2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I try to draw a panoramic view of the development of the conceptual world in which this study is entrenched. The disciplinary horizon of this study overlaps with developmental historiography, economics, politics, sociology and social resistance movements. Apart from providing the theoretical background, the directly relevant books\(^1\) are discussed to situate the study in terms of its significance and scope.

2.2 Theoretical Background

Progress, Growth and Development happened to be concepts that define human activity in the modern period. Though these terms represent varying perceptions, they have evolved along with modern industrial economic development.

To begin with, The enlightenment rationality was critical in nature, with regard to what is out there as well as that which is within, raising the human capacity to control and manage life by controlling nature, ‘the man-nature divide’, rather than succumbing to the ‘mercy of nature’ as was the experience during plagues and famines and droughts and floods. The new found stability and increased capacity to control, produce and dominate led to the notion of progress as a collective and common destiny that may be perceived and persuaded. Progress was the legitimizing concept that enabled self legitimacy for actions and functioned as the criteria to judge those who are different.

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\(^1\) Articles are not included, since the number of the articles on the Narmada issue is vast and go beyond the scope of this chapter. The only exception is the article by Arundhati Roy, which was later published as a book. The relevant articles are referred as the study progresses. The referred articles are mentioned in the reference section at the end.
Progress was not just a concept but it acted as a vision and offered a sense of purpose and goal towards which human enterprise should proceed. What the linear notion of Progress did to the European world is important for our study. It enabled the colonizers to evolve industrial technology, colonize and subjugate most parts of the world and generate more wealth leading to the emergence of market driven socio-political and cultural institutions. According to Lyotard ‘the colonizers colonize their own nature or nature in them’. (Lyotard, 1979: xiv)

The increasing focus on material wealth generation required new forms of legitimation as progress could not be reduced to mere wealth generation. Growth emerged as a legitimizing concept that explained and rationalized the unlimited wealth generation by industrialized countries, clearly at the expense of the rest of the world as Andre Gunder Frank\(^2\) or Immanuel Wallerstein\(^3\) may explain. The Dependency theory (Frank, 1966) expounds that in the name of Modernization, the highly industrialized countries (Core) depend on the countries that are not yet industrialized but rich in raw materials (Periphery). The Core gets richer at the expense of the periphery and hence presumes that the Core is accountable for the overall crises in world economy, namely rising poverty and unemployment in the third world. The World system theory (Wallerstein, 1974) explains a category known as semi periphery which is added to the Core-periphery relation explained by Dependency theorists. The semi-periphery is the partially developed countries who act as mediators between the Core and periphery but without much economic control.

W W Rostow’s publication of The Stages of Economic Growth: A non-communist manifesto (1960) gave a strong impetus to the growth model with economists competing to legitimize his take-off theory as it is popularly known.

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\(^2\) His works titled Development of Underdevelopment (1966) and Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America (1967) were critiquing capitalism using an explanatory tool known as dependency theory. It emerged as a critique of Modernization paradigm.

\(^3\) Immanuel Wallerstein went beyond the dependency theory and developed the World System Theory where he rejects the idea of ‘Third World’. He argued that there is only one world which is connected in a web of socio-political and economic relations which may be conceived as a system. While explaining the interconnectedness, he adds a category called semi-periphery that lies between the concepts of core-periphery relations explained by Dependency theorists.
The drive for developing the rest of the world intensified banking on the conceptual clarity provided by Rostow’s theory.

2.2.1 The Development Debate

This above foreground is necessary to explain the emergence of the concept of development as an overriding concept in legitimizing a world view that divides the world into Developed, Developing and Under-developed or least developed countries.

Though the word develop means ‘unfold’ or ‘open up’, the legitimized concept of development has come to mean material development based on Industrialized and technology driven infrastructure, production of commodities and services. The traditional and the nature-friendly approach to life and livelihood patterns came to be considered as under-developed.

It is United States President Harry S Truman (1949) who visibly proposed development as a surest means to progress, entrenchment in material processes as economic development. This is reducing development to Economic development which is what this concept turned out to be in the dominant discourse. After the Second World War, the 1960 was celebrated as the development decade where most of the nations were recovering from the devastations caused by the War. American mainland was not directly involved. The US funded the war and managed to control the material recovery of the nations.

