment. In fact, grass-root perspectives mean that empowering the local communities through participation can be the best political strategy for sustainability with eco-sensibility.

Sociological studies on the environment in developing societies like India are a relatively recent innovation eclipsed in modern environmental movements in the west. By deploying social movement theory, in fact, one can examine the evolution and articulation of organizations and the location of people who are committed for environmental cause. Of late, environmental movements have

added a new conceptual framework to the way Indian democracy and civil society ought to be, as the former began to challenge the dominant ideological notions of meaning, content and pattern of development driven by the latter (Gadgil and Guha, 2000: 385). As a result, environmental discourses in India have acquired a new meaning which reflected on how people's movements reinforce community rights over natural resources for equal distribution and sustainable use (Sangvi, 2006).

This paper is intended to highlight the effect of discourses that the movements discursively produced in the process of collective consciousness and mass mobilization and their implication for people and groups within and outside of the very movement. The debate here broadly counter-poses two competing discourses – environmentalism and justice – in the field of environmental movement studies as it was necessitated by the properties of the situation itself. Put it more clearly, the conception of justice obviously is subjectively meaningful once rights are denied to the people who were forced to displace. Justice, indeed, is not sheer abstract theory, but an actual reality in the face of injustice. On the other hand, highlighting the discourses on environmentalism was to gain wider recognition and legitimacy of the movement for its global reach. As long as people were evicted by force from the ecosystem they inhabited for centuries in the name of development, obviously, the parallel discourses on environmentalism remain remote and meaningless to the former in context. It is, perhaps, the same way the North began to talk of sustainability for the South once it exploited all resources in the North.

The movement in opposite directions of such conceptions has been a real puzzle in understanding environmental movements in post-colonial societies like India today. Apparently, such protests have been theorized as environmentalism of the poor as the evidence shows that they are more dependent upon natural resources and any change in the eco-system will directly affect their livelihood system (Kadekodi, 200:195). As Eyerman and Jamison (1991) rightly pointed out, environmental movements only remain for a brief period between the constitution of the knowledge interest that define the movement and their institutionalization. Hence, environmental movements can be distinguished from social movements subjected to the act of cognition or network, but our purpose here is not to elaborate this further. However, emergent discourses on environmentalism on the one side, and the submergence of justice on the other seem to be problematic in the context of people who were threatened by the mega dam projects in the Narmada valley.

The Narmada valley protest, led by the Narmada Bachao Andolan and begun nearly 25 years ago, for instance, is an empirical site to describe this dialectical process. Much of the explanations and arguments were gained from the field observation conducted in the project-affected areas of dam site, protest venues and interaction with activists and intellectuals. No doubt, discourses centered on the dam construction in the Narmada valley have been salient for people's collective protest and mass mobilization. A historical sense of the protest in the valley would show how the movement succeeded in articulating the

environmental question and problems of people globally as a new texture in the public sphere. It is the mass media, national and global network that led such discourses to travel beyond its local geography. However, while foregrounding the movement in its geographical location with immediate circumstances, one should rather find out the misplaced polarities of the generic discourses. It is the hegemonic discourses of the state through its stubborn determination that dictate why people in the valley should be uprooted, as the dominant paradigm of development submerges the idea of justice empirically and involuntary displacement as its consequence. Under such conditions, conceptions of justice as properties of fair treatment get exhausted in the name of development once people have been denied the right to live in their habitat. Hence, these discourses remain meaningless for their immediate political context and the potential language for displacement pronounced to make people object of compensation and rehabilitation. In other words, the political culture of democracy failed to unify a linear process to keep the balance of discourses squarely on environmentalism and justice. As a result, people were denied the epistemic privilege to embrace the discourses of justice, and instead sustained victimhood as object of development.

