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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 POSING THE PROBLEM

The role of public policy is becoming increasingly important in most of the developing countries. An overall development of a society has come to rest on various public policies pursued by the state. In India, a number of policies for development and also for rural development, have been launched after the independence. Of these, the Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R) policy is considered as of a vital significance. Its importance stems from its objective to help the oustees of such large scale projects as the Narmada Đam and Sardar Sarovar Project on the Narmada river in Gujarat, India. Millions of rupees have been spent on schemes embodying the objectives of the R&R policy. Therefore, the evaluation of the R&R policy and critical research calls for academic attention. This would help us to understand the nature and limitation of such instrument as R&R policy in relocating the ousted people in such a way that their socio-economic development is taken into account.
Any developmental project initiated by the state is expected to consider the twin objectives of the economic development in the region and the economic welfare of its people. Neither of them can be ignored or neglected, if the state envisages healthy human community to grow and prosper under its concern and care. The world over a nagging dilemma is faced on this point. It is particularly so in the developing countries of southern hemisphere. That any initiative to achieve general economic development gets marred by such human cost as displacement of large populations. Relocating such uprooted population poses an equal challenge as initiating a development project. Conventionally, adequate attention was paid to such displacements and dislocations. But, due to the rise of the politics of democratic mobilization and new social movements in the field of ecology in these countries, the issue of large developmental projects such as dams, power grids, road networks has drawn substantive attention and interest. The initiative first came from non-governmental factor. That is, it came from non-political party processes or social action groups. The balance is gradually tilting towards the victims of development rather than beneficiaries of development. The similar view may be held regarding the Sardar Sarovar Project on the river Narmada in the State of Gujarat.

The Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) is one of the vital components of the Narmada Valley Project (NVP), a single largest river valley project in India. The whole of the NVP envisages the construction of thirty major
dams of which ten will be on the river Narmada and the rest will be on its tributaries. The NVP also includes the construction of 135 medium and 3000 minor dams. The SSP is the second largest dam under the NVP in terms of area submerged and the population displaced. Its construction commenced in 1961 with the foundation stone laying ceremony performed by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on this project nothing happened between 1961 and 1985 as it had got caught in inter-state dispute which is discussed in greater detail in third chapter. But it gathered momentum only after 1985, when the inter-state dispute got resolved and the World Bank (WB) agreed to grant finance aid for completion of this project.

The related concerns of the inevitable human need and the basic human right cause a severe dilemma that eventually lead to irrepairable/unredeemable delay in the project work of high utility in the light of fulfilling in the twin objectives. The conflict is over mobilizing water as a resource for wider socio-economic development and its cost on homes and hearths of those who have to be relocated. The GOG is engaged in the former whereas Narmada Bachao Andolan is committed to preserve the latter.

The present research therefore proposes to examine the problems of resettlement of people affected by this large-scale resource development project in India. At present there is no resettlement policy evolved at the
national level. However, the Government of Gujarat (GOG) has sought to evolve a resettlement policy in view of the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) on the river Narmada. The research attempts to look into the R&R policy, its strategies and the implementation i.e. efforts made by the state government to resettle the project affected people in new habitats. The research also seeks to work out a few recommendations and suggestions that may help strengthen the resettlement process.

1.1.1 Defining Policy

Policy is the foremost requirement that precedes to every activity of the political system. It is a pre-requisite to foster all administrative managements. The reason is that it, as its primary concern, seeks to depict a final judgement made on various issues concerning the society, the state and the nation on what should be done and what should not be done and where to do, when, why and how. Dimock views, "Policies are the consciously acknowledged rules and conduct that guide administrative decisions" (Tandau, 1996:43).

Policy has come to assume vital importance in modern times. The state, through a number of policies, seeks to intervene positively in the developmental process by stimulating production and ensuring distributive justice. In the present context, policy is becoming increasingly important in
most developing countries. The overall development of the society has come to rest on policies pursued by the state. In India, a number of policies or public policies have been launched after the independence for development as well as for rural development. Of them, the Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R) policy is considered vital and significant. Its importance stems from its objective to help the oustees of Narmada dam. Millions of rupees have been spent under this scheme (policy).

