

CHAPTER 10

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

1. INTRODUCTION:

In this final chapter an attempt has been made to present in brief the summary of the findings, conclusions drawn from the summary, and the suggestions made to the policy planners at the State and Central level which would be useful to them in formulating the programmes of the construction of dams in different parts of the country.

2. DAMS, DISPLACEMENT AND REHABILITATION: The construction of dams is not a new phenomenon in India. A number of dams of different sizes are being constructed both for irrigation and the production of hydro-electricity. However, while constructing a dam people inhabiting in the habitat have to be moved. Thus the rehabilitation of the people from the submerged areas becomes a necessity. In this context, the Government no doubt pays compensation to the displaced people in terms of land, sight for home and other necessary expenses. However the amount of compensation paid may not satisfy the people who have lost everything that they had on account of displacement. The process of rehabilitation poses a significant problem not only before the government but also before the affected people.

The construction of big dams brings about fundamental changes in the ecological setting of catchment as well as command areas. Generally the fertile soil on the slopes of the river in the catchment area is lost under the water as a result of which the settlements are widely scattered and flora and fauna totally disturbed.

On this background, the large dams are today India's most controversial issues. The key issue is not only the destruction of the nature and flora and fauna alone but the widespread displacement of human beings alongwith their material belongings and the sufferers are essentially the tribals, the poorest and the most powerless.

Nothing is more dangerous and painful than being asked to shift over to a new habitat which the original settlers have not practised before. Yet the people have to be migrated and uprooted for want of overall development of the nation. Those who are made to migrate are the ones who make a sacrifice for the sake of the community at large and the country as a whole.

The process of construction of dams in Maharashtra has been going on since the British rule. A number of dams have been constructed accordingly and a number of people have also been displaced eventually. However in absence of adequate law concerning rehabilitation, the displaced people have not been satisfied. Even after the passing of Rehabilitation Act of 1976, there is no significant

change in the resettlement of the displaced people as a result of which those who are displaced have been launching agitations against construction of dams. Their major demand is "first rehabilitation and then dam."

The general trend that is quite clear from all the earlier studies is that the construction of dams has affected the socio-economic status of the displaced. The number of persons actually resettled was much less than the displaced persons. The displaced people did not receive adequate compensation and the landless poor were paid nothing. In some cases there was a wide spread corruption in the disbursement of compensation. Rich farmers managed to receive compensation in reasonably competitive terms, whereas the people with low socio-economic status did not get adequate compensation for the property they lost. The studies also show that the compensation received was spent indiscriminately, it was spent on transportation/living expenses and the people were unable to purchase land. In some cases the compensation had spread social evils also. The title-holders only received small plots of land and the amenities were not provided to the displaced people.

In general, it can be said that the magnitude of the problem arising from irrigation development in India is by no means negligible. The number of people driven away from homes/habitats from dam building is enormous and whatever benefits that accrue from these projects do not reach these displaced people.

3. BACKGROUND OF THE RESPONDENTS: The respondents under the present study were in the age-group of 41 to 60 years and majority of them were married. Most of the respondents were found to be either Marathas or Dhanagars.

A majority of the respondents were illiterate. For those who were educated there also, most of them had education only upto primary level. The trend in housing shows that the respondents have not been able to build up big sized houses with more spacious rooms after rehabilitation.

Only a few respondents have told that their family members have migrated to other places during the rehabilitation process. These people have migrated to greater Bombay or places in Satara District. A majority of the respondents reported that they were not staying at the places which were assigned to them by the Government.

4. ECONOMIC PROBLEMS: In the case of the majority of the respondents their parental occupation was agriculture. This has been followed by those who were engaged in Balutedari-Cum-Agricultural Labour. In the present generation almost all those who were owner-cultivators before rehabilitation have become owner-cultivators-cum-agricultural labourers; while almost all those who were Balutedars-cum-agricultural labourers before, continue to be so even after rehabilitation with a little change here and there.