The experimental part of this article would detour into the language of the modern state, its trajectories of developmental thinking and transformation and access on how the political language in the form of public policies responded to the livelihood patterns of subaltern communities on the one hand and the ecosystem on the other hand. Sociological insights on the ecology-development paradigm, within the citadel of the state, seem to subordinate the voices of the people who resist the large scale development induced displacement. This means that the hegemonization and patronization of one sided discourses displace another set of discourses. Subsequently, the legitimization of categories and outsourcing discourses such as environmental conservation, protection and regulation led to sustain existing oppressive structures. Discourses on displacement, on the other hand, as a repulsive attitude of the state, become inevitable for the feasibility of development. They eventually form hierarchies of discourses in the backdrop of the political economy led by the nation-state. No wonder it is the state that arbitrarily defines derivative concepts like development subsuming equality and justice to qualify its legitimacy. As a hegemonic institutional apparatus, the state, at times, perpetrates violence against non-violent struggles and hence neutralizes democratic means (Senthilir, 2012). However, the same categories were not allowed for public debate as is essential for democratic practice where people's protests are subjected to. In other words, the derivative characterization of conceptual universes from the state, are only to preserve and hold power with the new elites and, as a consequence, de-politicizing the politics of the masses as led by the movements.

Marginalization of the excluded communities due to uneven development was illustrated in social science discourses as political prisoners. The discourses generated by the movement, in fact, can make thick description to present these subalterns. It is the very act of subalternity as a discourse, in the era of

globalization, that can be a best framework for public policy (Spivak, 2000). Making people an object of reform and target of rehabilitation policy, under the pretext of great common good as a symbol of development and progress, have violated epistemological privilege of the adivasi life-world, in the Narmada valley, whose social-world is organically linked with nature. These undeserved sufferings, not being fault of the victim, detect the logic of oppression. Under such circumstances, there is a need for strengthening theories on oppression as a critical consciousness in the backdrop of the post-developmental state driven by the global market forces.

This article demonstrates the protest, context, and its resultant inter-textuality as an epistemological site in the movement studies that slightly deviates from the conventional approaches. True movements often non-discursively articulate and express people's aspirations as fragments of discourse. In our times, it is this kind of discourses that fundamentally challenge the ideological positions of post-developmental state in the realm of public-policies and seeks to find out alternative vision (Kothari, 1994) for our common future. However, those who challenge the oppressive structures remained as perpetual victims, susceptible to transcending their critical agency as equal citizens due to the hegemonic languages of the state. It is the growing awareness about vulnerability that needs critical attention to capture [un]desirable directions of the movements, in context, in the era of globalization. Hence, this article at one level examines how movements, as a weapon of the weak, created a base for collective awareness, mobilization and protest against these oppressive forces, and at another level investigates its consequences upon them as victims of the same discourse generated within. For our immediate conception, the discourse is narrowed down to investigate how environmental protests engage with the dialectics of complex network on the one side and cognitive formation on the other as a meaningful [dis]location for movement studies.

[Dis] location of movements: discourses on environmentalism and protest

There are conceptual institutions of the politics of nature that regulate human behaviour as critical, reflexive and discursive practice. As an ideology, in the pretext of environmentalism, people were neglected as trouble makers in respect of the former, leading to lack of sensitivity (Gadgil, 2000). From a sociological point of view, nature and eco-system are understood as complex networks associated with society. However, as a body of knowledge, through research activities, this implicitly indicates the potential as well as vulnerability of people to ensure sustainability provided new rules and regulations are imposed upon them. For this purpose, nature was to be introduced as knowable through the disciplinary practices of sciences, protocols, network of data and instruments, intervention of professionals, and learned societies. Hence, it is the learned community that effectively mediates between ecology and society. As a result, people have hardly direct access to nature as such. Of late, environmental movements seek a short-circuit to the third party to inform that nature is

rapidly evading politics, hence, everyone is expected to rally behind it, despite political ecology already existing in countless forms in human history. While undertaking the politics of nature, environmental movements also modify our assumptions and concepts in public life to protect nature from human degradation through the theories of sustainable politics (Latour, 2004). It is a simple logic that nature does not have moral or immoral strands by its own, instead, one needs to understand the fact that the unique discursive power of culture-nature dialectics generates discourses, and for that matter counter discourses as well. No wonder: counter discourses were primarily born out of people's collective mobilization and their constant protest in a democratic society.

It is true that the dominant paradigm of development in post-independent India has apparently proved to affect both people and eco-system adversely as one closely examines the series of protests began in the later part of 1970s. Unlike earlier debates on the competing claims of state vis-à-vis people over resources, now the debate has extended further to the question of access and abuse of resources, particularly forest resources for industrialization. Hence, a new politics and morality is being consciously incorporated in ecology for sustainable development in which environmental movements are largely involved. Although these movements were spearheaded under the rubric of different ideological pre-occupations, their evolution and subsequent forecasting with one another appeared to be a sequential episode of collective struggle that created distinctive ecological consciousness, by questioning the very paradigm of developmental models of the welfare state.

