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**Remembering Displacement: Hunger and Marginalisation in  
three resettled villages of south Gujarat**

**By**

**Gauri Raje**

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## Abstract

Dams have had significant impact on the hinterlands of the regions in which they are built. Since the 1980s, there has been a growing body of empirical literature that has critiqued the fallout of dams on populations residing in the catchment areas and face uncertain futures due to inadequate or lack of rehabilitation policies that do not consider the long-term impact of the displacement on the economic, social and political lives of the affected population.

Due to such encompassing effects, dams have long been the points of critique for environmentalists and social activists in the countries of the South. In south Asia, the Narmada dam controversy raised questions of displacement and water politics in the decade of the 1990s specifically but raised larger questions on the nature of *adivasi* relations with the Indian state, and the nature of development and paradigms of progress in the region. However, there are few studies in the field of anthropology or displacement studies that have examined the relationship between development projects and how these are remembered among those adversely affected by them.

Based on fieldwork over 8 months, this thesis seeks to explore the different ways in which displacement due to the Ukai dam in the south Gujarat region of India is remembered by a group of 3 *adivasi* villages. It focuses specifically on the perception of the displaced *adivasis* and contexts and creation of the varying memories of displacement across social status, gender and generations in these three villages. In remembering the processes of disempowerment among displaced groups, the different groups of *adivasis* articulate the hunger and marginalisation that pervades their everyday lives. This thesis attempts to look at this fibre of social suffering and how this is experienced and lived out by the displaced villagers 30 years after the event of being displaced due to the dam. Through the focus on remembering displacement, the thesis attempts to examine the process through which pre-existing hierarchies are strengthened in the post-displacement period and the disempowerment experienced by some of those already living on the margins in the pre-dam socio-economic and political structures. By focusing on the different memories and experiences of

disempowerment from a long-term perspective, the thesis calls into question the singularity of an 'impoverished community' and the role of development projects in exacerbating pre-existing hierarchies rather than transforming them.

## Acknowledgements

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When I started my fieldwork, it was with anger and mistrust at the 'complicity' of government officials and non-*adivasis* in perpetuating the poverty in the *chaudkheda* villages. Interviews, when they confirm this bias, are exhausting. During the course of fieldwork, I met a few individuals who challenged these emotions and insisted on a more nuanced view of the Ukai project. My enquiry would have been further impoverished without these discussions.

Hinaben and the library staff at CSS helped trace much of the local literature on the area and the project. Their engagement and enthusiasm could not be but infectious. Over Ahmedabad, Surat and Songadh, Satyakambhai, Dr. Hirway and Fr. Stany went through the premises of fieldwork many times over. Their suggestions have been invaluable. Fieldwork would have also been entirely confusing and dreary but for the friends at the '*Mafat Kanooni Kendra*', Songadh. The debates and discussions over *bhajiya* and *chaa* turned fieldwork into another adventure. Navalbhai, his family and friends in Limbi will always be a home that one is expected to return to during difficult times and festivals.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introduction: Literature Review**

This study is about the states of displacement, marginalisation and hunger among the Vasava villagers of the displaced villages in the Bordha region, located in the western region of India. Specifically it focuses on 3 villages from among the 14 in this region. It looks at the inter-generational and gendered memories of the displacement due to the Ukai dam and the meaning that displacement has acquired through the three generations since the dam was built over the lands of these villages. Furthermore, the generational and gendered memories are also interwoven with the memories of displacement and hunger for various socio-economic groups in the villages researched.

Before examining the specifics of the different literatures, in the literature review I demarcate the domains of the main themes and concepts in this work. Located within a conceptual and contextual space of social suffering, the study attempts to examine the condition of the Vasavas as one of marginalisation and endemic hunger, more or less acutely experienced among different hierarchical groups within the three villages chosen for the study. Social suffering is characterised not only by these aspects of their lives, but prolonged and sustained neglect by the state and its agencies that is bound to these villages both as the perpetrator of the uprooting faced by the villages and as the agency overseeing displacement. In the particular instance of Ukai, the thesis is set in a context wherein the state continues to follow a pattern

of a sustained neglect of this area since the event of displacement and through the particular path of development it has supported in the region, thereby perpetuating and among some groups intensifying the suffering caused by their displacement.

