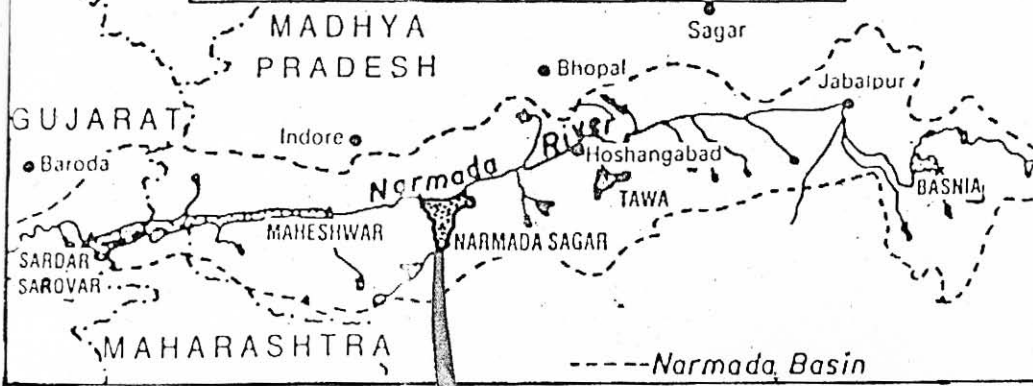


in sorrow and anger

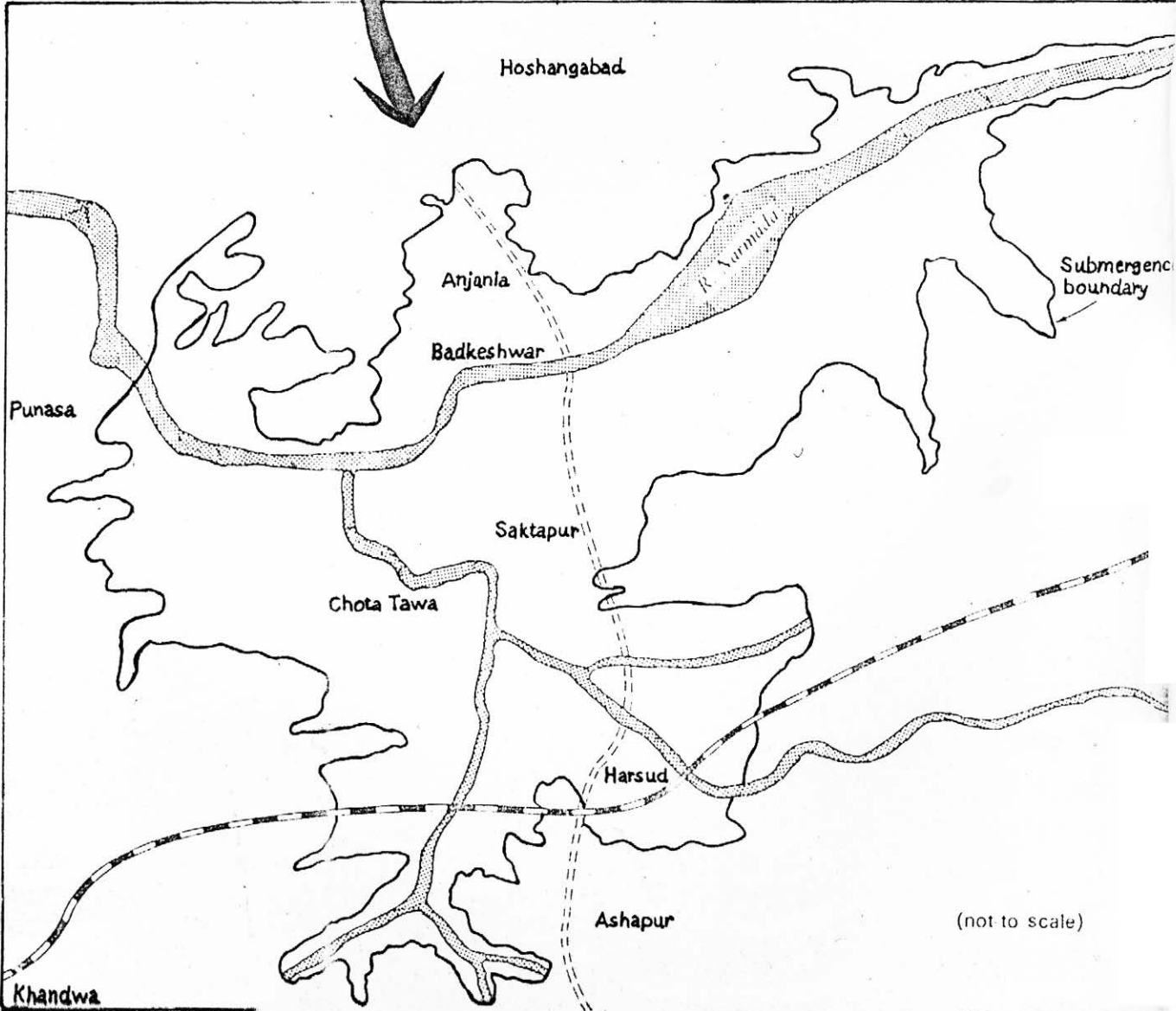
THE VICTIMS SPEAK—Based on a visit to the area
to be submerged by the Indira Sagar Project



NARMADA BASIN PROJECTS



INDIRA SAGAR is the official name of the major dam on the Narmada river in Madhya Pradesh. It is also called the NARMADA SAGAR.



SUBMERGENCE AREA UNDER INDIRA SAGAR

(not to scale)

IN SORROW AND ANGER
THE VICTIMS SPEAK

*Based on a visit to the area to be submerged by
the Indira Sagar Project*



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CAMPAIGN AGAINST INDIRA SAGAR

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The present report has been prepared on the basis of tape recorded interviews by a few of us in the group called Campaign Against Indira Sagar (CAISA).

We are a group of young people - journalists, professionals, film makers and social activists who are committed to oppose the construction of the Indira Sagar Dam.

The Indira Sagar Dam is one of the major dams to be constructed on the river Narmada in the state of Madhya Pradesh. The social, economic and environmental impacts of the dam are enough to justify its being called one of the largest planned disasters in the world. The Narmada Valley Development Authority is overlooking the construction of the dam and the World Bank is providing the funds crucial to its construction. The World Bank has a gory track record of funding such major projects all over the world which cause human suffering and ecological destruction. The Indira Sagar Dam will displace more than 1,70,000 people, many of them tribals, from over 250 villages. It will submerge 43,000 hectares of irreplaceable natural forest land and more than 45,000 hectares of cultivable fertile land. This dam will also lead to the annihilation of a large variety of wildlife many of which belong to endangered species. Ecologists have pointed out that due to the unstable geological conditions at the dam site, the possibility of occurrence of a major earthquake will be heightened due to the phenomena of Reservoir Induced Seismicity. The benefits of the dam are quite questionable. The soil to be irrigated is of such quality that an estimated 40% of the land will get waterlogged and will thus be lost for ever. It has also been pointed out that 50% of the land to be irrigated consists of shallow soil bed

which is not fit for irrigation. The 230 MW of electricity to be produced is to be supplied mainly to multinational and other industries and will serve the interests of the rich.