The environmental protests in India began with continuing conflict over access to resources for livelihood. This reflected the dissenting voices against the state sponsored commercialization of these natural resources on the one hand, and the right to preserve and use limited resources for the sustenance of the marginalized majority without harming the eco-system on the other. The scholarship geared to theorize environmental problem and its huge social cost for development thinking by the activists and social scientists has equally understood how the poor is burdened in the name of development as well (Munshi, 2003). It is to be noticed that, from the beginning these struggles were spearheaded by forest dwellers, mostly tribal communities in order to protect and preserve their social relationship with sustained eco-system (Karnik, 2005). Discourses generated out of these struggles, led by the tribal communities, reveal how their life-systems are sensible towards community consciousness with ecological-sensibilities (Omvedt, 1984). Community, a morale terrain of sociability, is being evoked for the sustenance, growth and transformation of the system. It is needless to mention that it is the mass protest through collective consciousness, identity construction, mobilization and art of resistance that evokes the morale of community to negotiate with the sub-systems of society.

Chipko, being a pioneer environmental movement in post-independence India, emerged as a peaceful protest against commercial forestry. In the formative periods of protest with a grassroots perspective, it received little attention by

politicians or scientific communities. However, gradually it became a mass protest once its ideology was articulated in the background of violation of customary rights of the forests dwellers. Commercial timber operations, for instance, unmasked the inherent contradictions and exploitative nature of forest policy of the nation. This, in turn, generated a series of debates over environmental questions for the first time in India (Gadgil & Guha, 2007). In addition to this, discourses were also evolved in parallel to protect the forest and natural resources from commercial exploitation. As a classical example of non-violent resistance, the Chipko movement was not confined only in the Himalayan regions, but also inspired spearhead similar struggles in other parts of India; for instance, the protest in Reni forest in the Chamoli district of Uttar Pradesh. As a consequence of such environmental protests, an ideological precept of popular discourses on development was under way to make conscious efforts for ecological sensibilities.

Environmental movements in the formative stage created a discursive space for series of protest and environmental discourses at the national level. To begin with, people mobilized and protested against the construction of Bedthi Dam in Karnataka and the Silent Valley project in Kerala in the southern states of India. The Silent Valley issue, in fact, was conceived differently from Chipko, as it was a network of rural school teachers and local citizens to promote alternative scientific approaches in the domain of development of the state led by the *Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad* (People's Science Movement). However, the controversy over the Silent Valley project on the question of environmental dispute in India and the subsequent logical decision to halt the project by the union of India, created an epistemological shift in developmental thinking towards eco-sensitivity.

Successful episodes of this kind, indeed, inspired other environmental groups in the rest of India which culminated in, for instance, a popular protest on the bank of the Narmada valley against multi-purpose dam constructions led by the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA). The NBA mobilized a wide range of groups such as adivasis, rural population and activists in the central part of India, to fight against big dam projects being constructed in the Narmada river causing large scale displacement and submergence of agricultural and forest land. Subsequently, in the central part of India, one would see, for instance, Jharkhand and Bastar movements against the state policies to convert mixed natural resources for plantation and fisher-folk fighting against the commercialization of shrimp in Chilika.

In addition to this, in the north-eastern part of India, there has been another group of movements against hydel project in Gangtok and students' resistance in Meghalaya against the mining in the Western Khasi Hill. Similarly, in south India, the Munthanga Land struggle by the adivasis and Quit-Cola-Plachimada in Kerala highlighted development induced ecological problems and displacement threats (Sethi, 1993; Karan, 1994; Zachariah & Sooryamoorthy, 1994; Swain, 1997; Bijoy & Raman, 2003; Pattanaik, 2006; Raman, 2007; Arora, 2008; Sirnate, 2009). In response to the pervasive attitude towards

human and environmental destruction, the emergence of the micro-level localized protests in different parts of India begun to foreground new theoretical location of development at the macro level supplemented with public intellectuals such as journalist, activists groups and academics.