The 1960s saw the emphasis on Industrial development justified in the name of Human development. The consequences of energy intensive development lead to widespread unemployment and social issues shifted the

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4 The famous Speech by US President Harry Truman delivered on 20 January 1949 is considered by many to have set the tone of the interference of US and other rich countries in the affairs of the third world countries, in the name of development. Truman expounded a four point program offering technical and financial assistance to the countries suffering from the consequences of Second World War and Colonial exploitation. The speech went a long way in legitimizing development based on Modernization paradigm.
emphasis to Sustainable development in the 70s. The movements of the youth, women and workers raised serious questions regarding the process of unbridled wealth accumulation and destruction of social and environmental fabric in the name of development. The arguments such as ‘Limits to Growth’ emerged during this period advocating political more control measures to manage development. Schumacher’s ‘Small is Beautiful’ (1973) questioned the western development model and suggested alternatives to energy-intensive development.

Women and development paradigms too emerged during this time, inviting women to share a piece of the development cake. The critical reflection within the social movements demanded a rethinking of the development process which led to the emergence of thinking in terms of Alternative development. But none of these concepts could de-link from ‘development’. What does this mean?

Material development is the ultimate goal i.e. techno-industrialization of production and sustenance of livelihood from dependence on nature to control of natural ‘resources’. Heidegger gives a good illustration of this change in his work on *Technology* (Heidegger, 1993). He refers to a hydroelectric dam built across River Rhine stating that the dam has reduced the river into a mere supplier of water for power. The river, a beautiful gift of nature has become a ‘resource’ for production, control and exchange, what Heidegger terms *Standing-Reserve*. Here Heidegger is making an observation on what happens to our perception, when we, our being, get constituted by the modern technological world. This line of

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5 The 1973 "oil price shock", along with the 1973–1974 stock market crash, has reminded the world about the Great Depression (1929 onwards) which too had long lasting and drastic effects on the global economy for some time to come. In 1972, the Club of Rome, a team of scholars then based in Rome, published a book named ‘Limits to Growth’. The main concern was to counter the belief in the unlimited growth model of development. The world population, industrialization, pollution, food production and resource depletion were taken as the variables based upon which alternatives were sought to the current model of development. As a result of this growing awareness on a global scale, green movements began to evolve into political parties and the first green party to come to form a national government was in Germany. The principles that they upheld include ‘ecological wisdom, social justice, participatory democracy, nonviolence, sustainability and respect for diversity’. Also refer FNs 54, 55, 56 in Chapter Three.

6 This work offered an alternative vision to mega development, giving fillip to environmental movements and alternatives to development thinking.

7 The idea of seeing nature as resource combines instrumental rationality and the complete faith in modern science and technology as the panacea for all human problems. Roger Bacon was one of those who saw nature as an object out there to be exploited by Man. The dualistic perception of man as different from nature alienated the humans from nature as well.
argument is useful for this study as well since the River Narmada (natural resource) and the displaced *adivasis* (human resource-labor) became standing army of labour, reserved for consumption by mainstream society.

The complexity of human life situations and the limitations of modern science and technology often led to serious crises. In other words, there emerged a need or necessity to legitimize development to counter the contestations through re legitimation.

Development which emerged as a legitimizing concept to justify unequal and unbridled wealth accumulation, exploitation and market driven production and consumption is facing serious crisis. Hence it required all those tags to justify its presence as a legitimate concept that explains the modern experience. The problem that triggers the study is this crisis of legitimacy faced by development. What legitimizes development? If development legitimizes dam constructions that destroys and displaces nature and people, contestations happen. These contestations challenge developmental legitimacy. This crisis demands all kinds of tags to justify its presence in the conceptual world. In such a situation, what actually happens in terms of legitimacy during this process of contestation is what the study problematizes and seeks to understand.

Development was conceived as a surest means to progress, entrenched in material processes, social life and symbolic representations. This process, as we have already seen, was legitimized by scientific reductionism, economic reductionism, partisan knowledge and greed for wealth accumulation. There are critical theories and research that has emerged in the last half a century which sheds light into this dilemma of development, human rationality and the idea of linear progress and unbridled economic growth.