Two major trends have emerged over the years in response to such major dams. One of these is to focus on the problems of the potential oustees and to rally around the demands of rehabilitation and relocation. The other is to build up resistance to the construction of the dam. It is our contention that taking up the issue of rehabilitation and relocation amounts to giving sanction to the construction of the dam. We also believe that, though the possibilities are remote, even if the oustees are resettled properly the serious ecological implications of the dam will still be there.

We see the problem of major dams in the context of the path of development chosen by the Indian State and financed by foreign capital. Major dams are but a part of the - intensive irrigation, HYV seeds, chemical-fertilizers, pesticides, hazardous high tech industries - path of development and we see the opposition to the major dams in relation to opposition to such a path of development. The experience of the last 30 years has shown that such development has only resulted in the accumulation of power and resources in the hands of a rich few, marginalized the vast majority of the masses and has caused enormous damage to the air, water and soil of this country. We see environment as a part of and interlinked with human life. Our protest against the construction of the Indira Sagar Dam is thus an assertion of life against death dealing forces.

We believe that through a combination of local peoples' protest action and national and international campaign against the construction of the dam, it can still be halted.

We look forward to your ideas and comments on our approach and seek your help and support for our actions.

C A I S A

OF FORESTS AND PEOPLE

Campaigning against Indira Sagar Project from a distance, dealing with survey reports, published facts and official fiction, lobbying through letters and memorandums, is one thing. Visiting the villages to be submerged by the project, meeting the people to be displaced, trekking through the forests to be destroyed, is quite another. There is a difference in the quality of the emotions that are evoked. For the four of us who visited the villages around the dam site, this difference was sharply felt in the first few days of our 15 day visit (8 December 1987-23 December 1987).

It is a beautiful country. The deciduous natural forests which cover 32% of the Narmada Basin lend a lot of their beauty to making it so. The forest in many patches is scarce, and thanks to the legal felling by government departments and illegal felling under the protection of ruling party functionaries, the stock is further declining. But whatever remains of the forest is still breath-taking. The majestic teak, anjan, sheesham, salai, phansi, and kalam stand tall, with mahua, haldu, temru and other trees of lower heights, while bamboo groves and other shrubs grow in their own niches. Besides containing a wide variety of trees, some of which are rare species, the forests abound in bears, panthers, wolves, cheetals, neelgais, pangolins,

porcupines, badgers, flying squirrels, rose-ringed parakeets, grey partridges, jungle fowls, green pigeons, grey hornbills, spotted doves, and other exhilarating species of wildlife. Many of the species we found are listed in Schedule I or in part 2 of Schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972.

The absence of forest corridors will make it virtually impossible for wildlife to migrate to alternate habitats and most will simply drown in the rising waters.

"The animals will die too. If the forests are submerged animals will be submerged too. Where will they go? What do the animals know? They do not know that the forests are to be submerged, and that they should find ways to escape. We all will escape, but they will be left to die, no?"

SHRAWAN PATEL/60/SMALL FARMER/JAMMOTI



Not a single study has yet been initiated by the Indira Sagar Project authorities to identify the species of flora and fauna which would be submerged, and yet they continue to be criminally complacent.

"....And as for the threatened species which we hear about, it is a hypothetical argument, whether there are any such species or not,

in the absence of a study."

MAHARSHI/CHIEF CONSERVATOR, FORESTS/
(September 1987)

The lives of the Adivasis (original inhabitants) who live on the fringes are interlinked with the fate of the forests. From medicines to wedding "mandaps" and from roof thatching to cattle grazing, the people are dependant on the forests.



"When our children get married, we get sagam, adkath, and jamoon branches for the mandap. They are very essential for the wedding ceremonies."

GHASIRAM/45/SMALL FARMER/BANKA PALASH



"I have ten cows. They graze in the forest. If we are moved from here I will not be able to look after my cattle and they will all die. From the forest we bring teak leaves to thatch the roofs of our huts."

MOHAN SINGH/45/SMALL FARMER/BANKA PALASH

"If we are driven near a city we have to face many hardships. If my cot breaks where shall I get the wood to repair it? I do not have enough money to get a carpenter. Here I can repair it myself. We make and repair



cots for ourselves with the pieces of wood lying around in the forest."

BUDHA SINGH/32/LABOURER/BANKA PALASH

The adivasis in the forest villages, belonging to several tribes - korku, bhilale and rathia - are mostly small farmers owning 5 to 10 acres of land, and cattle rearing is a major source of earning their livelihood. The land is extremely fertile and in many such villages farming is practised without the use of fertilizers or pesticides. A large number of them work as wage labourers for the forest department and the big farmers in the neighbouring villages. Their traditional skills include construction of the "Paat" system of irrigation through mud bunds on perennial streams.

The other villages, classified as revenue villages in the government records, comprise of old-time immigrants who belong to a variety of castes and communities. Small and middle farmers owning 5 to 15 acres of land constitute the majority of the population in these villages. The number of rich farmers owning more than 200 acres of land is small but, due to their connections with political leaders and their ability to influence people's opinions, they are extremely powerful.

The land consists of rich, black soil good for the cultivation of cotton, wheat, jowar, pulses and oilseeds. A lot of irrigation is done

from the streams and small rivers, of which there are plenty.

It is a beautiful country which is going to be destroyed. The thought of the lovely forests that will be submerged, the wild animals which will meet a watery grave, the people who will be uprooted and impoverished fills one with sadness while the reality that all this is being done to satisfy the economic and political interests of the World Bank and others, fills one with a sense of anger.



... UNCERTAINTY AND CONSEQUENCES

The 1300 kilometer long river Narmada has been a target for "development" since the times of the British Raj. Serious considerations for the construction of power and irrigation projects began in 1946 and the destiny of the river remained unchanged after the tryst in 1947. Since Narmada passes through three states Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh, interstate river disputes came to the fore once preparations for the harnessing of the waters began. The central government set up the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal in 1969 and it has been 8 years since the Tribunal announced its final awards. Subsequent to the granting of the awards, the project authorities got down to the business of producing reports and with each successive report, the picture of a dammed future was made to appear brighter and brighter.