The present study seeks to examine not only the viability and impact of the scheme, but also the adequacy and efficiency of the existing administrative structure, and the role of the bureaucracy, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), and other participating states. The study tries to explain how crucial is the role played by the bureaucracy in implementing the policy to ensure a due completion of the dam project.

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Public policy has emerged as a very vital field of governance. Its study in a democratic set up is found to be particularly interesting. We must have attempt a brief explanation of what is policy. Let us consider a few definitions of policy. Reddy & Haragopal (1985:1) have attempted a comprehensive, workable and interesting formulation on public policy. They state that, “Public policy has come to assume vital importance in
modern times. The state, through a number of public policies, seeks to intervene positively in the developmental process by stimulating production and ensuring distributive justice. The entire thrust appears to be on improving the quality of life of all the citizens. The policies are broadly of two types: one, the policies which might be called comprehensive and lead to structural transformation; and two, incremental policies which are of a reformative type. Policies like land reforms, ceilings on property and wealth belong to the former category as they touch the ownership of the means of production, and policies like reservations, public distribution system, subsidized anti poverty schemes fall in the latter category.

It is aptly stated by Nicholas Jequier (1972:344) that, “policy might be viewed as a means of creating a new future and the absence of policy is an acceptance of the status quo.” According to a scientific perspective, “policy evaluation research is the objective, systematic, empirical examination of the effects, on-going policies and public programmes have on their target in terms of the goals they are meant to achieve” (Nichimias, 1979:4). In this sense, “policy evaluation research is goal oriented research focusing on effectiveness rather than on the decision-making processes that lead to the adoption of policies” (Singh, Tarlok, 1979:2). It is observed that an analysis of policy failures is even beneficial as “more could be gained from it, going beyond the immediate measures through which government seeks relief, institutions of research and learned scholars associated with
them could examine causes and manifestations with uncompromising
objectivity, tear apart the myths and ignorance which often surround public
policy, and seek more fundamental and long-range action for the future”
(T.Singh, 1979:2).

Dahl has argued that the very act of choosing to have a policy implies
that we possess both normative standards and empirical judgements. For,
when we choose a policy, we are trying to move towards some goal that we
believe is desirable. We are, therefore, compelled to make judgements about
the possible ways of reaching that goal, how easy or difficult it might be. “A
good policy is a path,” Dahl defines, “to the best situation we can reach at a
cost we think it worthwhile to pay” (Dahl, 1989:138). It may even be said
that policy erects an utopia that everyone aspires to reach. It even holds a
torch to light the avenue reaching it.

Wilson, another Political Scientist, views that the policy of a
governmental unit stands for total relationship of the government to its
environment. It has to have due expression in its concrete programmes and
specific decisions. The problematic of policy-making arises out of the
relationship affected with changes in the environment. These changes are
experienced as challenges and require some kind of response, on the one
hand, and the policy orientations of decision-makers on the other hand. For,
if a policy is a response to environmental pressures, both physical and
social, as well as an anticipation of a future state of affairs, a change in policy may be both casual and teleological. It is “caused” by environmental challenges, but it is also directed toward an end in view or sharpened by a purpose” (Wilson, 1968:39-40).

Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz hold a view that policy can be a response to the environment without particular decision having been made. In other words, no government can be without a policy, even if government officials refuse or fail to make decision regarding a policy to be adopted (Bachrach & Baratz, 1963:632-42). “No policy” as such is also a policy. The study of public policy, therefore, cannot just rely on the manifest statement. It has to concern itself with the policy outcomes even as the most direct evidence of how environmental challenges are being resolved.

The modern state pursues usually both the types of policies and thus, covers a wide range of socio-economic processes that touch upon the life of the community at various points. The state invests its major resources in developmental policies and attempts to implement them through its complex organizational network (Reddy & Haragopal, 1985:1). It, thus, tries to give priority to the developmental aspect without indeed ignoring or neglecting the incremental one. Major thrust of the state seems to be on the development in the interest of enhancing its economic strength. It is viewed
that strong economy enables the state to concentrate sensibly on the incremental aspect to strengthen the socio-economic base.