While social suffering suffuses life in the post-displacement villages in the Bordha region, the core concerns of this suffering are defined by the resettled people in terms of the struggle for food. In this sense, hunger is the strand that runs through the chapters in my thesis. It identifies the displaced villagers as distinct from the non-displacees, but also demarcates different groups and hierarchies within the displaced villages themselves. In this sense, there is an appropriation of the mode of experiencing hunger between the landed and the landless displacees, who migrate as sugarcane cutters. In other words, while hunger is experienced in the displaced villages and more acutely among the sugarcane cutters from these villages, it is also present as a trope in the narratives of the landed displacees about the impact of displacement on their lives. In this manner, hunger is represented to the 'other', ie. the non-displacees, as part of a narrative that demands an overcoming/alleviation of the condition of hunger.

Several studies, both case studies (Colson, 1971; Hakim, 1995, 1996; Nayak, 1999; Jing, 2003) and proscriptive models that study the risks of displacement (Cernea and Guggenheim, 1993; Cernea, 2000; Dwivedi, 2002) have shown that displacement leads to a condition of acute hunger for the people displaced. It is a condition characterised in terms of both---a basic struggle to access food and a loss of

employment and educational opportunities, and the strain that these put on familiar modes of social life. Jean Dreze (2004) has conceptualised this condition of hunger through emphasising the centrality of the right to food in civil society. As he writes, in a post-development world, democracy is a condition whose index is reflected in the proportion of the population that goes hungry. This is so since the access and right to food also presupposes access to education, health and other institutions that promote possibilities and conditions of well-being for the population (2004: 1729). While then the demand for the right to food powerfully raises the question of the state's responsibilities to its population, it is simultaneously difficult to translate it into a question of entitlements since the right to food addresses the claims of individuals on society as much as on the state. In other words, it is difficult to see this right within the domain of legal enforcement and obligations alone. The central question in this study arose through raising this concept of the right to food in the villages; a right that is implicitly or explicitly stated by different groups in the displaced villages. Hence, given that hunger and marginalisation have been defining conditions over the years, how does the 'felt experience' of these conditions characterise the lives in these villages? It is through asking this question that I seek to examine the impact of the construction of the dam on the lives of the villagers studied through the narratives of 3 generations.

The initial scope of this study concerned the history of displacement of the Vasavas displaced by the Ukai dam, and their felt experiences of this event. In this sociological study of displaced persons, the Ukai dam displacees were selected for

the study given the numerous studies just north of the region due to the Narmada dam. While there have been numerous socio-economic and anthropological studies on the impact of displacement on the Vasavas and other caste and tribal groups due to the Narmada dam (Baviskar, 1995; Dreze *et al*, 1997; Hakim, 1996, 1997; Singh *et al.*, 1997), there seems to be very little documented and systematic literature on the Ukai dam displacees from the time of the inception and implementation of the project. This is a surprising lacuna since the environmental and social effects of this dam are a living proof of all the fears on the impact of inadequate resettlement policies that are put forward by the opponents of the Narmada dam. Although the Ukai dam displacement happened in 1971---15 years before the anti-Narmada movement consolidated itself, there is sparse mention of this displacement and its ramifications in either official, environmental, academic or development literature.