All of course on the basis of disputable facts and dubious methods of computation. The construction of the dams remained uncertain though and when the government's own Department of Environment and Forests, put up a note before the Prime Minister evaluating the colossal environmental losses, it seemed quite possible that the Prime Minister would not give clearance to the project. It also seemed that the World Bank, with its gory track record of funding man-made disasters the world over, would withdraw from providing the crucial funds for the project because of the mounting criticisms. Finally, in April 1987, the Prime Minister gave the clearance for the construction of 30 major dams, 135 medium dams and over 3000 small dams along the Narmada River. And the World Bank obliged by granting US\$ 300 million loan for one of the major dams, the Sardar Sarovar Project. The other major dam being the Indira Sagar Project.

The spectre of a dam at Punnasa has been looming over the people in that area for a painfully long period. It is now almost 40 years since the preliminary surveys for the dam were undertaken in that area. A lot of people, however, believe that there were others who tried to fetter the virgin mother Narmada a long while ago - during the time of the Mahabharata.

"Arjun (one of the Pandava Brothers), proposed to "Mother" Narmada that he wanted to marry her. She agreed, but on one condition. The

condition was that he should be able to construct a dam over her before the break of dawn when the rooster crows. In case he failed to do this she would not marry him. So Arjun and his brother Bheem brought two big mountains and placed one on each side of Narmada - these mountains which you see today on both sides of the river were brought by them. Then they went back to bring the third mountain to put across the river. Narmada, realising that the dam was nearly complete turned herself into a rooster and began to crow. On hearing the rooster crow, Arjun and Bheem dropped the third mountain which they were bringing from afar, on the way, and came running. But it was too late and dawn was breaking. Mother Narmada can never be fettered."

JASMAN SINGH/35/SMALL FARMER/ONDWA

Others in the same village are not so certain. Arjun, they say, in frustration and anger later delivered a curse that in "Kalyug" human beings would erect a dam across the Narmada. The uncertainty about how the story ends is but a part of the larger uncertainty that has so far surrounded the construction of the dam. And this pall of uncertainty has had serious

consequences on the lives of the people. The barest of community facilities have not been provided.

"I have been hearing about the dam since my childhood. Since they have declared that a dam is to be constructed here, they have not built anything for us. No hospitals, no schools for our children, no roads, and no buses to travel."

GOVIND PRASAD/36/SMALL FARMER/BIJALPUR

People who have the means have hesitated from investing into permanent ventures.

"I have been hearing about the dam for the last twenty five years. My father never invested into anything that would be there for a long time, neither have I. This is true of the whole village. People haven't dug wells to irrigate their lands, the wells that are dug we have not made them pucca (permanent). How can we, when all this nonsense is going on? People are not planting orchards. If the orchards get submerged after 5 years when the trees bear fruits, then what is the use? All around you will find houses half constructed. There are four handpumps in this village that need repair,

but what will they do by repairing them? They are also going to be submerged."

TEJRAM SOLANKI/28/TAILOR & FARMER/BADKESHWAR

People with nothing to invest also suffer.

"Since the last 3 years I have been earning nothing. I make farming implements and work on building construction. I have been hearing about the dam since a long time, that the dam is going to be built, but nothing is definite about it. All work here has come to a standstill. If buildings were constructed, I could have gotten some work. There are 17 traders in this village and I owe loans to every single one of them."

**ISMAIL KHAN/53/BLACKSMITH & SMALL FARMER/
BALDI**

"I make bricks, tiles and clay pots. Twenty years have passed since the plan to construct the dam has been around. The ghost of the dam hovers over all of us. I have not been able to earn anything. All the houses in this village are built with bricks made by my hands. Now what will people do by getting bricks made? Why would anyone build houses."

MANGILAL/48/BRICK MAKER & POTTER/JABGAON

The passage of time since the plan has been mooted and the absence of any authentic information has led to the prevalence of an uncomfortable uncertainty. Leading to, as the villagers say, a situation in which they have been "drowned even before the actual submergence."



... WATCHES AND MOTORCARS

During these uncertain years on many occasions the people were herded together to listen to grand speeches. The one delivered by Indira Gandhi, in whose memory the Project has been rechristened was one such occasion.

"Indira Gandhi had come here. We heard that she was going to give a speech. They told me to come along and listen to her speaking on the dam. I told them that I would have to go walking. Then someone said there were arrangements to take us there on trucks free of charge. So I went by that to the dam site. A large crowd had gathered that morning. Then Indira Gandhi came on the stage. She told the people to look for land. Then the public asked her to settle them wherever she wanted. Give us land for land, we don't want compensation they said. Indira Gandhi said that we in the government can fell trees to give land to you all, but what will happen to us if we cut down the trees and spoil the forests, so you look for land somewhere else. The people told her if you dont give us your land then where will we

go? Nothing much was said after that."

PYAR SINGH/35/AGRICULTURAL LABOURER/BIJALPUR

Such speeches served to make the spectre of the dam more real and provided little comfort. The visits by the government officials were even more disturbing.

"They had come to survey the village, measure the land and houses. I asked them what they were doing, they said that a dam was going to be built. I asked when and where it would be built, they said what did I have to do with it and then asked me to mind my own business. Such are the officers who come here."

GENDALAL/50/SMALL FARMER/ABHAWAN

"A lot of government people come and say that the dam is being built you will be given compensation and land. What else do they say? 'Till now it has not been decided where you all will be sent', they say. They never tell us what will be done with us. Some come and talk of compensation, others come and say that they are looking out for land for us. But till now they have not told us where they are looking for land."

RAJA RAM/35/AGRICULTURAL LABOURER/CHUCCHREL



During their visits the officials did not think it was necessary to provide people with information about the policies which are going to affect their lives. But atleast with the "brown sahibs" the people could ask questions - communicate to some extent. With the white sahibs from the World Bank such 'indulgence' was denied. "Two months back 4-5 government officials had come and there was a white man with them. They talked in English and we could not understand anything. The officials with him were translating things for him. They asked where would we like to be shifted, we said we dont want to go anywhere, we want to stay here. We dont want to leave our homes and wander anywhere, we said. The white sahib wanted to know what we had said, then we dont know what the officials told him in English."

BHARAT SINGH/35/FARMER/ONDWA



The government people bring white sabibs to the village. They tell us these are people from the World Bank. They come and speak English and we do not understand anything they say. We do not understand whether what we say is being conveyed to them. We tell them that we do not want the dam to be built. But

we are never sure that they understand us.

RANVIR SINGH/45/SMALL FARMER/BIJALPUR

But then "officially" the World Bank people had no business to be there.

"The World Bank people are not supposed to have direct dialogue with the people. They go there only to see the catchment area treatment and all that. We will never allow foreigners to interfere in these matters. It is our country, our people, we will deal with them, not foreigners.

S.C. VERMA/CHAIRMAN/NVDA

The Chairman, NVDA, never fails to mention the various visits he himself has made.