The State of Gujarat has adopted the policy of progress and prosperity through intensive industrialization. As a result, it has been able to develop a broad agro-industrial base to ensure the economic welfare of, not only the vast population within the state, but also of the country taking a leap forward into the new millennium. In the course of the last 50 years of planned economic development in our country since the Independence, we have taken tremendous strides in the agriculture sector among other sectors of economy. Yet, there prevails widespread human distress in terms of poverty and unemployment. Water deficiency adversely affects agricultural and domestic uses. It, in turn, further aggravates the environmental degradation, ingress of salinity and lack of green cover (as it has been done in USA, Israel and elsewhere). In this condition, there is no option left but to transfer water as a basic necessity of life from surplus areas to deficit ones. Such a transfer can be made only if large dams and transmission system of canals are techno-economically feasible. The Narmada project has evolved as one such effort in direction of transfer of water from a huge reservoir to deficit areas in Gujarat.

If we accept that for a better and more purposeful human existence, environment and development must go hand in hand, then it is essential that
each major human intervention in a natural process be assessed in terms of its environmental impacts. The Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) of constructing a large dam on river Narmada in Gujarat is one such project which has been studied in far greater details than any other developmental project in India of similar dimension. All aspects of this large dam-project are researched and scrutinized in greater details during the last several years. A large number of national and international research agencies of repute are intensively engaged in the study.

Every development project has its cost. The Sardar Sarovar project has to be viewed in the national perspective. The Gujarat State, which is relatively deficient in erecting/generating apt irrigation potentials has launched a giant scale Sardar Sarovar Project on the Narmada river. It is popularly known as the Narmada Project.

The Sardar Project on the Narmada is perhaps the most debated, criticized, and studied project following a lot of research and scrutiny. It is examined from all angles and evaluated repeatedly, as controversies have been raised by those who are opposed to this development project. The people belonging to water and rain deficit areas of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh (M.P.), Maharashtra and Rajasthan are eagerly awaiting the completion of the project with the hope that it would bring about major changes in the
socio-economic conditions of the region and the people of the participating states through which the river Narmada passes.

The SSP has eventually become one of the most controversial projects, not only in the country, but globally. It is being opposed for its various claims of cost-benefits ratios. There is a fierce contest of claims and counterclaims raised by the conflicting groups. The conflict of interests has taken various sharply contested forms. The opponents of the Narmada project initially raised issues like damage to the environment in the dam-affected region and resettlement of those who are going to be displaced. Now, the latest campaign unleashed by the opponents of the project, such as NBA, is in the name of violation of human rights. The state claims that it has delivered the most ideal compensatory package to displaced and dispossessed tribal families. In fact, the state argues that it adequately protects the human rights of the masses in rural areas in Kutchh, Saurashtra, North Gujarat and Bhal regions of the state which are from perennially to intermittently affected by water crisis. Availability of water is an issue crucial for the survival of human life as well as of forest and domestic animals. An official review affirms that the State Government is determined to protect human rights on two fronts, i.e. dam-afflicted people and dam-benefited people. The SSP aims at harnessing the vast water flow of the Narmada river to benefits to the national economy as well as to suppor, promote and develop the economy of the four participating states.
Owing to the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Project, a multipurpose irrigation project, nineteen villages of Gujarat confronted a danger of submergence, like in case of any other multipurpose project and the oustees lost their original land, livelihood and homes. The government, however, grants them due compensation for their losses and makes efforts to rehabilitate and resettle them at some other places. But it must be admitted that it is an inevitable consequence of such large irrigation projects, that the oustees get uprooted from their socio-economic base and cultural milieu and face the problem of adjustment in a new settlement. The very process of rehabilitation gives rise to a feeling of economic insecurity among the oustees, dismantles their social network and creates psychological stresses and strains. No monetary compensation of any kind can completely alleviate these stresses and strains. Thus, it is not merely a problem of shifting a few households or villages from one place to another. It is a grave human problem causing immense anxieties to the uprooted oustees who are to be resettled in a new community environment in such a way that their socio-economic life may not be seriously disrupted. They must be resettled in as much a naturalized way as possible. This makes it necessary on the part of the administrators, who deal with rehabilitation, to understand social, economic and attitudinal aspects of the oustees and carve out a rehabilitation programme in a manner that the costs of human socio-psychological impact are nullified, or at least minimized and rather help retain the spirit of living among them.
Studies on rehabilitation and resettlement by social scientists the world over are but a few. Their number is still a fewer in India. There was no practice of studying consequences of displacement of population on account of setting up large projects. A healthy practice has begun with the SSP on the Narmada. The studies conducted in the past usually reveal the details of demographic, socio-economic and cultural aspects. Further, an absence of comprehensive national policy on displacement and resettlement is a sorry tale of a legislative neglect.