Considering this contextual space of dam-based literature (Colson and Scudder, 1982; Thukral, 1992; Cernea, 1997; Dreze *et al.*, 1997; Fernandes, 2000), and starting from a bias of scepticism as to the stated benefits of the Ukai dam and mega-hydroelectric projects, I had assumed that displacement would continue to constitute the core of grievances and anger among all the displacees as well as being perceived as a major source of marginalisation of all the displacees in the Ukai displaced villages. In particular, I had expected to find narratives that expressed these emotions and conditions, particularly among sugarcane cutters, these being the poorest and the most destitute group in the villages. However, the interviews did not hold up to this initial assumption, and revealed the study of displacement as much

more fragmented and fragmenting within the villages. In this sense, this thesis is about the differential ways in which displacement is viewed, remembered and talked about by the displacees according to age, gender and social status.

### Labour migrants or development displaced?

The linkages between displacement and rehabilitation and the place of dams as part of a global mode of conceptualising development have been studied both in the case of India and other regions (Scudder and Colson, 1982; Dhawan, 1990; Singh *et al*, 1997; Dreze *et al*, 1997). When dams were hailed in Nehru's (in)famous phrase as the 'temples of modern India', they were conceived as being an indispensable part of the agricultural and industrial energy base of a modernising country. According to Judge (1997: 850), this was a period when India 'was trying hard to fit into a world-system based on an industrial culture and growth, irrespective of capitalist or socialist developmental emphases'. Rehabilitation acquired lesser priority in comparison with the need for water as a renewable energy source for power generation, and to spur the demands of capitalist agriculture. Studies from around the world extensively document this dilemma faced in prioritising nationalist development aspirations and rehabilitation of the displacees in different regions around the world (Colchester, 2000; Fuggle *et al.*, 2000; Agrin, 2000). Development induced displacement arose as a major field of study after the dramatic rise in these form of displacements in the 1970 and 1980s, induced by a global infrastructure boom, and the disastrous negative effects on development projects (Dwivedi, 2002:

709).

The dilemma in anthropological works on forced migration, of which development-induced displacement is a specific mode, has been on how to document and study the impact of the power of such globalising ideologies on displacees and migrants in situations of forced migration especially due to development projects, without negating possibilities of displacees creating strategies to survive in hostile and unfamiliar new environments. Elizabeth Colson, a pioneer in anthropological studies of the aftermath of forced displacement, addressed this dilemma as one where one needs to acknowledge that '[...] humans are in fact migratory animals in the sense that they treasure possibilities for mobility but at the same time see any attempt to force mobility upon them as an infringement upon their personal space and their sense of integrity' (Colson, 1989: 13). In light of this statement, several recent works have looked at the structural and cultural disintegration faced by people in the event of forced migration, and the livelihood strategies that emerge in new contexts and environments to adapt to them (Scudder 1991; Thukral 1992; Hakim 1997).

Development induced displacement has had a long struggle to be recognised as an issue needing policy-level intervention. While the populace displaced through natural disasters or internal strife and civil war are recognised in international jargon as 'refugees' (Piciotto *et al.*, 2001), populations dislocated from their settlements due to modernist and 'progressive' projects such as industries, dams and military establishment are referred to as 'displacees' or 'affected populations' seeming to

indicate an entirely different ambit of experiential conditions (Cernea and Guggenheim, 1993: 3). Such demarcations have led to the prevalence of the justification that while redressal mechanisms are essential for people affected by natural disasters or wars, dislocations caused due to development projects demand certain costs for the common good (Dreze *et al.*, 1997; Singh *et al.*, 1997). On a theoretical plane, the argument for modernisation and development has argued that there is a trickle-down effect---the benefits of projects percolate through social and political hierarchies to eventually compensate the losers and affected populations. In other words, until the 1980s rehabilitation policy frameworks were not prioritised within national policies in developing countries.