Scholars\(^8\) have been trying to understand the 20th century development scenario with various methods and approaches like discourse analysis, anthropology, cultural studies, alternative development, political economy. The emerging scholarship on development differed from the theoretical

\(^8\) Refer FN 9
conceptualization of the dependency school and neo-Marxian traditions, primarily at the epistemological level. The new trends no more saw development as a *fait accompli* as they sliced through the foundations of modern science. The absolute faith in science and its metaphoric symbolisms shattered. From the earlier perceptions of exploitation and core-periphery dimensions, the conceptual frame shifted to a critique of the ‘knowing subject’ and the knowledge that is produced on the basis of ‘certainties’. Some of the specific scholars who dealt extensively on developmental issues are further discussed as they are relevant for this study.

### 2.2.2 Scholarship Relevant for this Study

Post-structuralist scholars sharply critiqued the claims of modern rationalistic science and doubted the technological man as the savior of a world faced with severe crises of division, war, energy crunch, population boom, food security, global warming and rise in sea level etc. There are many scholars who have viewed development as discourse. In this section, we may refer to a few of them whose works are relevant for this study.

While better cost-benefit ratio was projected as the measure of successful development projects, Ferguson (1990) argued that the ‘failed projects’ were actually beneficial for the project implementers. He differentiated the dichotomy between what is claimed and what is intended by looking at what happened. In his work ‘The Anti-Politics Machine’, which evolved out of his PhD thesis titled ‘*Discourse, Knowledge, and Structural Production in the ‘Development’ Industry: An Anthropological Study of a Rural Development Project in Lesotho*’, he narrated this phenomenon. This book is divided into nine chapters arranged into five parts. After the introduction, the second part deals with the conceptual and institutional development apparatus. The third section explains the target population. The fourth chapter explains how the process of development is deployed in a specific context, in this case, a World Bank water project in Lesotho. The last chapter discusses the instrument-effects of a development project and how it de-politicizes people from their resource base, both conceptually and institutionally.

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His major argument is that development projects are intended for ‘failing’. But the irony is that this failure effects the enhancement of bureaucratic state power on people’s life preventing denying space for ‘politics’ to spring up from ‘below’. Hence he explains development as an ‘anti-politics machine’.

Another scholar who has been a staunch critic of modern westernized development paradigm was Arturo Escobar. In his path breaking book titled *Encountering Development – The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (1995), he enumerates how the idea of the Third World and its dream of development were constructed in the post-World War II period. The book is divided into six chapters. The first chapter places development in the context of Anthropology of Modernity. The second chapter problematizes poverty and discusses the representation of the three worlds. The next three chapters narrate the power relations involved in the development process. The last chapter envisions a post-development era.

The book is a post-structuralist anthropological narrative that critique economics from the view point of historical experiences of people in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Escobar takes on the discourse of development and analyses its relation to actual historical economic relations. He proposes a post development scenario were modernized development is challenged, opposed and subverted.

There were other scholars who contributed significantly to the critique of development. One of them was Akhil Gupta who did extensive field studies on agrarian conditions in North India. His work is titled *Postcolonial Developments, Agriculture in the Making of Modern India* (1998). He identifies the ‘backward’ conditions of peasants in Alipur (a village in north India near New Delhi) as ‘post colonial condition’. He critiques modernized development and argues that ‘underdevelopment’ has become a kind of identity, in the post colonial world: “I argue that underdevelopment is not merely a structural location in the global community of nations; rather, underdevelopment is also a form of identity, something that informs people’s sense of self.” (Gupta, 1998: Preface)
He expounds the idea that developed countries should help the underdeveloped countries which have evolved specifically after the Second World War. The World Bank’s funding for the Sardar Sarovar project should be seen in this context. Gupta articulates how structural and discourse modes are intertwined in a complex scenario where the structures influence the discourse and the discourse in turn influence the re-alignments of the structural aspects of economic and social life.

A comprehensive analysis and reflection on development thinking was initiated by Jan Nederveen Pieterse, who reviewed the existing stock of literature of various strands of perspectives and tenor of developmentalist discourses, some of which are already referred in the previous section. Therefore I am not invoking the details as it may tantamount to platitude. Pieterse has written profoundly on Development. In his book, *Development Theory, Deconstructions/Reconstructions* (2002), he problematizes development knowledge and traces the major trends in development thinking. The book has 10 chapters. In the first chapter the trends in development theory are discussed. The second chapter discusses the dilemmas of development discourse. Various views on the shift from evolutionism to development and also the perception of development as redemption are debated here. The next five chapters discuss the various aspects of development debate such as critical globalism, cultural turn, alternative development, post development and social development. The last two chapters explain critical holism as a way forward and debate the future of development.