The case of the SSP is a process of resettlement and rehabilitation that is painful for everyone. As it is known, the submergence is spread over three states viz. M.P., Maharashtra and Gujarat. According to the Tribunal’s direction, Gujarat has to resettle all project affected persons (PAPs) that include even those from the neighbouring two states of M.P. and Maharashtra, that are willing to resettle them. The policy laid down by the tribunal has been further liberalized by the three states. The primary objective of the policy is that the economic condition of the PAPs must improve significantly after resettlement.

The resettlement of oustees however, causes to them a number of inter-related psychological, socio-cultural and economic problems. Therefore, the chief concerns of rehabilitation programme of the Government of Gujarat remain as follows:
i. the stress of the oustees should be reduced to what extent;

ii. how they should restore to their earlier status; and

iii. how to improve their conditions.

To sum up, the confusion prevails and the structures of governance at local, state and national level, including all three organs of the government, namely, legislative, executive and judiciary and in addition to them, non-government bodies like NGOs and Voluntary Agencies (VAs) as well are caught in a confusion about evolving a sound and subtle policy instrument that may cater to demands of multiple clash of interest, on the most contested issue of rehabilitation and resettlement raised by the rival activists. The issue of the violation of human right is raised by both the sides, viz. those in favour of Narmada Dam, who want its water to be carried to waterless arid areas of Kuchcha, Saurashtra, and North Gujarat, and those protesting against it on the ground of the allegations on the R&R policy of the government that it turns out to be faulty, inhumane, unjust, unfair, inadequate and anti-tribal.

The R&R policy is an outcome of an intensely contested evolutionary process. When the construction work began, there was no adequate R&R policy evolved on the part of the government organs. Thenafter, the anti-dam activism rose and persisted with increasingly sharpened protest and the government was compelled to lend an ear and allow suitable alterations. In
the last two decades, the state has witnessed massive popular mobilizations of both sides of the protests, for and against the SSP dam. It ranged from a broad spectrum of Sarvodaya-Gandhian concerns to socialist-communist and even ecological concerns. The issues of alternative, appropriate and sustainable developments have been raised by anti-SSP groups. The claims of cost-benefit ratios of the SSP by the governments are contested by the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) activists. In their view, large projects are like white elephants, a brain child of insensitive, anti-people and corrupt nexus of bureaucrats, rich peasants and politicians. According to them, the claims of government are illusive, unfounded and inflated. They also allege that the benefits imparted by the SSP are far less than the costs incurred on it. They do believe that in the same costs, alternative development strategies may be worked out which would be eco-friendly and people-friendly. An uproarious debate has commenced to which various sections of the society have contributed. Efforts are being made in the interest of evolution of a better and sound R&R policy. Hence, original R&R policy, its controversy and interests and the emergence of a new and revised R&R policy remains the central concerns of the present study.
1.3 **HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY**

The study proposes to test the following hypotheses:

1. The Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R) policy is framed by united efforts of institutions of state, market and civil society.

2. This has proved to be immensely conducive to the enrichment of the contents of the policy of R&R in SSP.

3. The issues of the R&R policy on the SSP is multi-dimensional. It brings out a unique relationship, not only between the centre and the state, but also between the state and its neighbouring states, as well as between the centre and more than one contentious states.

4. The assertion and participation of civil society, in the form of NGOs and social activists, in crucial issues, concerning the very survival of its most vulnerable sections affords a good scope to influence the course and content of the policy.

5. The extent and intensity of participation and involvement of people in various policy-making processes, initiated by the government depends on the substantiality, consequentiality and vitality of the issues at stake.

6. The issues of the R&R on the SSP are less local and more of national and global dimensions.
1.4 **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The objective of this study is to focus on the issue of rehabilitation and resettlement in relation to the project affected persons. The policy package of rehabilitation and resettlement indeed has come to become a crucial component of the Sardar Sarovar (Narmada) Project. Hence, the policy remains the central focus of the study. Besides if, the study also intends to deal with the approach and status of environmental protective measures and some other policy components such as compensatory afforestation, treatment to catchments area, protecting wild life, command and development, etc.