The kind of politics crystallized in the form of environmental protests, emanated from rural and tribal landscape of India, have critically responded to the cost of development (Omvedt, 1984 and 1993; Guha, 1994; Baviskar, 1995; Singh, 1997; Gadgil and Guha, 1998, 2007). There has been anxiety as a result of militant upsurge by the youngsters as they see ‘the advocates of nation development would weak/victimize smaller and indigenous communities and right to live in their habitat’ (Sirnate, 2009:19). In other words, deprived communities were always remained to be, at the receiving end/victims of environmental problems (Martinez, 2002). This uneven development in no way attributes to a setback of development *per se*. Instead, it was an outcome of unintended consequences of a particular type of the developmental language, for instance, forest conservation and clearance, river pollution, huge multi-purpose dams and highway construction to protect the vested interests of the privileged (Raghunandan, 2003:55).

Given the non-discursive spaces of the spectacular environmental movements and their logic of protests in India, one could sense a collective resentment against undesirable developments from different quarters. It is this non-discursive space that indeed, ingrained impetuses of epistemology for environmental movements in contemporary social science discipline. Moreover, labeling as ‘environmentalism of the poor’ or ‘subaltern political ecologies’ fundamentally challenged the dominant way of framing environmental politics. Non-discursive practices in environmental movements constructed political agency to chart out a set of discursive practices in the domain of power, institutions and nation-state. To begin with, a series of policies and programs conceived under sustainable development, environmental protection, regulation and conservation pronounced by the state institutionalize certain practices. Secondly, discourses on movements non-discursively evoked the unequal, unsustainable social and environmental relations of power held with many agencies and institutions. Finally, there have been continuous engagements with dynamic, productive and fissiparous geographies of antagonism and contestation over the nation-centred accounts of politics. Varieties of such complex practices have also exposed the neo-liberal logic of the state in the era of globalization, as a new field of contestation for environmental movements. Politico-ecological conflicts of these kinds, as it appears, are as much struggles over meanings that acquired by environmental movements globally as they are battle over material practices (Bryant, 1998).

No wonder social science practices on environmental movements in India have also critically responded by examining complex forms of network of agencies and groups and cognitive formation. These intellectual engagements examined the emerging challenges and subject matter, for instance, the progress of new social movements (NSM), discourses on ecological problems and sustainability

questions in the realm of development. Moreover, civil society, particularly, voluntary associations, while shaping these discourses through purposive action, attracted the imaginations of social scientists as well. A sizable number of them began to seriously engage on action-oriented research with ethnographic sensibilities. The critical engagements of scholars located in these intellectual spaces opened up a new vista for reflexive thought which radically altered the theoretical frames, concepts and methods (Singh, 2003). On the other side of the spectrum, global discourses on political ecology reinforced research priorities and underlined self-reflexive reasoning such as preservation, conservation, and sustainable use of resources and distributive justice. At a time, when the world is grappling with disastrous consequences of man-made ecological problems, environmental movements worldwide had also underlined the fault lines of humans' perception, attitudes and behaviour. Therefore, 'a harmonious nature-culture relationship can only be made by a conscious approach to balance human society and nature; something of that sort being found in a revolutionary movement' (Omvedt, 1984:1867).

Subsequent scholarship in movement studies has also erupted into controversies in the backdrop of such revolutionary traits, particularly raising the voices over the development induced displacement and ecological problems. Instances of collective protest and mobilization in the Narmada valley, in the middle part of India, for instance, become an empirical field for subjective experiences of displaced communities and objective reality for those construct discourses on environmentalism. In other words, discourses centered on dam construction in the Narmada valley are bound to create dialectics of discourses on displacement on the one hand and environmentalism on the other.

Dislocations of protest in the Narmada valley

As a template of development, the Narmada valley project has been a metaphor of '*the great common good*'. With the intention of multipurpose outcomes, the project was designed to explore and benefit those who did not have access to the scarce natural resources, such as water for drinking and irrigation and electricity. To achieve such goals, uprooting tribal communities from their habitat, who have been living for many generations, submerging of flora and fauna and above all the degradation of the eco-system were seen as a logic of great sacrifice for the sake of the nation's prosperity. This is exactly what is meant by development, as the Chairman of the Narmada Valley Development Agency (NVDA), SC Varma explained:

....the uprooting has to be done. Because the land occupied by the family is required for a development project which holds promise of progress and prosperity for the country and the people in general. The family getting displaced thus makes a sacrifice for the sake of the community. It undergoes hardship and distress and faces an uncertain future so that others may live in happiness and be economically better off (cited in Alvares and Billorey, 1999:18).