What began in the 1980s as documentation and questioning of the assumptions and options in development resulted in extensive studies on the negative impacts of development induced displacements in sociological and anthropological research (Dwivedi, 2000: 709). By the late 1980s, studies by Cernea and Guggenheim (1993) and Hansen and Oliver-Smith (1983) were emphasising the need to go beyond merely documenting the impact and 'unhappy' outcomes of failed resettlement strategies with an approach that suggested conceptual approaches and alternative policy frameworks (Cernea and Guggenheim, 1993: 10). By the 1990s, anthropological directions had moved from an involvement in the policy arenas to newer agendas of research that combined village ethnographies with action research (Thukral, 1992; Baviskar, 1995; Hakim, 1997). Much of this work located itself within resistance movements to displacement. They demonstrated that displacement



resulted in not only asset and employment losses, but also the breakdown in kinship ties, dismantling of social and food security, credit and labour exchange networks resulting in the socio-political disempowerment of displacees and a loss of cultural identity along with economic destitution (Thukral, 1992; Baviskar, 1995; Dreze *et al*, 1997; Fernandes, 2000; Cernea, 2000). In an effort to formalise and expand this approach to an international framework for evaluating the impact of displacement, Cernea proposed a model to measure the degree of vulnerabilities and offsetting risks (Cernea, 1997) with an aim at ‘deconstructing the anatomy of impoverishment’ (Cernea, 2000). Within this model he sketched out the various ‘risks’ of enforced relocation. These characteristics are no different from other populations caught on the flipside of global relationships of economic production. According to him, outcomes of displacement of populations result in 8 major conditions of impoverishment: 1. Landlessness 2. Joblessness 3. Homelessness 4. Marginalisation 5. Morbidity 6. Food insecurity 7. Loss of access to common property assets 8. Social disarticulation (Cernea, 1995: 252). This model is a proscriptive one that the World Bank and other international agencies emphasise in evaluating the costs vs. benefits of every such development project since the 1990s (Dwivedi, 2000: 720).

Among the several criticisms to Cernea’s model, two pertain quite closely to addressing certain questions in displacement studies. First, a well-worn critique points out that Cernea’s framework for calculating risks does not take into account the subjective perception of ‘risk’ of the displacees. According to Dwivedi, ‘[...] affected people internalise risks and factor them into decision-making and strategic

actions.’ (2000: 719) In other words, the perception of the impact of displacement in these studies is differentiated based on class and gender predominantly. Generational, religious, cultural and household factors have not yet managed to find a place. Different resources may be valued differently by members of these groups. Besides, the understanding of risk may vary based on the experience of displacement and of the political manoeuvrings through grassroots movements and by state agencies (Baviskar, 1995; Hakim, 1997; Dwivedi, 2000). Secondly, it is difficult within this framework of ‘assessment’ to capture the contours of some of the losses and outcomes of displacement such as issues of felt anger, humiliation and violations that displacees undergo. Besides this, at a human level displacement also results in a drastic transformation of traditional social and economic practices, physical and mental health, dietary patterns and the spatial arrangement of their societies (Pathy, 1988; Hobart, 1993). In other words, from the available evidence enforced displacement results in the unforeseen and uncontrollable losses of the experiential and emotional worlds of displacees with anger, humiliation and confusion over longer or shorter periods. In a sense, Cernea’s risk model is asset- and livelihood-based, wherein on the one hand, emotions fail to find a place; and on the other, the model does not take into account that ‘big’ overarching events such as dam-induced displacement impact different groups within displaced communities in markedly different ways. Within the subjective perception of the displacees, there are large differences in the weight given to the event of displacement. I take up on the latter point of criticism regarding the impact of dams on the lives of displacees. In this thesis, I attempt to analyse the ways in which hunger and displacement are

subjectively felt, and historically transmitted across class, generation<sup>1</sup> and gender.