Two out of every three respondent-families were found to be below the poverty line. Their income level didn't improve. It continued to be where it was during the last 25 years. A majority of the respondent-families did not have any savings before as well as after rehabilitation. The trend of indebtedness has been on the increase after rehabilitation which is the sole product of displacement.

The respondent-families with insignificant exceptions did possess some agricultural land, no matter whether Jirait or Bagait before rehabilitation. One out of every three respondent-families did not receive any land from the government, so these were the families left to themselves with no source of livelihood from agricultural land. They have been trying to contact Government Officials during all these years in their individual capacities but they have met with a failure. In the land distribution amongst the displaced families, it is observed that there is no uniformity as regards the land allocation. Apart from this, a majority of the respondents have not purchased any new land after rehabilitation.

A majority of the respondents were practising Kumari cultivation for producing Nachani and Vari. The practice has been harmful from ecological point of view but this has been continued.

A majority of the respondents were keeping cattle before as well as after rehabilitation but the proportion

of respondents who were keeping cattle has come down after rehabilitation. A majority of the respondents were using milk and milk products for household purpose before as well as after rehabilitation. Thus dairying is not performed as a subsidiary occupation in the rehabilitated families.

5. SOCIO-CULTURAL PROBLEMS: Before rehabilitation the people used to have matrimonial relations in Satara District, i.e., places of their origin. After rehabilitation alongwith the continuation of this trend some of the respondents have established matrimonial relations with the people where they have migrated. A majority of the respondents continue to maintain their matrimonial relations with the villages from where they are displaced. The dowry problem has become more serious than finding the matrimonial relations for their sons and daughters. The practice of child marriages is still continued among Gopal Dhanagars of Patan, Javali and Satara Talukas. The Konkani people are not willing to have matrimonial relations with the people in the Koyana catchment due to the lack of transportation facilities.

A majority of the respondents' kinsmen have not arrived with them but they are scattered in different places.

The tendency to stay together with one's own kith and kin in the same neighbourhood continues to dominate even after rehabilitation in the new colonies. The tendency to stay together with the people following similar occupation also continues to dominate amongst the rehabilitated colonies.

People continue to celebrate festivals even under adverse conditions, no matter even if they are forced to take loans from the natives. A little less than half of the respondents reported that native villagers do not participate with them in celebration of religious festivals. The women also were found to observe social distance as did men in the celebration of festivals.

The participation in Bhajani-Mandals is declining due to rehabilitation. The respondents don't feel like taking active part in such activities, may be because they have developed a sense of indifference over the years which is acting as an obstacle in taking active part in the community activities.

A majority of the respondents report that there is an absence of temple of family deity in their new villages. It is primarily because when one village is displaced, it gets distributed itself into various groups and they are settled in different villages. The result being that the temple comes to be installed in only one new colony; whereas the rest of the offshoots of that original village are left with no such temples. This conspicuous absence of temples has adversely affected the religious lives and they feel insecure and uncertain about their future.

The majority of the respondents reported that the recreational facilities were available in their villages before as well as after rehabilitation. The annual village fairs are carried on in villages. In general recreational

activities have not been greatly affected due to the process of rehabilitation. Shramjivi Janata Sahayyak Mandal a voluntary organization is performing best role in providing financial assistance through activities like making cane articles, milk-collection, honey bee raising etc. in some of the rehabilitated villages.

6. CIVIC FACILITIES: The civic facilities provided by the government are at the village level. Therefore the village schedules were analyzed. Majority of the villages have not been allotted with gaothans. Majority of the settlements had tube-system for drinking water. The settlements especially in the catchment area were largely dependent on the river and natural spring for drinking water. The respondents have to fetch water from long distances and the situation becomes even more worse during the summer season.

The scene regarding approach road and transportation indicates that though the approach roads have been made available here and there, for majority of the settlements transportation facility has not been made available.

The school facility has been made available in almost all the settlements. However at the same time there are several settlements where the facility is available but teacher does not remain present and this situation is even more dangerous. There is a need to check this trend and the authorities will have to check that the allotted work is being done by the teachers concerned.