"I must have visited these 12 villages atleast 5-6 times. They may not have understood what was asked, but, we have video films of all my visits. Not to publicise my visit, but, just to keep a record, the questions that are asked, the answers replies I give, so that it is educative for us also."

S.C. VERMA/CHAIRMAN/NVDA

But more than video films are required, "strictly for the record" and perhaps not merely

for "educative" purposes. So the officials resort to time tested methods.

"They only come and tell us to sign on blank papers. Ask for our signatures on blank papers. But people from 10-12 villages had called a meeting and it was decided that nobody would sign on blank papers. Only a few days back an officer had come with some paper and asked us to sign on it. So we told him 'You can tell us whatever you have got to say, we will tell the whole village, but, if you ask for our signatures on blank papers, we won't do it.' They are forcing us to sign on blank papers."

RAJA RAM/35/AGRICULTURAL LABOURER/CHUCCHREL

Around the time that we were visiting the 12 villages to be submerged in Phase-I, legal notices for land acquisition were being received by some of the villages. The notices issued by the land acquisition officer, Indira Sagar Project under section-5 of the Land Acquisition Act of 1894 said "the undermentioned officer has been given the rights, to enter, take measurements and make excavations in the land that is proposed to be acquired by the Govt. of M.P. and any person causing obstruction to these activities, would be doing so at his own risk". The officer mentioned was the Executive Engineer of the Indira Sagar Project or his

subordinates and the land that was to be ravaged was the land that has been nurturing the villagers for hundreds of years. The villagers could however, submit their objections to such violations of their fundamental right to life by 11 Jan '88, for land is the only source of livelihood for the majority of them. Such legal procedures are of course not designed to suit the convenience of the villagers.

"They have fixed a date within which we have to present our objections. There is so little time that the date will pass by. After that they will do whatever they want to do since then they can say they had given us an opportunity to state our objections. If we can't put forth our objections they can say we do not have any problems and everyone is ready to go from this place."

GOVIND PRASAD/36/SMALL FARMER/BIJALPUR

And of course, for the villagers in the four forest villages (Sarai, Bankapalash, Dhari-kotra and Jammoti) such facade was not necessary. No such notices for them.

"No notice has come to our village. How can we submit our objections when the notice has not come? If the notice had come, we could



have gone to nearby villages and consulted people there and written the objections."

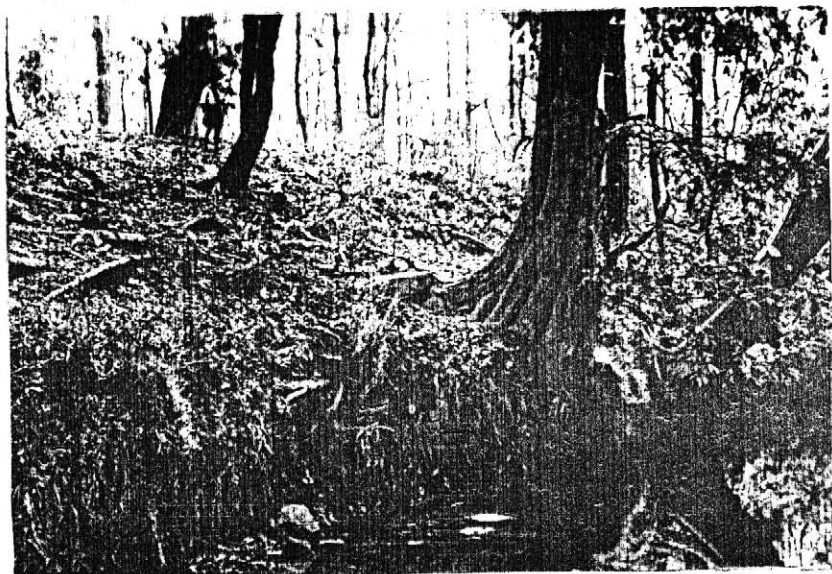
GOKUL/30/SMALL FARMER/DHARIKOTRA

The Chairman NVDA has a ready explanation for such discrimination. "You see they have no right over land, so there is no question of serving any notice. They are not owners of land". There is enough reason to be afraid that the discrimination will not end there. And while such preparations for the planned deprivation of the people are afoot they are being fed with liberal doses of assurances.

"One year back the dam authorities had organised a three day training camp at Harsood. Listening to the assurances they gave us about the re-settlement provisions, it never occurred to us to demand anything. They promised us more than we could ask for. They even said that Rs.250/- would be given to us in advance to buy ropes and strings to pack our belongings and tractors and trolleys would be provided to move all our household stuff. They said they wont leave us till we were settled twice as good as we are here. Listening to such assurances our hearts began to swell with anticipated pleasure. 'You people in these twelve

villages are so fortunate', they said. 'People of Harsood will envy you. There! are you wearing a watch?! Your wife will also wear one (after you are settled) and you wont be the only one to wear a watch in the family. Your children would also wear watches. Your children are illiterate now, they graze other people's cattle, they will sit in motor cars and go to college!'

RAM ADHAR SINGH/45/FARMER/ONDWA



... TREMORS AND TRIBULATIONS

A perpetual supply of assurances has played a substantial role in preventing protests against the dam from becoming widespread. There are many who cling to the belief that people who come wearing clean clothes can never lie, can never give false assurances. There are others who believe that the clean men are up to dirty tricks!

"I personally feel that those who are rich farmers and are influential have been given to believe that they would be paid compensation in full, would be given good land. I feel that the government has secretly assured the rich landlords that they will be compensated well. And then the government has silenced the small farmers by means of threats. The small farmers have been given to understand that if they resist they won't be given anything. So these people say things to please the government officials so as to get some benefits out of them. In this manner the government has quelled any opposition to the dam that is likely to arise."

YOUSUF KHAN/32/SMALL FARMER/GANNOUR

Most of the rich farmers have confined themselves to the issues of resettlement and

compensation and have kept clear of direct opposition to the construction of the dam. Because of their hegemony they have influenced the opinions of other people, and negatively so.

"The big farmers are not objecting to the dam. They are not saying that this will not be allowed. We are small people. What power do we have? There is Raj Narayan Singh, (the local Congress(I) M.L.A. and a rich farmer), and if such people oppose the dam we will also join them. But these people are not giving us any such suggestions."

SHRAVAN/38/SMALL FARMER/ONDWA

Some of the rich farmers owning "unmanagably" large tracts of land, and saddled with "unmanagable" labour do actually support the construction of the dam!

"Farming is my main occupation. I farm on 215 acres of land. The land can give very good yield but due to bad climate and shortage of labour the yield is less than what it could be. The government has unnecessarily started this relief work here. There is enough work for the labourers in the fields. Instead of working in the fields the labourers are going



for relief work just because the wages are a little higher. I am not worried about my fields getting submerged. I can easily get 50-60 acres of good land elsewhere. If they pay compensation it is also fair, but it should be given according to the quality of the land. I am ready to take compensation and leave. It is beneficial to move with the nation. This dam must be constructed. We should consider national interests. Our Prime Minister is doing a very good job by making this project. One has to suffer in order to get happiness later. If the forest is submerged the nation can grow better forests. What is the use of forests anyway? It is Okay for the environment, otherwise, they are mostly used for illegal purposes."