Another prevailing framework for the analysis of the social consequences of relocation has been the Scudder-Colson relocation theory (1971) based on the work done by these anthropologists among the Kariba dam displacees in the Gwembe valley in Zambia. This model looks at the long-term effects of resettlement and ascribes four phases of resettlement---learning about resettlement, actual relocation, the transition phase and resettlement. The first two phases are marked by what they called 'risk avoiding behaviour'. In the transitional phase, the risk avoiding behaviour was balanced by a limited amount of risk taking strategies so that while many of the displacees continued with earlier strategies of sustenance in the new environment, a few begin to experiment with new opportunities and livelihood strategies. The final phase is characterised by the independence of the community from the need for outside management and has attained economic and administrative abilities. The model does not deny that displacement is a stressful experience. Scudder and Colson's model, however, warn against ascribing resettlement as merely a negative experience. While most case studies of experiences of displacement of large numbers of people reflect Cernea's model of impoverishment (CSE, 1987; Thukral, 1992; Dreze *et al.*, 1997; Nayak, 1999; Fernandes, 2000);

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<sup>1</sup> Generation is defined in this thesis based on age and, more importantly, experiences of displacement. For example, the first generation refers to the generation that constituted the decision-makers and village elders in the pre-displacement period. The second generation constitute the sons of the first generation, who are the decision-makers in the resettled villages today and the third generation are the youth who are the grandchildren of the first generation, who were born in the resettled villages, 10-15 years after displacement. Each generation's experiences and rememberings of displacement would be qualitatively different from the other. Chapter 4 attempts to draw out the contours of this difference.

there are specific local instances from smaller countries such as Costa Rica (Asthana, 1997: 1469) or in the instance of the Baliraja dam in southern India (Asthana, 1997: 1469) where relocation has made available increasing opportunities, in educational and economic terms, to the community. What is interesting in these studies of post-displacement experience is the results of the enmeshing of resettlement with the general processes of change. Critics may see this process as the destruction of traditional lifestyles (Thukral, 1992; Nayak, 1999; Fernandes, 2000). According to others, the model illustrates that needs and desires change as alternative rationalities become available to communities (Das, 1996). Such frameworks of the post-displacement period emphasise the ways in which the forced experience of migration introduces the displaced groups to confront the larger national ideologies and practices of development in a manner that may not be purely negative.

Both the above approaches differ quite substantially from what has been regarded as the 'movementist' approach in the studies of displacement (Dwivedi, 2002: 711). These refer to those groups of action research studies where displacement is not seen to be just an inevitable outcome of development; it is a manifestation of a crisis in development (Asthana, 1997; Parasuraman, 1999; Singh *et al.*, 1997; Piciotto *et al.*, 2001). This is a structural approach that seeks to investigate the structures of power that generate this crisis in the first place. Various thesis have been employed here—based on a country's commitment to rehabilitation programmes (Piciotto *et al.*, 2001); the nature of the displacing agency (Parasuraman, 1999) wherein resettlement

was more 'successful' in public sector industrial projects that offered a range of rehabilitative measures in terms of preferential employment, capacity building and re-training preventing economic destitution for displaced groups. In other words, this approach addresses the question of why in national contexts such as India, Brazil or China, the people undergoing displacement tend to be from the more marginalised constituencies of the national polity (Asthana, 1997: 1468-1475). Development projects by and large tend to be constructed in regions that affect what have been termed in international and anthropological literature as 'indigenous communities'. In India, indigenous communities, referred to in academic literature as *adivasis*, constitute 8% of the population of which about 5 million have been displaced at least once (Census India, 2002). According to a study on the rehabilitation of tribals from 110 projects, by 1997, of the 16.94 *lakh* people to be displaced, almost 50% belonged to tribal groups (Kothari, 1997: 1477). Many of these communities have, since the event of displacement, undergone secondary displacement and migration for employment. This holds especially true for persons displaced during such projects up to the late 1980s (Thukral, 1992; Singh *et al*, 1997; Kothari, 1997). In recent years, comparative studies have focused on the factors and influences that have led some of the movements of the oustees to acquire momentum and influence in public debates, especially as in the case of the Narmada dam in India (Judge, 1997; Dwivedi, 1999). Dwivedi (1999) has examined the composition of the leadership in the struggle against the Narmada dam, indicating to the presence of a significant number of high caste farmers who are to be displaced by the dam, and lend a strong support base to the anti-dam leadership. In a similar vein, Baviskar