The absence of health centre facility in Koyana rehabilitated settlements in general and in the catchment area in particular shows the miserable state of the residents in terms of health. Majority of the settlements had a facility of community halls. Again though the majority of the settlements had facility of electricity, the settlements in catchment zone have not been provided with these facilities.

The majority of the respondents (48.61 percent) were not at all satisfied with the facilities provided by the government in their settlements.

7. KOYANA DAM AND THE EARTHQUAKES: The Koyana dam was started filling in 1962. In 1963, the frequency of the earthquake shocks increased greatly and their epi centres were all found to be either in the neighbourhood of the dam or under the reservoir. The devastating earthquake of the magnitude 6.5 struck Koyananagar on 10th December 1967. In this earthquake nearly 200 lives were lost, 1500 people were injured and thousands were rendered homeless. More than 80 percent of the houses at Koyananagar were either completely destroyed or became totally uninhabitable.

The reasons behind the earthquake at Koyana cannot be attributed to the single factor alone. However the fact remains that the shocks in 1967 have caused great disturbances and damages to the houses of the people who were resettled in this location just 2 to 3 years ago and still today the series of tremors continue to occur on and often.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS: The big dams have had several adverse effects on the environment and the people. These can be enumerated as degradation of the soil in the command areas, eviction of thousands of families, increase in the incidence of some diseases, destruction of eco-system and loss of large tracts of forests, etc.

The native villagers have not accepted the ^{Koyana}rehabilitated families as part and parcel of their native village and they do not extend wholehearted co-operation to them. The tensionsome situation has horrified the new settlers. Therefore they feel that they are living at the mercy of the native villagers.

The old traditional pattern of spatial distribution of households in which the scheduled caste families were made to build up their huts on the periphery of the colony was observed.

A majority of the respondents were not at all comfortable in their present location.

The rainfall in Koyana catchment and water level in Koyana reservoir indicate decreasing trend. The Koyana forest has had rich flora and fauna resources, but this is being influenced due to shifting cultivation practices and hunting habits of the people residing in the catchment area.

The privately owned patches in the Koyana catchment have hardly any trees. This naturally leads to massive erosion and resultant siltation of Koyana dam during the rainy season. The contractors have started charcoal making activity on a very large scale and this has resulted into tree felling in the catchment area.

On this background, there is a need of afforestation. The Government of Maharashtra declared development of Koyana sanctuary in 1984, but this is not being implemented properly due to inadequate facilities to the officials.

The Save Western Ghats Movement was launched during November 87 and February 88. The marchers visited many villages where no development work has been carried out as they were earmarked as the areas to be submerged by irrigation projects. As a result, these villagers lived without any benefits of development for as long as two decades.

The firewood requirements and tradition of hunting in the Koyana catchment have adversely affected flora and fauna. The Save Western Ghats has called for a mass people's resistance against environmental degradation, deforestation, pollution and the construction of projects which threaten the ecological balance.

9. IMPACT OF REHABILITATION: A majority of the respondents received the compensation only upto Rs.5000/-. The cash compensation received by the respondents was not adequate

at all. The respondents felt that the government's evaluation of their property was too low. The compensation amount was utilized by the respondents on purchasing the land, constructing the house and on other miscellaneous items.

Nearly half of the respondents got themselves rehabilitated within six months after their displacement and this is particularly so in the catchment area.

The funds were spent during the process of rehabilitation but these were spent not necessarily on matters of mutual interest to the displaced families and their colonies. The native villagers and their active leaders saw to it that those funds were sanctioned for the rehabilitated colonies but these were diverted and actually spent in the native village communities for the benefit of the native villagers at the cost of the displaced colonies. Here, the government agencies cannot be blamed because the government can function well only if it receives active co-operation from all the quarters.

There is a long list of grievances which the respondents have voiced when they were approached for their

interviews. The intensity of these grievances is very deep and the extent is very wide. These grievances were with reference to agricultural land and absence of civic amenities.