It is no surprise that the development language underlines its inherent ideology of dispossession by design. No matter that tribal people were uprooted, resettled or rehabilitated, or even for that matter that environmental problems exist, the main exigencies of the development thinking was to create the happiness of the elite minority at the cost of the subaltern majority and those whose livelihood depends on these systems. This was a generic aspect of development questions which have been debated and negotiated in the Narmada valley. The Sardar Sarovar mega project (SSP) has been one of the largest and most contentious of the large dams being constructed in the Narmada River Valley in India. The SSP was planned to build up 30 large, 135 medium and 3000 small dams on the river and her tributaries which would lead to the submerging of 40,000 hectares of land including about 13,000 hectares of forest land. An official estimate states that at the full height (138.68 meters) of the dam, will affect 245 villages 7000 families in 1979. But later on the official figures were 41,000 families.

The movement of 'oustees' is known as the *Narmada Bachao Andolan*. At the outset, NBA has begun to raise many critical issues, for instance, mass human displacement, livelihood patterns, human rights violation, ecological degradation etc. With indigenous logics of reason, naturalism and humanism, the collective protest led by the victims of this developmental project, eventually began to encounter established/privileged knowledge claims. To begin with, the movement opposed the very construction of dam by raising ecological concerns and livelihood issues of the tribal communities live in the Valley. Eventually, the voices it raised gained momentum as it reverberated in and outside of India. As a result of its continuous mass protest at the global level, an independent review committee was to be set by the World Bank under the leadership of Bradford Morse (the former chair of UNDP) to assess the problems of rehabilitation including a better standard of living for oustees after displacement. As the review committee strongly criticized inability of the project authorities to rehabilitate all displaced groups, the World Bank withdrew its financial support for the dam and irrigation project in 1993. This was the land mark in the history of people's protest in general and the Narmada Movement in particular.

The dynamics of complex network that the movements are known for, help one's to draw a lesson on the praxis of NSMs in terms of their art of mobilizing people at one level and, challenging/negotiating with the modern institutions on the other. In this regard, NBA made use of available knowledge, both local as well global, from different sources to raise critical voices at the corridors of the national and transnational institutions including the World-Bank and United Nations Commission for Human Rights. Its systematic strategy of mobilization through global network pressurized the World Bank to review the Narmada project (Goldman, 2006). On the other hand, the way the language of protest was articulated by the victims in different hegemonic spaces, led to create a new sensibility among the protestors and led concerned authorities to negotiate with their everyday tyranny. To that extent, the role played by the collective effort of the NBA has been a landmark in the history of new social movements in India.

Intervention of the India's Supreme Court in the backdrop of Public Interest

Litigation (PIL) by the NBA activists led to a stay on the dam construction on the ground of serious social and environmental implications and questioned the viability of dam construction. However, in 2000 a final judgment pronounced by the court permitted the resumption of dam construction as per the Award of the Tribunal only *pari passu* with the implementation of relief and rehabilitation cleared by the Relief and Rehabilitation of Sub-group (Narmada: 2004). In its final verdict, in fact, the court undermined the ecological consequences and displacement threat of the subaltern groups and highlighted the construction of the dam as a life-line of development.

Dialectics of environmentalism and displacement

As the ecological sensibilities of ethnic communities have consciously been brought into the ongoing movement discourses, protests in the valley of Narmada began to show new meanings. Since then, new discourses started to be foregrounded in multiple directions. Obviously, these various discourses changed the course of action, strategy and mobilization of the movement. Consciously, there was a new way of articulating the subaltern politics with eco-sensitivity. It is true that the global discourses on environmental questions have discursively produced when collective mobilization traversed into the terrain of nature-cultural dialectics reverberated in a local geography. As Baviskar (1995:242) rightly points out, the

Narmada Valley shows, the conflict over nature has several manifestation-from organizing to protect access to local forests to the world renowned across these different, yet connected, levels of action can be understood in terms of the relationship between local communities, activists and intellectuals-groups united in a common cause, yet embedded in different social context and moved by different ideologies.

This self-reflexive thought on the generic aspects of everyday life experiences bring home the idea of cultural identity of the community. During the course of struggle, the attempt has been made to organically link tribal habitations with specific cultural traits. Such a cultural specific linkage gave rise to a normative state as eco-system people. It is this unsettled nature-culture dialectic that sheds light on tremendous cultural resources for resistance and mobilization. However, tribal culture and its quality of life have always been inferior as the dominant culture was detrimental to the former with the dictum of development. While sensing developmental implications led by the state of India on the subaltern groups, social activists articulated environmental issues in the realm of social justice as well. In fact, social justice in the realm of environmental protests has posed two epistemological challenges to the ongoing strategies of political economy today – inclusive growth and justice.