(1995) has remarked on the reluctance of many landless and marginal *adivasi* farmers who prefer to remain silent or not join the same movement although they face displacement too, like the others. Judge (1997) has compared the public nature of the movement against the Narmada dam to the silence from the oustees regarding the dams in the north of India, particularly the Bhakra Nangal and the Pong dams where the conditions of resettlement have been as bad, if not worse. According to him (1997: 849-850), the silence and indifference over a critique of hydro-electric projects in north India have to be understood within a socio-political context (1997: 849). The projects heralded the Green Revolution and the rise of influential lobbies of capitalist farmers whose organisational bases are far stronger than those of the oustee movements. This allowed for drowning out the voices of the displacees during, but also far after, the projects have been constructed and operationalised. The effect of economic and social capital on the influencing critiques of displacement, then, not only emphasises the social and political marginality of *adivasis* and the landless groups; it would also imply that the nature of the marginality of the *adivasi* affects and is affected in entirely different ways by global and nationalist projects of development than among displacees from non-*adivasi* groups.

Studies on displacement, then, have had to negotiate the question of conceptualising the *adivasis* in relation to the larger social and political politics along with the questions of the nature of their marginality that adversely affects them during the planning and construction of development projects in India. This is not a new or

neglected question. The question of the nature of *adivasi* identity has been part of an on-going debate in anthropology since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The two strands of this debate in the Indian context have resonated at one level with the connotations to the term 'tribal' expressed in other parts of the world, as representative of the power relations between the anthropological writings and the contexts of colonialism within which this term was employed to create connotations of primitive, pristine and simple societies. On the other hand, in the Indian context debates over the use of the term '*adivasi*' rather than 'tribal' have raged in the context of constructing or contesting the position of the *adivasi vis-à-vis* the caste hierarchy (Leach 1960; Ghurye 1963; Bose 1971). Bose (1971), for instance, emphasised the difference between castes and tribes by positing ideal-type constructs for tribes marked by isolation, self-sufficiency and autonomy. On the other hand, anthropologists like Ghurye (1963) regarded them as a less-sophisticated, poorly integrated part of Hindu society, representative of an early form of Hindu society. Baviskar (1995) has tried to place these two strands within the contemporary issues of the interaction and effects of the Indian polity on *adivasi* groups. She writes, '[...] when we analyse the relationship between '*adivasis*' and the caste system, we must remember that contemporary identities are devised within a larger system of cultural dominance and subordination, and that they acquire different values according to changing contingencies of power' (Baviskar 1995: 87).

Going back to the models of displacement proposed by Cernea, the aftermath of displacement spans areas that include and transcend those of the socio-economic as