SARDAR SINGH/50/RICH FARMER/JABGAON

The long years over which the idea of the dam has been drilled into the minds of the people has made some of them accept it as a part of their reality - yet another misery that has to be borne. The uncertainty that has surrounded the Project has made the others believe that possibly the dam will not come about, at least not in their lifetime. Then, of course, there is the belief that the freedom-loving virgin mother Narmada would not let herself be bound.

"I believe that mother Narmada will not chase us away. When she could not be tied down by the Pandava brothers, how can she be tied down now? They tried to construct a dam and Narmada appeared as a rooster and undid all their plans."

LAXMAN/40/SMALL FARMER/CHEECH

And thus in the face of powerful forces and in a situation of uncertainty, a substantial section of the potential oustees do not yet consider protest against the dam as a possible course of action. They have resigned themselves to a doomed future.

"Some officers came in cars and talked about the construction of the dam. I never said anything to them. Who can stop the government? You can ask me what is my wish. It is the government which can wish. If they submerge us, we will have to run wherever they chase us to."

BABU/50/SMALL FARMER/SARAI

"Earlier I had a lot of strength but now I am old and weak. I would go wherever I am driven away to. Otherwise they would break our heads with sticks. We can stay back, not



go anywhere but what if we get beaten? We will have to go, we will just have to go."

HAJARI LAL/70/SMALL FARMER/CHEERWAN

Women consider themselves helpless for added reasons :

"The government officials who have come to the village have never asked me anything. Nobody asks the women. Everything will depend on what my sons decide and what the village decides. What can the women do? We have to accept what the government does. The women cannot talk about the dam. Can women have their say before men?"

JATTAN BAI/55/HOUSEWORK/ONDWA

"We are labourers and we would have to go away wherever we are moved to. I would go where my in-laws take me. I would agree with what my husband decides. My husband and the rest of the villagers would decide on what to do."

SAGGU BAI/30/AGRICULTURAL LABOURER/CHEERWAN

The machinations of a totalitarian state, the shrewd calculations of the vested interests and the agony of those who consider themselves helpless do not, however, constitute the total picture. And there in lies hope.



Organised protest, it is true, has not yet built up to the extent that it can influence the construction of the dam, but people continue to be extremely critical and voice their concerns. Possible environmental degradation is one of their prime concerns.

"The submergence of so many forests will have an adverse effect on the climate. It will not be possible to grow such forest even if the government spends thousands of crores of rupees. These are nature's gifts. As it is we have drought conditions. If the forests are destroyed then this place will become a desert, even if the dam is filled up or whatever else is done. Since the last four years the water level has gone down a lot, previously, where a pump used to work for 24 hours in a well, today there is not enough water for it to work for half an hour."

GOVIND PRASAD/36/SMALL FARMER/BIJALPUR

"As it is, the environment has been spoilt after the forests have decreased. And if these forests continue to be felled this place will turn into a desert. Earlier when the environment was better, we used to get 50 inches of rain.

Nowadays in the monsoon we get rains only once or twice. This change has taken place in the last 10 years."

RAMPAL SINGH/60/BIG FARMER/JABGAON



PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN FOREST AREA IN MADHYA
PRADESH:

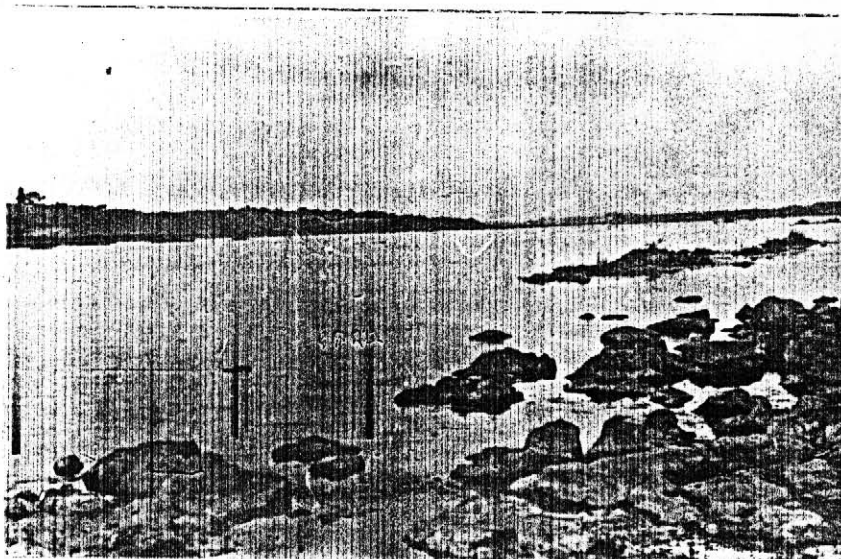
	1972- 75	1980- 82	CHANGE
AREA OF FOREST IN TOTAL PHYSICAL AREA	24.52	20.37	4.15% DECLINE
DENSE FOREST AREA	20.03	15.57	4.46% DECLINE
DEGRADED FOREST AREA	4.40	4.80	0.31% INCREASE

SOURCE: NATIONAL REMOTE SENSING AGENCY,
HYDERABAD. AREA OF FOREST TO BE SUBMERGED
BY THE INDIRA SAGAR PROJECT IS 40,332
HECTARES. THIS FIGURE DOES NOT INCLUDE
AN EXTRA 1,500 HECTARES REQUIRED FOR
STAFF COLONIES, CANALS AND RELATED WORKS.

"We will strengthen the Bank's long stand-
ing policy of scrutinising development
projects for their environmental impact,
and withholding support for those where
safeguards are inadequate."

BARBER P. CONABLE/PRESIDENT WORLD BANK/
WASHINGTON D.C.

There are others who voice concern over even more serious and immediate ecological consequences - like earthquakes. Scientists, including experts from the National Geological Research Institute, have pointed out that given the geological conditions existing in the area, the construction of a large dam of such dimensions can lead to the occurrence of an earthquake of high magnitude due to a phenomenon known as Reservoir Induced Seismicity (RIS). It is quite possible that villagers, living in the villages - Kalanka, Jamla, Ghatikhas, Anjangaon and Ghatakheri near the Sukta dam have been experiencing the consequences of Reservoir Induced Seismicity for the last eight years. The Sukta dam, constructed around 1976, is one of the major constituents of the Narmada Valley Project. It is situated about 60 kms, as the crow flies, from the proposed site for the Indira Sagar Project, in the same district (Khandwa). After water



was impounded in the Sukta reservoir, pronounced seismic activities began to occur.