Though the Narmada Valley protest indicates the conflict over natural resources, it unfolded multiple strands of cause and consequences of the dominant paradigm of development. It is true that the protest in the valley was conditioned/imposed by the political economy of the state dictated by the transnational corporations like World Bank. It was with the support of both national and transnational non-governmental organizations, that the NBA alarmed the voice of the people in the Narmada valley and created a global discourse. On the other side of the spectrum, people in the valley, the indigenous adivasi communities were subjected to cumulative deprivation, as potential oustees, to sacrifice lives and cultural systems for development of the nation.

Citizens have increasingly become the marginalized subaltern under the nation-state once the public policies serve and protect vested interest of the dominant minority. From the point of view of the affected people, victimization was necessitated by the state that pushed the movement from the art of resistance as counter discourse to birth of displacement for rehabilitation. This relatively diverted the movement's attention, from their aggressive campaign for ecological protection and fight against mega projects like constructing huge dams, to resettlement by demanding better rehabilitation packages. As a result of the ecological components of the movement based on reflexive articulation as part of protest, cognitive formation acquired a status of mainstream discourse which could only paved the way for negotiating with the agencies like the state, the court and the World Bank for/with different logic.

Yet, the indispensability of displacement was internally designed in all these discourses on development. In other words, the critical discourses that the movement generated over a period of time were useful neither to civil society nor to the policy makers as relevant knowledge (Oommen, 2006) to protect the victims of development. The multiple frames academic, media and policy makers use to initiate communicative action effective have failed to synchronize discourses. Instead one becomes cost of the other. This was exactly the implication in the Narmada valley, where discourses of displacement become the cost of environmentalism. Broadly speaking, it is the narrow intellectual action that marginalizes the serious discussions once the repressive regime of the state with the market forces silences democratic space and epistemic privilege of subaltern groups. One needs to understand the fact that the new properties of social situations generated from the protest and counter discourses on political culture and their practices inform and determine the theoretical validity of universal language of justice as a realizable one.

References

- Alvares, C., & Billorey, R. 1999. *Damming the Narmada: India's Greatest Planned Environmental Disaster*. Malaysia: Third World Network.
- Baviskar, A. (1995). 2006. *In the Belly of the River: Tribal Conflicts over Development in the Narmada Valley*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

- Bijoy, C. R., & Raman, K. R. 2003. "Muthanga: The Real Story." *Economic and Political Weekly*, 38(20), 1975-1982.
- Bryant, L. R. 1998. "Power, Knowledge and Ecology in the Third World: A Review." *Progress in Physical Geography*, 22, 79-94.
- Eyerman, Ron., & Jamison, Andrew. 1991. *Social Movements: A Cognitive Approach*. Oxford: Polity
- Flacks, R. 2004. "Knowledge for What? Thoughts on the state of Social Movement Studies." Pp. 146-147 in *Rethinking Social Movements: Structure, Culture, and Emotion*, edited by In J. Goodwin & J.M. Jasper. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Gadgil, M., & Guha, R. 2000, 2007. *The Use and Abuse of Nature*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press
- Gadgil, M., & Guha, R. 1998. "Towards a Perspective on Environmental Movements in India." *Indian Journal of Social Work*, 59(1), 450-472.
- Gadgil, M., & Guha, R. 2007. "Ecological Conflicts and Environmental Movements in India." Pp. 385-428 in *Environmental Issues in India: A Reader*, edited by M. Rangarajan. Delhi: Dorling Kindersley.
- Goldman, M. 2006. *Imperial Nature: The World Bank and Struggles for Social Justice in the Age of Globalization*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman.
- Guha, R. (ed.). 1994. *Social Ecology*. Delhi: Oxford University Press
- Jamison, A. 2001. *The Making of Green Knowledge: Environmental Politics and Cultural Transformation*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Latour, B. 2004. *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Science into Democracy*. Delhi: Orient Longman
- Kadekodi, K. Gopal. 2001. "Environment and Development." Pp. 162-209 in *Environmental Economics: An India Perspective*, edited by Rabindra N Bhattacharya. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Karan, P.P. 1994. "Environmental Movements in India." *Geographical Review*, 84(1), 32-41.
- Karnik, K. 2005. "People's Movement for Natural Resources." Pp. 27-35 in *Environmental Movements in India*, edited by S.N. Pawar; R.B. Patil & S.A. Salunkhe. Jaipur: Rawat.
- Kothari, R. 1994. "Fragments of a Discourse: Towards Conceptualization." in *State and Nation in the Context of Social Change*, Vol. 1, edited by T.V. Sathyamurthy. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Martinez-A. J. 2002. "Environmentalism of the Poor." *A Report for UNRISD for the WSSD*, University of Witwatersrand, Aug. 30.
- Munshi, I. 2003. "Environment and Society: Towards a Sociological Perspective." Pp. 158-176 in *Practice of Sociology*, edited by M. Chaudhuri New Delhi: Orient Longman.