The author critically analyzed various approaches to development and contrasts seemingly opposing ideas like de-linking and globalization. He philosophically reflects on various epistemologies of development thinking and suggests the possible future conceptualization of each of them. According to Jan Nederveen Pieterse: “Development is too complex to allow partial approaches to have their way…combining different angles and approaches yields a holistic assessment of development.” (Pieterse, 2002: xii)

For him critical holism and reflexive development yields better understanding of the debate and enables the way forward (Pieterse, 2002).
While scholars like James Ferguson (1990), Arturo Escobar (1995) and Akhil Gupta (1998) were deconstructing development in a discourse analysis mode; Pieterse (2002) went one step ahead with theoretically reconstructing development and predicting its future path applying the principles of critical holism and reflexivity. This approach may be useful to understand the Narmada struggle for people centered development and the development scenario that sustains it.

2.3 Relevant Books Specific to the Narmada Issue

It is important to see how various scholars have interpreted the controversy and what the theoretical and ideological nature of the discourses was. The major works are divided into those before the Supreme Court Judgment (2000) and those which came after. This division is due to a perceived change in approach and perspective that may occur since the Supreme Court declared the project as a ‘fait accompli’ with its pro-development verdict, overlooking non-compliance to hitherto legitimate Constitutional rights of citizens and rules and regulations laid down by none other than a quasi-judicial body. To a certain extent, the books preceding the SC judgment focused more on building legitimacy for the project and resistance as well, trying to explain the issue and arguing why the dam should be constructed or not constructed and the possible alternatives. The post-judgment works which accepted the project as a fait accompli took a neutral position to development and sought ways ahead, while those that did not, were critical of the judgment and sought new methods to critique the political and economic process.

2.3.1 Books preceding Supreme Court Judgment

The need for development projects as well as the critique of it emanated from socio-political, economic, environmental, humanistic and rights perspectives. Arguments were developed for and against the dam. While poverty, drought, energy deficiency and drinking water needs were projected on one side, legal non-compliance on grounds of rehabilitation, environment, question of autonomy and alternatives were argued on the other side.

10 Here Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal (NWDT) is the body in question. Detailed discussion will follow in the coming chapters
One of the case studies on Sardar Sarovar Project was Vidyut Joshi’s book, *Rehabilitation – A Promise to Keep-A Case of SSP* (1991). This study focuses on rehabilitation. After narrating the background of the project, the study proceeds to discuss the various issues that came in the course of project construction. One of the features of the work is that it gives a socio-economic profile of selected submerging villages which challenges generalized notions about ‘typical’ Indian villages. The discussion moves on to analyze the rehabilitation policy of Gujarat government and observes how the voluntary agencies working among the dam affected people influenced government’s stated policies. The book concludes by reiterating the need for a comprehensive national rehabilitation policy. The discussions revolve around a socio-humanistic perspective.

The World Bank Independent Review Report, titled *Resettlement and Environmental issues of the Narmada Valley* (1992) stimulated wide ranging debates and discussions on the SSP and related issues. It is a widely quoted work authored by Bradford Morse and Thomas Berger, who were appointed as the independent review committee to assess the progress of the project amidst opposition from NBA.

The report makes studied observation that the project has failed on grounds of implementing rehabilitation and environmental stipulations of the World Bank. The report makes a comprehensive study of rehabilitation sites and concludes that resettling all the people affected by the dam reservoir is impossible and hence they recommend that the project should be abandoned.

Another report was done by Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai, which was the official agency for Monitoring and Evaluation of Resettlement and Rehabilitation of people displaced in Maharashtra by the Sardar Sarovar Project from 1987 to 1994. TISS, in its study titled ‘Economic Appraisal of Sardar Sarovar Project – Report’ (1993), has taken a broader view of balancing between affected people, nation and natural environment. While acknowledging Gujarat government’s R&R policies, it observes the limitations in implementing the policies. The study highlights the plight of SSP reservoir affected *adivasis* who
were living in the 33 villages of Maharashtra. It observes the problems in habitat and life conditions of those shifted to the resettlement sites in Gujarat.