"In Kalanka village we used to hear loud reports, the earth used to tremble and water surfaces would show disturbances. In March 1984 these loud reports continued for about 15 days. The report on 25th March 1984 was so loud that the villagers took their belongings, left their houses, and all through the night sang and prayed to the Gods. The village elders said that these were due to the anger of Goddess Kalika. To appease the Goddess it was suggested that milk and cow's urine should be poured all around the village, and this was done. For some time the tremors and reports stopped but some time later the number and intensity of these reports suddenly increased. It is still a mystery to the villagers."



PRAKASH CHANDRA THAKRE/25/WARD BOY MINT
PRIMARY HEALTH CENTRE/KALANKA

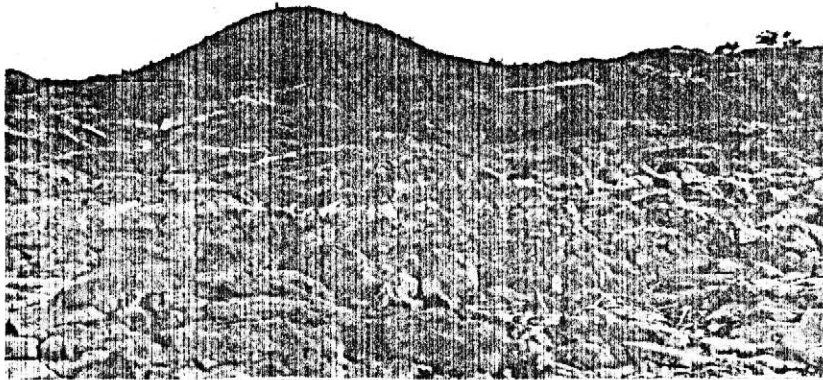
A teacher in the same village kept meticulous records of the date and time of occurrence of these reports.

"According to my records the reports started at around 5 A.M. on 6.8.1979. After 1979 they

occured on 28.3.1984 at 7.05 P.M., 12.25 at night then at 4.50 in the morning and on 29.3.84 at 9.00 A.M., 11.07 A.M., 12.15 P.M. and 3.15 P.M. in the afternoon. Then at 9.00 P.M. at night. Then again on 7.4.1984, 13.4.1984 and 25.4.1984. There were a lot of them in 1984. Like the noise one hears when dynamitē is put in a well, the reports would sound like that. There used to be tremors and roof tiles used to slide and fall. People from the Geological Survey of India had come from Khandwa in a jeep. They made inquiries, took the vehicle outside the village and set up some machines. Afterwards they said that there was nothing special about these reports and tremors and didn't give any reasons for their occurence. The reports and tremors continue to occur even now, but they are not as intense. They occur once in every 15 days or in a month, and they sound like a train passing by at a distance. We didn't experience anything like this before the Sukta dam was built."

RAM DULARE BORASIA/40/HEAD MASTER, VIDYA MANDIR SCHOOL/KALANKA

The matter, meanwhile, had been dealt with.



"The villagers were scared and they told me to report about the tremors to the government people. I gave the information to Pandhana police station. They told me to relate it to the Tehsildar at Khandwa, so I did that too. Ten days later the Tehsildar came and accused me of spreading terror among the villagers. He said that from then on he would keep an eye on me. When he was here, there was another loud report, but he dismissed it by saying that someone was banging on the bus in which he had come. He was drunk and very angry. After the Tehsildar accused me in this way I stopped keeping records (of the date and time of occurrence of the tremors)."

**RAM DULARE BORASIA/40/HEAD MASTER, VIDYA
MANDIR SCHOOL/KALANKA**

The officials, however, would like us to believe that the seismic activities experienced by the villagers in at least six villages just did not exist.

Records of the seismic activities around the Indira Sagar dam site are available since 1946. The number of such seismic activities is 7. No such activity has been recorded within 100 kms. of the dam site. The earthquake of magnitude 6.25 which occurred in 1938 was at a distance of 115 kms. from the dam site."

(from an article by S.C. VERMA, CHAIRMAN, NVDA, published in Dainik Bhaskar (Bhopal) of 8 May 1986.

A report of the seismic activities around Sukta dam appeared in the Indore edition of the same newspaper on April 27, 1984. On December 25, 1987, when confronted with these reports the Chairman of NVDA reiterated the official view in typical bureaucratese.

"We have no such report. Had there been anything like that the GSI would have reported it. Now that you are saying this we would again get the matter looked into. We will refer this matter to the GSI, the MDI and the Earthquake Engineering Institute, Roorkee."

S.C. VERMA/CHAIRMAN, NVDA/BHOPAL

"The Bank is taking steps to assure that the project financed by it do not have serious adverse ecological consequence..."

**ERNESTO FRANCO, WORLD BANK REPRESENTATIVE,
MARCH 1970.**

"As a matter of routine, environmental issues are not considered. The Bank does not have the capacity to conduct sector work on environmental issues on a routine basis...."

**WORLD BANK INTERNAL MEMORANDUM, MARCH
1984.**

Apart from having such a severe environmental impact, the Sukta dam had its social impact too. One forest village, Kotra, consisting of 31 cultivators belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, was completely submerged and the villagers chased out.

"I stayed in Kotra village for seven years. About 10 years ago the people who were to build the dam told us that the village was going to be submerged. They told us to leave, "you have no right to stay here" they said.

They told us to go anywhere we could. Out of fear we all left. They said they would give us land, but they did not. So I went and stayed in Bhordad forest and worked as a labourer. I had to leave Bhordad because all my belongings were taken away by robbers. They broke my hand with sticks. I got compensation only 3 years ago, I got Rs.6800/-. In Kotra I used to cultivate 20 acres of black fertile land and the produce used to sustain my entire family for the whole year. I had 6-7 heads of cattle; half the land was left for them to graze. After we were driven out, the cattle did not have enough to eat so they died. With the compensation I got I bought 4 acres of land. But the land is not good, I can barely manage to produce enough for 2-4 months. All the 31 cultivators got their compensation. Some got Rs.6000/- some got Rs.8000/-, no one got more than Rs.10,000/-. All of us had 20 acres of land each. Now some of them are in Kalanka, some are here, some in Arud and some have gone to Bhopal."



BALU/70/MARGINAL
TRIBE

FARMER/GHATAKHERI/BHILALE

"For many years I stayed in Kotra village. This son of mine (around 32 years old) was 12 months old when I came to the village. We had plenty of land there-about 20 acres. We grew jowar and cotton. We used to manage throughout the year with the produce from the fields. After we were driven out of the village by the dam authorities, we had to do wage labour. Just two years back we got the compensation for our land, but what can we do with this 4 acres of barren land that we bought? All the animals we had, died."