outlined by Cernea (1990). The cultural perceptions and representation of *adivasi*hood played and continue to play a great role in the experience of displacement among the displacees. Roxanne Hakim's work (1997) is one of the few anthropological works that illustrate the negotiation of *adivasi*hood when *adivasis* are relocated to regions dominated by caste-based Hindu groups. In her work among the Vasavas displaced by the Narmada dam, the negotiation of identities between the caste and *adivasi* societies is evident by the manner in which the displacees accommodate certain practices and values of caste Hindu society such as food practices, dress codes, agricultural practices that Hakim characterises as evidence of a 'pragmatic ethic' (1997: 159); while at the same time retaining an awareness ascribed to differences between '*adivasi*' modes of such everyday practices as the core of what it means to be a *vasavi*. As stated earlier, there is a strong thread in the official narrative of the dam that seeks to demarcate the *adivasi*hood, for all it connotes, as an earlier form of Hinduism<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> More recently, this has occurred in two ways. In protest against the Morse Report (1992) that concluded that the displacement due to dams were particularly inimical to 'tribal' groups pro-dam activists in India argued that the 'tribal' or *adivasi* was not a different social and cultural group in India, but a poorly integrated Hindu whose integration would be facilitated through such development projects. This has also found support in a statist narrative that situates the dam as *necessary* for the 'development and uplift' of the 'poor and backward' *adivasi* population in south Gujarat by creating jobs, irrigation and electricity for the region. Which groups benefit from these facilities is not a moot question within this discourse. It is a narrative that is characteristic of the dominant political culture in Gujarat and is characterised by two processes, since 1947: a drive towards capitalist accumulation through a development paradigm of 'modernisation' and the prevalence of a religious sensibility that defines citizenship in terms of a dominant Hindu identity. The two processes characterise a 'culture of political authoritarianism' (Mukta, 2003), a homogenising trope that at the level of a development paradigm encourages the growth and availability of abundant and cheap labour, is intolerant of dissenting voices to its model of development and has followed an economic policy that encourages investment of large industrial complexes and agriculture based on industrial models. In the socio-political arena it is a culture marked by attempts at an erasure of differences, especially focusing since 1990s on the religious and political 'Others' in its concept of a *Hindu rashtra*---the Muslim and Christian people living in Gujarat. Within these political and development agendas, the *adivasi* areas become a site where these imperatives of the state's aspirations collide---most development projects such as dams and industrial complexes have been planned in regions of south Gujarat, which have some of the largest



The beginnings of this debate are reflected in the sociology and anthropology of the caste and tribe in India (Risley, 1891; Leach, 1960; Ghurye, 1963; Bose, 1971; Beteille, 1986). Through the British anthropological writings and ethnographies as well as those of the early Indian anthropologists, the tribes continue to be depicted in various stages of an autochthonous and primitive existence. While the British anthropologists argued for a distinct identity for tribal communities on the basis of their isolation in hills and forests and separation from the other mainstream religious and cultural groups (Elwin, 1943; Leach, 1960; Fuchs, 1973); the Indian anthropologists argued for continuity on an evolutionary ladder between the castes and tribes (Ghurye, 1963; Bose, 1971). In the latter argument, the tribal groups represented the early stages of Hindu civilisational thought and in the present times their perceived isolation was regarded as evidence of their poor integration into mainstream Hindu society rather than an indication of a distinct historical, cultural and social group. These early attempts at creating watertight classifications of caste and tribe have been fundamentally challenged by sociological and historical arguments that contest the attempts to classify castes from tribes in India. Beteille (1986) has particularly challenged this schema of understanding Indian society by suggesting that castes and tribes have co-existed through history in India leading to porosity between the two groups. More specifically, the historicist argument formulates this fluidity between caste-based communities and their various *adivasi* neighbours in terms of relations of domination and subjugation. Hardiman (1987) elucidates on this argument in terms of the rise of a particular *adivasi* consciousness,

locating the *adivasi* as a subject within the histories of the *adivasi*-outsider relations. He writes, '[...] the term *adivasi* is preferable in the Indian context because it relates to a particular historical development: that of the subjugation during the nineteenth century of a wide variety of communities which before the colonial period had remained free, or at least relatively free, from the control of outside states. This process was accompanied by an influx of traders, moneylenders and landlords who established themselves under the protection of the colonial authorities [...] In this way outsiders who had dealt previously with the *adivasis* on terms of relative equality became their exploiters and masters. This experience generated a spirit of resistance, which incorporated a consciousness of 'the *adivasi*' against 'the outsider' [...] *Adivasis* can therefore be defined as groups which have shared a common fate in the past century and from this have evolved a collective identity of being *adivasis*.' (Hardiman, 1987: 15-16). In other words, in returning to Cernea's argument and a critique of the studies on displacement that focuses on the socio-economic destitution of tribal groups due to development projects, one finds an elucidation of the negative impacts of these projects on the socio-economic and cultural domain without an equally important focus on the history of the displaced groups. The focus on a historical dimension to the lives of the displaced *adivasis* is an important aspect in an effort to put the *adivasi* subject back into the study of displaced groups as well as linking events of displacement to a larger continuing history of the gradual marginalisation of *adivasi* groups through Indian history.