William Fisher makes a historical assessment and observes that the project keeps repeating the same mistakes that had led to the controversies from the beginning. In his work titled *Towards Sustainable Development, Struggling over India’s Narmada River* (1995), he offers a critique of SSP. He argues that SSP has not yet provided empirical evidence to support its claims of benefits that are due to a large dam. The book presents an overview of the arguments of other critics as well.

Another path-breaking and widely read work came up during this period. This work highlighted the construction of dams elsewhere and put the issue in a global perspective. The book was titled *Silenced Rivers, The Ecology and Politics of Large Dams* (1996). Patrick McCully authored the book. He writes from a political and ecological perspective. He scales a scathing criticism of the prevalent model of development which mystifies Mega dams and destroyed rivers and ecosystems around the world. He goes into detailed research and shows how many dam projects have failed to bear the promised benefits. He also explains in detail the problems of mega dams and how, all over the world, dams have displaced people into hunger and destitution. He exposes the ideology behind Mega dams

> Massive dams are much more than simply machines to generate electricity and store water. They are concrete, rock and earth expressions of the dominant ideology of the technological age: icons of economic development and scientific progress to match nuclear bombs and motor cars. (McCully, 1996: 2)

Certain books focused on the Displacement and Resettlement issues. One such work was titled *The Dam and the Nation - Displacement and Resettlement in the Narmada Valley* (1997), an edited work by Jean Dreze et al. The book takes a position in favour of tribals and attempts to understand the conflicting issues faced by them. Social actors like the anti-dam activists, environmental organizations, the World Bank Review team (1991-93), the government’s policies, the role of the new media are identified as the sources that led to the controversies that revolved around the dam and resettlement issues. The discussions review the controversies surrounding resettlement from the point of view of tribal experience.
The authors shed light on the complex political nuances that initiated the dam affected *adivasis* to be part of larger political processes that opposed the SSP. Similar processes from other spatio-temporal terrains all over the world are shown to explain how ideological different streams sometimes work together when situations demands so, especially when existence is under threat.

Further works on displacement of tribals and their specific cultural and economic issues came up during this time. One such work that came out of a participatory research was a work titled *In the Belly of the River* (1997) which discusses the life and issues of the SSP reservoir affected Bhilala tribes living in the Narmada valley. The study juxtaposes the struggling *adivasis* against the domination of the state. The author Amita Baviskar critiques romantic notions of *adivasi* communities and challenges the readers to take a fresh look at the politics of representation of tribals in the context of struggles for survival, especially social movements like Narmada *Bachao Andolan*. The author did participatory research by living with the Bhilala tribal community for one year in a village called Anjanwara in Alirajpur *taluka*\(^{11}\) of Madhya Pradesh.

From the dam builders’ point of view, B G Verghese wrote a book, justifying mega dam projects. The work, which was titled *Winning the Future* (1998), is an apologetic writing arguing the case of large dams. He critiques four major water harnessing projects like Narmada, Tehri, Indira Gandhi Canal and Bhakra-Pond project and claims that the benefits are far superior to the loses. The Report of the Independent Review team appointed by World Bank is severely criticized and its flaws are highlighted. His main thrust is that India needs big projects to achieve its development goals. The author assesses the tribal condition and weigh it with developmental needs. The arguments are of a bureaucratic nature and called for pragmatic approach over against romantic views of life.

One of the most popular and persuasive writings which came during this period was the essay named ‘*The Greater Common Good*’ (1999)\(^{12}\). In this piece, Arundhati Roy effectively brought to light the fallacies of development that are

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\(^{11}\) *Taluka* is a revenue sub-district division

\(^{12}\) Also refer Roy (1999b) which she has written just two months after the Greater Common Good.
happening in the name of the Sardar Sarovar Dam. Her writing has caught the imagination of the public intelligentsia and intense debates set off in many universities and academic circles. She was criticized for promoting a romantic vision of the *adivasis* and irrationally opposing Mega dams, especially by B G Verghese. From a political and social perspective, Arundhati critically narrates the politics that lies behind the dam. She unfolds the hopelessness and misery to which the affected are pushed into. She deconstructs the myth of nation, democracy and development and challenges the authorities to be responsible for what they are doing in the name of the poor and in the name of development.