BEENA BAI/50/BALAH CASTE/KALANKA

"The state shall promote with special care the interests of the weaker section of the people, and in particular, of the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation."

ARTICLE 46 OF THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION

A railway track, commonly known as the Hingoli line was laid through the same district about 30 years ago. Land for this was taken from cultivators, and in most cases not compensated for.

"I lost about 3 acres of land to the Hingoli line: I was cultivating on government land which was on my name and they said they were going to acquire the land. They said that it was government land and went on to cut the jowar which I had grown. I fought against this 'you will make a railway line across our fields, what will we eat?' They said 'we are making the railway line for the benefit of everybody, and anyway this land belongs to the government and you don't have any rights over it. I did not get a single paisa as compensation."

GANYA/65/SMALL FARMER/VISHRAMPUR



"The right of ownership, collective or individual of the members of the population concerned, over the lands which these populations traditionally occupy, shall be recognised."

ARTICLE 11 OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION CONVENTION NO.107 ON TRIBAL AND INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS (1957), RATIFIED BY THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT IN 1962.

"It has been about 30 years since my land was taken away for the Hingoli line. The government officials measured the land and then called us to the site. They said 'so much of your land will be taken. Come to Khandwa on such and such date and you will get money". All of us (farmers) who had lost land went there - the officers said "Wait here, you will get money". We waited the whole day - till five in the evening. Then the Tehsildar said "Go away, come tomorrow, come the day after". He gave us another date but we haven't gone there since. We opposed the taking of our land

"What will our children eat", we asked?
To which they said "If everyone talks like

you all do, how can anything get done?"

MOUJILAL/60/SMALL FARMER/VISHRAMPUR

People living in the villages that are to be submerged are familiar with the government's style of functioning in their own district. There are others who know about "development" projects in neighbouring districts.

"I know a little about the Chandrakeshwar dam because my relatives were ousted by it. They had to face a lot of difficulties. The government has not settled them in any place where they can earn a livelihood. They were given compensation and were ordered to leave their village Heerapur, but they were never shown a place where they could resettle. Now they live on top of a hillock. They sow their summer crop when the dam water recedes from the land. Earlier they were well off now they can't get enough to eat."

**BUDH SINGH KAJLE/32/GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE/
BIJALPUR**

Also thanks to the efforts of the Project authorities quite a large number of people have had a glimpse of the shape of things to come.

"We were taken to Gandhi Sagar dam by the Executive Engineer. There were 48 of us in

one bus, four each from the twelve villages that are to be submerged in the first phase. We were taken around to see the way the farmers ousted by the dam were resettled. The condition of the people in that village Chachor in Mand-saur district, was not good. Mangilal, a man from the village who was taking us around, told us that the people do grow crops, but they are hesitant to claim ownership of the land for fear that they would have to pay taxes, even when the crops were bad. They could grow crops only in summer after the dam waters receded. The crops there were not even half of what we grow here. Then we were taken to see the dam. On the way the bus stopped at Rampura village. A man selling knives came into the bus and told us that earlier he was a farmer, but after being ousted by the dam his condition was such that with the meagre compensation he got he has to now sell knives on the wayside. The Engineer showed us the dam and said that a similar dam would be built in our area. And, in the same way, factories will be set up there. We weren't interested in all that. It was no use seeing the dam. We wanted to see how we'd



be resettled but we weren't satisfied with what we saw. After that nothing was spoken."

BASANTI LAL GANGRADE/37/FARMER/CHUCCHREL

The likelihood of a "green revolution" being thrust upon them in the event of a resettlement was equally disturbing.

"I grow wheat and cotton on my 6 acres of land. We don't use chemical fertilizers or pesticides. None of my village people do, and still we get good yields. I was taken on a bus to see the Gandhi Sagar Dam. Over there I saw that the people grew wheat and gram after the water has receded from their lands. Pests get to their crops and ruin them and they have to use pesticides. The villagers said they have to use chemical fertilizers to get any crop. We were told by the engineer that we would be given such partially submerged land."

MOTIRAM/25/SMALL FARMER/SARAI

Why can't the government invest its resources into alternative areas, ask the potential victims of this "development" Project, and they go on to suggest a few.

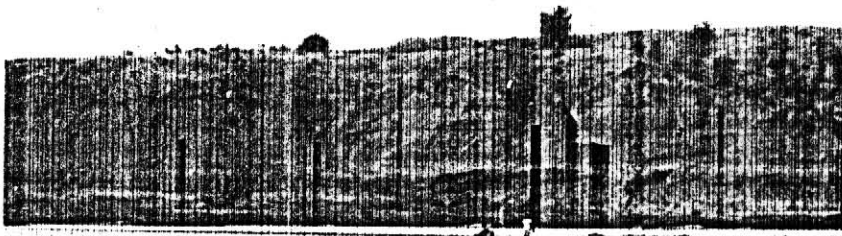
"There are so many small rivers and streams around that a lot of irrigation can be done

if the government builds stop dams. Among the villages in the first phase of submergence Chheerwan and Chucchrel are close to two rivers Choti Kalimachak and Chota Tawa; a stream flows near Baldi and near Jabgaon is the Kharkali river. Similarly the other villages are close to such perennial streams and rivers. Irrigation can be done through stop dams without causing destruction. For energy production too there are other possibilities. Our Prime Minister himself says that we are going into the 21st century, then energy production target should be achieved through solar and wind potentials. Why should we continue to use the same sources of energy even in the 21st century?"

SHAKEEL ZAIDI/31/LAWYER & FARMER/SAKTAPUR



Why has the 21st century Prime Minister finally given the clearance for such a project? Yes, why is the government intent on a 'development' project that would uproot over 1,70,000 people, a large number of them tribals; submerge more than 40 thousand hectares of forest area containing many rare species of flora, and about 45 thousand hectares of fertile cultivated land; and slaughter an unknown number of wildlife species, many of whom are in danger of becoming extinct? Yes, why is the government going ahead? And why is the World Bank providing the much needed funding? That is the 350 million dollar question.



... DISSENT AND ASSERTION

Now when people are slowly beginning to realise that the dam is certainly going to be built, opposition towards its construction is also becoming widespread. Helplessness is giving way to anger as the picture of their doomed future gets clearer.

"Now 90% people of our village think that we should not leave the village. Where will we go? It will be difficult to find work elsewhere. We cannot find work as a wage labourer in a new place. A few days ago some porters were brought in from outside by the truck owners so the village labourers remained unemployed. This will happen wherever we go."

ABDUL RAZZAK/26/LABOURER/BALDI

"We are not prepared to move, leave our native place. If we are displaced we will have to look for jobs elsewhere. We are illiterate and can only work as wage labourers. Wherever we go there will already be other labourers around, so there will be a surplus of labour. Even now the labourers are forced to work at Rs.10/- a day. When labourers are in surplus

we will have to work for Rs.5/- a day. If there is any opposition to the dam I will certainly take part in it."