A majority of the respondents reported that the displacement and rehabilitation process has not at all

benefited them.

The dam affected people were given many assurances by the state ministers but these have not been fulfilled. This has been going on since the construction of the dam and it has been continued until today.

Though the government has reserved seats for the project affected families and issues a certificate, its implementation is not being observed except in Satara District.

The dam affected people had to pay 10 times of the amount for purchasing land at the rehabilitated places. The dam affected people even today try to put their demands to the government through appeals and strikes for the long awaited demands, but the response from the government has been slow.

The description of some individuals and villages rehabilitated due to Koyana Dam indicates the worst situation under which they are living.

The reasons why these people expressed total dissatisfaction, over the process of rehabilitation were first because they felt that they were not properly compensated for the agricultural land that they lost, secondly because they felt that adequate civic amenities have not been provided to them by the State Government in their new colonies, thirdly because they felt that their children were deprived of educational facilities and employment opportunities and lastly because they felt that they are being discriminated and

isolated from the rest of the native villagers. They feel that they are being treated as second grade citizens. As a result of all these reasons they have not been able to become one with the native village people. They are trying to maintain their separate identity which is far from the one that they have had in their own village communities before displacement.

10. SUGGESTIONS:

The review of the problems encountered by the displaced people on account of the construction of the Koyana dam comes out with the following suggestions, that will be useful to the academicians as well as policy planners in reformulating the policy of rehabilitation in future.

1. One must take a holistic view of the entire policy of rehabilitation. The holistic view will consist of displacement of flora and fauna alongwith human beings. Secondly the holistic view will also consist of just and proper rehabilitation of the displaced people which should be based on the strict principles of minimum displacement, development planning, land for land, some land to the landless and employment for all.
2. The problem of sub-title holders needs to be tackled intelligently. The origin of this problem lies in the deep rooted cultural practices which cannot be solved with the present legal set-up. The sub-title holders

were totally ignored during the whole process of rehabilitation. If justice is to be given to them, the government should establish a separate cell for a temporary period of time in the Satara District in order to locate all the sub-title holders as per the 1962 revenue records of the government.

3. The human settlements which have come up on the hill-tops in the catchment area have been totally isolated from the rest of the world especially during the monsoon season. Moreover there are no civic facilities like the primary school, approach roads, health centre, community hall, electricity and the drinking water. For want of these basic facilities, they have become the part of the nature in every sense of the term. They are leading their lives like other animals and not like the human beings. They are resorting to shifting cultivation by way of which they are helping the contractors who are engaged in cutting the tress on a large scale and making charcoal the practice which is leading to deforestation. Moreover there is no protection to wild-life in these jungles. Therefore if the wild-life is to be totally protected and deforestation is to be completely stopped, the human settlements should be completely evacuated on the priority basis and these should be accordingly rehabilitated.

4. The charcoal making activity which is going on continuously ever-since the construction of the Koyana dam, the people engaged in the business are economically dominant and politically influential. If this is to be stopped completely, the awareness in the local people must be created against the practice of deforestation and the government machinery should also come forward in checking unlawful activities on the part of the charcoal making contractors.
5. In the whole process of rehabilitation, the quality of land that has been made available to the displaced people is very poor. As such they have not been able to maintain their families. Thus some employment opportunities need to be created in order to help the unskilled, semi-skilled and the skilled persons in the rehabilitated villages. In this regard government is issuing certificates to the dam affected individuals but it does not see whether they get the employment or not. The government must see that the project affected persons are recruited in various departments of the government.
6. These days there are many agitations and movements going on in Maharashtra against the construction of dams. The slogans of these agitators is "first Rehabilitation and then dam." People have become aware of the fate of the displaced families. Thus the government must

pay proper attention during the phase of planning itself of the alternative proposals of displacement and rehabilitation.

7. Finally, the government should establish a separate cell to go into the grievances of the Koyana Project affected people and guide them properly. In the absence of this cell, even the basic facilities such as drinking water, electricity, approach road, school and community hall have not been met with properly.

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