Another significant contribution to the literary contestation surrounding the issue of damming and development, especially from the perspective of alternative politics, came from Sanjay Sangvai, a journalist by profession and ideologue of the Narmada *Bachao Andolan*, till he passed away on 29th May 2007. He has published numerous articles in EPW and major newspapers such as The Hindu, The Times of India and Indian Express apart from articles in regional dailies in Marathi and Hindi.

He has composed a history of the Narmada struggle as an insider, a most readable, yet authoritative work titled *The River and Life, People’s Struggle in the Narmada Valley* (2002). The narrative with numerous documented evidence and anecdotes still remains a basic book to understand the struggle of the SSP displaced. He has leanings towards an environmental socialist ideology based on people’s power and participatory democracy. He identifies this as one of the emphasis of people’s movements of the 1990s, especially NBA. For him, there is no compromise possible. The government and large global institutions work from a very different paradigm of capital intensive, technocratic growth-based development. There is nothing in common. He calls for a future politics of alternative development.

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13 B G Verghese is a journalist who was editor of Indian Express and Hindustan Times dailies. Later he also worked with the Centre for Policy research, New Delhi. He wrote a rejoinder titled *Poetic Licence* (Verghese, 1999) in response to Roy’s *The Greater Common Good*.

14 The relevant ones are given in the reference section.
Another major contribution to this field of literature was the Report of the World Commission on Dams (WCD, 2000) titled *Dams and Development: a new framework for decision-making*. This comprehensive report simultaneously gives awareness and analysis about dams and its consequences. It approached the issue from a holistic perspective starting with a review of the large dam scenario around the world. It evaluated the performance of dams from a Human Development perspective. The promised benefits were weighed against the social and environmental costs towards evolving better policies. The enormous volume of information, statistics and analysis of dams presented in the Report is very useful for researchers and government officials alike. Unfortunately, India did not approve of this Report, fearing that abiding by its findings may hamper its plans for huge irrigation and hydro power projects, including the Rs. 5, 60,000 crores river inter-linking project.  

Apart from this, World Bank Reports and Studies and official documents of the SSNNL add up to the list which is not discussed here in detail. Some of them may be referred as the study progresses.

### 2.3.2 Specific Books post-Supreme Court Judgment

This phase has fewer books that the earlier phase, but not less significant. As mentioned earlier, there was a shift in approach and reasoning among the scholars, especially in terms of acceptance of the SSP as a *fait accompli*. Hence the analysis was more tuned to an appreciation of what has happened as if the issue is over, how to positively articulate the issue and what may be done further.

Sanjeev Khagram was one of the scholars who continued reflecting on the issue during this phase. According to him the Narmada struggle and the Transnational reform movements combined to improve the democratic space, brought into focus Social Justice and intensified the debate on respecting Indigenous identities and environmental concerns. He proposed ‘constructivist

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15 The River Inter-linking project was considered by Government of India as a panacea for all future problems related to floods, droughts, Irrigation, hydro-energy, water transport, drinking water etc. This move faced strong resistance from environmental and social groups, questioning the feasibility of such a project involving hundreds of dams and canals, causing enormous displacement, destruction of environment and financial debt.
trans-nationalism’ as an area for further research. He was looking into the impact the Narmada campaign has made at the trans-national level and how it enabled ‘re-shaping’ of identities, processes and outcomes from the local to the global levels around the world. His work was titled *Dams and Development-Transnational Struggles for Water and Power* (2004).

Hinal Pandya approaches the project study from a policy perspective. The major focus is on the problems of resettlement of the dam affected people, especially in the context of the absence of any Resettlement Policy at the national level. Her doctoral research work was published with the title *Sardar Sarovar – Hope and Reality* (2004). The study discusses the R&R policy proposed by the Gujarat government, its strategies and implementation. The work offers a few recommendations and suggestions towards strengthening the resettlement process. The book is divided into five chapters. Apart from the introductory and concluding chapters, the second chapter reviews the major research works done on the project, the third chapter explores the history of the R&R policy and the fourth chapter discusses the main conflicting and controversial issues resulted from the contestation between pro and anti dam sides. The researcher argues that there is a gradual improvement in resettlement process as a result of the contestation and controversies.