DEVAJI/40/LABOURER/BALDI

The small farmers in the forest and the revenue villages would rather die than face destitution through displacement.

"They come to the village and only ask questions and tell us to vacate the place. We only have one thing to say - we've been born here and we want to stay here. The government wants to beat us out of here. But from our souls we don't want to leave. We can never get such good land anywhere. In this village there are 400 heads of cattle. If we leave this place we can't provide for them. We won't get land, we won't get work, and we will be turned into beggars. There is no way out. The only way out is to die here."

SHYAMA/55/SMALL FARMER/SARAI



"My husband is a small farmer. We know we won't get land if we move out from here. I am ready to die but not prepared to leave. What will we do with money? All the money

will just get spent. Our hearts do not want to leave this place. We will not move away."

SAJAN/40/HOUSEWIFE/BANKAPALASH

"My wish? I will not leave my land, my property and my house. We have been living here for generations and we will continue to live here. If the government wants us to move out, it has to drive us forcefully and violently - it can't get us to move away willingly. Where would we get such huts to live in? There are 10 people in my family and they will give us small plots to build tiny shacks and all of us will have to huddle in one room. We would prefer to drown in Narmada than leave this place."

RAMLAL/58/SMALL FARMER/SARAI

"Generations after generations of mine have lived in this village. We are getting prepared to oppose the dam. We are ready to give our lives for our birthplace. We are ready to die but not to leave this place. This dam should not be constructed. We will become destitute if we are driven from our homes. There are thousands of us - we can commit mass suicide."

REHMAN/60/SMALL FARMER/SUBHANPURA

What kind of people are these? Why can't they sacrifice their petty happiness for "public benefit"? Haven't they heard of "national interest"? What does one do with such unreasonable people? How does one make decisions? There is a way, and the villagers suggest it.

"All the people in the submergence area of the dam should be allowed to vote for or against the dam. First they should be told about the government's policy. Through the vote it will be possible to know what the people really wish. Whatever the people decide the government should decide accordingly."

PUKHRAJ MEHTA/38/MEDICAL SHOP OWNER/BALDI

But their answer is not acceptable to the policy makers of the project.

"There is no referendum on the dam as such. You see, the dam construction is a decision that has been taken by the tribunal on the proposal made by the State government. But of course it is publicised, and if the people have any objections they can write to the government. The people's representatives can voice their feelings in the assembly. They have a channel for expressing their views."

S.C. VERMA/CHAIRMAN/NUDA/BHOPAL

The people's elected representatives in the area, meanwhile, are doing their best to quell opposition to the dam. So those who have little faith in the democratic methods of the world's largest democracy suggest another option.



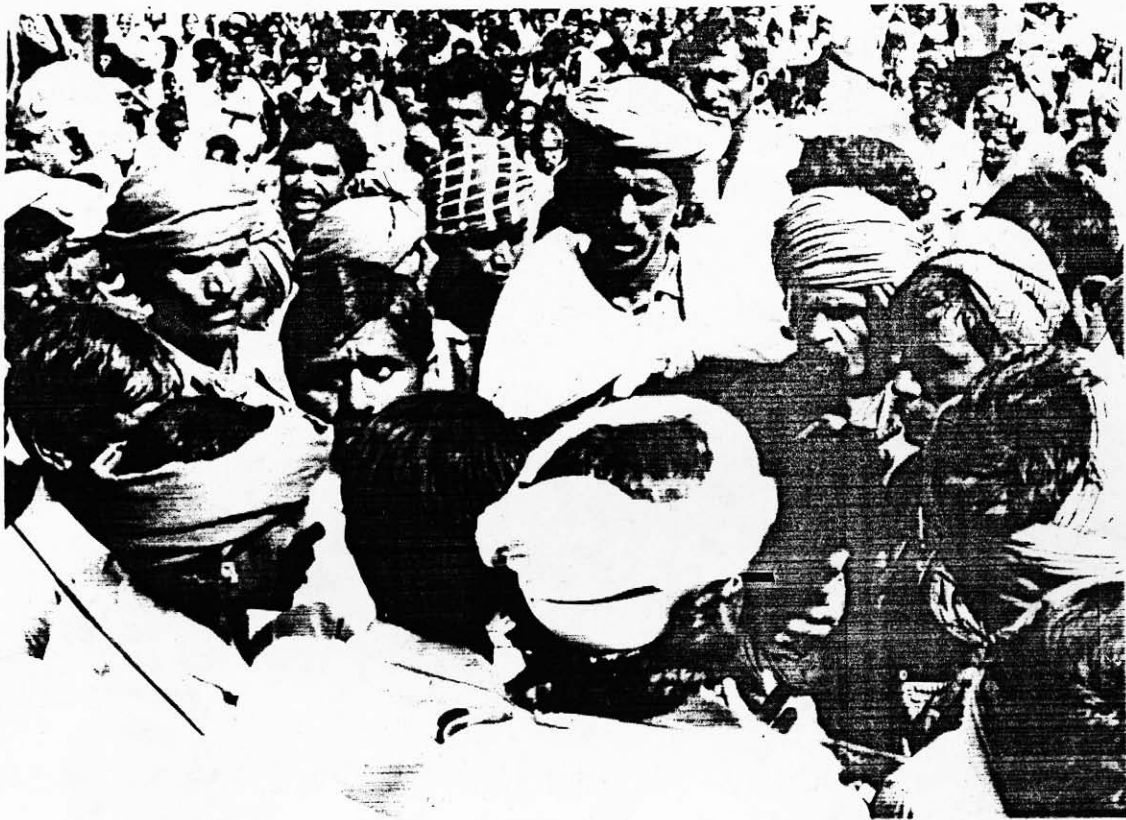
"If the dam is more dear to the government than the people, then the government should release some gas like that in Bhopal and kill us all. Then all the problems will be solved, and then they can build the dam and make canals. Nothing would have to be given."

GENDALAL/55/SMALL FARMER/ABHAWAN

In his moment of despair and anger this villager has touched upon the core of the problem. For similar kinds of death dealing forces are operative in the Indira Sarovar Project as in Bhopal. In Bhopal it was the anti-people collusion between the Government of India and foreign capital that was responsible for the death of more than 5,000 people and maiming of over 200,000 people. In this project a similar collusion would destroy forever the lives of more than 170,000 people. In Bhopal one could possibly say that it was an accident. Indira Sarovar is not an accident. It is a disaster of unparalleled magnitude that is being carried out after careful and systematic planning. The victims of Bhopal rose up together against this criminal collusion and have collectively

asserted their right to know and their right to life. The potential victims of the Indira Sagar Project are preparing for such an assertion.





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