The major objectives of the study are as follows:

a. to trace the genesis of the R&R policy, to compile and reconstruct the history of policy-making on the R&R on the issue of the SSP dam in Gujarat.

b. to delineate major points of conflict of interests and their resolution through policy-making processes.

c. to examine and analyze the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in formulating the policy on the R&R.

d. to study the implementation and the scheme of rehabilitation.

e. to examine the processes by which oustees get adjusted to their non-habitats.
f. to examine major criticism of implementation of the R&R policy raised by the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) and point out the deficiencies.

One of the general objectives of this study is to clarify the actual and factual position that the R&R on the SSP holds. Some environmentalist and protesters are agitating against the construction of the Sardar Sarovar (Narmada) dam beyond a certain height. In order to apprise the public at large about various contentious issues on debate, the study will make an attempt to elucidate them with factual details. It is hoped that this attempt would put the issues in true light and project them in proper perspective.

The study also proposes to present factual details and data relating to the project. It seeks to also highlight its multi-dimensional contribution to welfare of the people, of the participating states like M.P., Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan, and also to the national economy. The study aims at highlighting the most crucial and controversial issues in the irrigation planning and its implementation through due analysis of the policy of R&R in the case of the Sardar Sarovar project.
1.5 **METHOD OF THE STUDY**

In order to meet the objectives of the study and examine the hypotheses, the study has to adopt the method as detailed below:

The methodology employed in the context of the study is basically qualitative in nature. In order to study the issue of the R&R in relation to the SSP, a review and analysis of existing primary data is undertaken. The secondary data are reviewed as supplementary and complementary to the analysis. These data are obtained from the sources like the libraries of universities, research institutions and government offices. About 70 random and unstructured but open-ended interviews of concerned officials of the GOG, NGO-personnel, social activists, researchers, and political leaders were taken to reconstruct the case of SSP on river Narmada in Gujarat.

1.6 **SOURCES OF DATA**

A great deal of relevant material will be collected from the concerned departments of the Government of Gujarat such as the Narmada Nigam, the Narmada Planning Group, etc. Documented material will also be obtained from the NBA and other voluntary organizations. The researcher also intends to collect the empirical data on the R&R through interviews and discussions with a cross sections of the affected people, concerned local
officials, political leaders, government officials, journalists, activist leaders of NGOs etc.

Many studies are conducted on the Sardar Sarovar (Narmada) project and published in the Gujarati language. They will be exhaustively used for the purpose of analysis. Local gazetteers, official documents and some social science reports will also be referred to as sources on the secondary data. In short, the study proposes to employ a methodological mix of empirical, normative and policy oriented approaches.

1.7 CHAPTER-PLAN

The argument and composition of the study is presented in five chapters as detailed below:

The first chapter is introductory. It contains the rationale and significance of the study. It describes the methods used for data collection, data sources, hypotheses and the plan of analysis. This chapter has attempted a conceptual discussion on the processes of policy-making and policy-implementing in a participative democratic governance.
The second chapter deals with review of literature on the rehabilitation policy in general and the Narmada project in particular. It also attempts to review the major research works published and unpublished.

The third chapter explores the genesis and the history of the rehabilitation and resettlement policy. It relates it to the context of the history of the SSP dam and its construction in the socio-political context of the state.

The fourth chapter outlines the main conflicting and controversial issues related to conflicts of interest between the two positions. It states positions of pro and anti-dam sides on the issue and indicates the overall resultant shifts in the R&R policy to enrich it more and more. The chapter also focuses on the progressive enrichment of the policy as a result of constant contentious interaction and discourses between pro and the conflicting stand points on modes of socio-economic development drawing the global attention.

The fifth chapter enlists the findings and sums up discussion and drawing important conclusions on a progressively beneficial discourse on as important an issue as the R&R policy in the context of the SSP. It will also seek to review the shift that occurs in the relationship between the state, the market and the civic society in the larger public interest. Further, with a
view to rendering the study into a meaningful exercise it attempts to work out a few suggestions based on the observations that may be of some use when the R&R policy needs to be reviewed and revised.
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