While most works dwelt on the issue at hand, specifically to damming, development, displacement, environment, legal non-compliance and politics, a first of its kind study did a detailed analysis of another hydro-electric project to investigate whether the claimed benefits are actually accrued. The research work titled *Unravelling Bhakra, Assessing the Temple of Modern India* (2005) was done by Shripad Dharmadhikary. It is an extensive study on Bhakra Project. With facts and figures he argues that Bhakra dam project has not provided the claimed benefits. This revealing study exposes the gap between claims and actual benefits thus exposing the drawbacks in irrigation planning and implementation. The significance of this work is that it provided detailed analysis of how promised benefits are often floundered in development projects, especially dams in India.
A well known scholarly work which inquires into the contestations around large dams and SSP in particular is, *Conflict and Collective Action – The Sardar Sarovar Project in India* (2006). It is a well documented book on the issue. The book is divided into 10 chapters. The author Ranjit Dwivedi argues that discursive effects of planning have material consequences. Dwivedi situates the anti-dam protests in India within the larger environmental movement that subscribes to the ideology of ecological Marxism, challenging patterns of resource control and demanding greater control for those who labour to produce value. He critiques the truth-claims of each group involved in dam project. He claims that the NBA campaign has helped to bring out the social and environmental risks taken by developers. He centres his arguments on the paradox of development and highlights the need for a sustained critique of the political economy of water. In his last chapter he presents conflict as an agent of change and explains how the process of development creating crisis and change. The book strongly advocates resistance and conflict as a means of progressive change.

Yet another work that requires our attention is the book by Daniel Klingensmith titled ‘One Valley and a Thousand’, *Dams, Nationalism and Development* (2007). In this work, Klingensmith writes about the connection between The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC) as examples of ‘myth’ creation about the benefit of large dam projects for economic development. He shows how representations of River Valley Development projects are conceived and how they influence the political imagination of various countries. For him, dams have been made imperative for India’s development, even before independence. The pro-dam ideological atmosphere was created by the propagation of ‘ideal’ and replicable models of development like the Tennessee Valley Authority. He shows how India’s development policies and efforts – like dams - in that direction were entangled in the ideological challenges posed by nationalism, liberal colonialism and post-war liberal modernism. He also analyses how some of these projects later became disappointments for its supporters and traumatic for those who were displaced by them.
Another scholar who penned on the controversy was an academic historian named John R. Wood. He sees this as a political issue. His position seems to be a politically expedient and pragmatic. In his book titled *The Politics of Water resource Development in India* (2007) he observes that the project has become so entangled with other economic investment decisions at various levels, like business, banks, farmers and ordinary citizens. As a result the SSP has become a *fait accompli*. There are no alternatives. The Supreme Court has given its verdict. So the law will take its course. Political negotiation requires compromise and NBA needs to mellow down its hard stand of ‘No Dam’ and works towards a feasible political solution. So it may be wise for NBA to focus on rehabilitation of the affected and allow the project to proceed. Otherwise, he argues: “…given the demographic, environmental and economic projections, current levels of water scarcity and the norm of the one-bucket bath will soon be overcome by an even more ominous reality in much of India.” (Wood, 2007:17)

A second report prepared and published by TISS was titled *Performance and Development Effectiveness of the Sardar Sarovar Project* (2008). This Report gives facts and figures which show a clear non-compliance on the part of the government. It also gives a detailed cost-benefit analysis. One highlight was that the interest repayment amounted to a substantial percentage of the total expenditure (TISS, 2008: 57). Moreover, the benefits have not been realized as per the written down promises.

In this Book review, we have discussed some of the important works that analyzed the various aspects of damming and development related issues. Some of them argued for dams and but were critical of rehabilitation and environmental aspects. Others debated the legitimacy of industrial development and scientific rationality that reduces nature and nature-based people to mere objects of development. Still others raised critical political and policy questions highlighting the corruption, financial mismanagement while raising scathing criticism of eroding quality of party politics and suggesting creative and alternative ways of re-envisioning development for all.
This study finds a launching pad in such writings, contributing to critical scholarship by way of narrating what is happening when development faces resistance from those affected by it. This is discussed in the specific context of the contestation between NBA and the State governments. The focus is on the process of legitimation and delegitimation of the development project, when one group loses their livelihood base for the sake of another group, in the context of technocratic economic development vision. This specific aspect centering on the legitimation process is not sufficiently studied so far in the context of SSP. So the study may be considered as a further contribution to the voluminous literature that is already debating the issue of development and resistance.

In the next chapter, the evolution of the issue is narrated in the context of modernizing India and the world in the name of development.