- NBA. 2004. "SSP Updates." *Narmada Bachao Andolan*: on10th Nov.
- Omvedt, G. 1984. "Ecology and Social Movements." *Economic and Political Weekly*, 9(44), 865-867.
- Omvedt, G. 1993. *Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India*. New York: An East Gate Book.
- Oommen, T.K. 2006. "Coping with Development Pathologies: Resistance to Displacement." *Sociological Bulletin*, 55 (2), 267-280.
- Pattanaik, S. 2006. "Commercialisation of Shrimp Trade, Environment and Rural Poverty: A Socio-Ecological Exploration in Coastal Orissa." *Institute of Economic Growth*, New Delhi Working Paper Series No. E/274/2006.
- Raghunandan, D. 2003. "Environment and Development under Capitalist Globalisation." *Social Scientist*, 3(9/0), 36-57.
- Raman, K. R. 2007. "Plachimada Resistance: A Post-development Social Movement Metaphor." Pp. 163-179 in *Exploring Post-development: Theory and Practice*, Problems and Perspectives edited by A. Ziai, Oxon: Routledge.
- Rootes, Christophor. 2004. "Environmental Movements." Pp. 608-640 in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, edited by Snow A David; Soule A Sarah; & Kriesi Hasnpeter. Australia: Blackwell.
- Sangvi, S. 2006. "The New People's Movements in India." *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 42 (50), 111-117.
- Senthalir, S. 2012. "Violence Against the Non-Violent Struggle of Koodamkulam." *Economic and Political Weekly*, 47(39), 13-15.
- Sethi, H. 1993. "Survival and Democracy: Ecological Struggles in India." Pp. 122-148, in *New Social Movements in the South: Empowering the People*, edited by Ponna Wignaraja. New Delhi: Vistar Publications.
- Singh, S. 1997. *Taming the Water: The Political Economy of Large Dams*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Singh, Y. 2003. *Culture Change in India, Identity and Globalisation*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications.
- Sirnate, V. 2009. "Students Versus the State: The Politics of Uranium Mining in Meghalaya." *Economic and Political Weekly*, 44(47), 18-22.
- Spivak, G.C. 2000. "The New Subaltern: A Silent Interview." Pp. 324-340 in (Ed.), *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Post-colonial*, edited by V. Chaturvedi. London: Verso.
- Swain, A. 1997. "Democratic Consolidation? Environmental Movements in India." *Asian Survey*, 37(9), 818-832.
- Zachariah, M., & Sooryamoorthy, R. 1994. *Science for Social Revolution? Achievements and Dilemmas of a Development: The Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad*. New Delhi: Vistar.

About the author

Suresh Babu is Assistant Professor, Sociology of Education at Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawarlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi. He worked in the Dept. of Sociology, University of Jammu for nine years. His research area is focused on the post-developmental issues of subaltern communities in India by critically examining the role of education for social mobility, social implications of political economy of higher education and people's protests and emergence of new cultural politics. He has completed the Doctoral program and Master of Philosophy in Sociology from JNU and a Masters from Loyola College of Social Sciences, Kerala. As of now, there are 15 publications which include a book, research based articles, chapters in books and monographs (both published and accepted for publication) to his credit, apart from about three dozen paper presentations in both and international seminars. At present, he is a member and co-coordinator of the field based research on the *Pahari* speaking people of Jammu and Kashmir for the Govt. of Jammu and Kashmir and has begun to initiate international collaboration with University of Cologne, Germany.