The debate on the impact of dams on tribal groups specifically, then, has acquired

different connotations in the context of development-induced displacement in recent times. It has especially emerged in the sharp focus of the protests against the Narmada project, which was subjected to an independent review by the World Bank, the principal funding agency of the project in 1992 (Morse and Berger, 1992). The review concluded that displacement due to the dam would be inimical to the socio-economic and the cultural aspects of the 'tribal' way of life of the displaced groups, and that rehabilitation required special attention to the latter (Morse and Berger, 1992: 342). In contesting these conclusions, the position of the pro-dam activists was based on the concept of the *adivasi* as a poorly integrated Hindu, whose integration would be facilitated by development projects and the 'trickle-down' effects of the benefits. The stand of the anti-dam activists was more complex. Initially their stand was based on the injustice of the inadequate compensation offered to the displacees. Besides this, in the absence of the implementation or the lack of a rehabilitation policy at national levels, their stance also involves taking recourse to the international human rights framework in the form of the Indigenous and Tribal Population Convention, 1957 (Convention No. 107 of the International Labour Organisation), especially for displacees of older projects who were not awarded adequate compensation (Nayak, 1995). This latter stand, however, has not been without its debates. While it is an alternate court of recourse for rehabilitation demands the independent review report of the Narmada dam (Morse and Berger, 1992) called the Morse report, this convention was acknowledged by formulating a policy by which tribal people were distinguished from 'forest communities' based on their physical isolation, religious practices, subsistence economy and isolation

from national political events, outlining a category of 'timeless' and 'unchanging' communities. The tribal people in the Morse report are then mentioned as a special category of oustees whose traditional ways of life would be adversely affected by development projects. While this concern addresses the question of the need to recognise the trauma of dislocation arising from the loss of cultural symbols, it also raises questions about assuming a homogeneity of a 'tribal community' and the possibility of the reinforcement of cultural practices that might be oppressive and to the detriment of the certain groups within these communities, i.e. women, landless or immigrants in the villages (Baviskar, 1995: 220-222; Dwivedi, 1999; Srinivasan and Mehta, 2000). The other question that this categorisation raises is that of pitting the tribe against the idea of the nation, rather than examining the nature of politics and policy of the nation-state towards different groups within its constituency. By implication, it creates a global category of a tribe---itself a questionable proposition, given the various histories and relationships of indigenous communities with and within their nation-states. This question has also been raised within the recent debates on displacement in India. The World Commission on Dams country study of India (Colchester, 2001), outlines these debates as being one between those whose anti-displacement position is based on the impact of resettlement on the cultural fabric of tribal groups and those who argue that the impact of displacement needs to be studied within the framework of the impact on the increasing group of 'have-nots' within Indian society, and that tribal communities in the post-displacement period constitute a significant part of the large underclass of Indian society (Verghese, 1999).

A major effect of the building of the dam is fragmentation at different socio-economic and cultural levels in the affected villages. This observation has also been made in studies by other anthropologists---Colson's pioneering study (1970) among the Gwebe-Tonga observed that the fragmentation of the social groups in the post-displacement period may be based on the hardening of pre-displacement social hierarchies. In Baviskar's study (1995) the effect of displacement leads to socio-political disempowerment and a loss of cultural institutions exacerbating processes of economic destitution. In the light of literature like Dwivedi's (1999) that argue for the idea that affected people internalise risks and incorporate them into decision-making situations, this thesis argues that it is not sufficient to acknowledge that displacement impacts differently on various socio-economic groups of displacees, but that the perception of the impacts of displacement is disparate. For the underclass within the tribal groups, displacement due to the Ukai dam takes on very different meanings based on gender, social status and ownership of land. The differential meanings of displacement are the undercurrent of the widening of social disparities in the villages. What is under question is the very association of displacement with a single event of displacement due to the Ukai dam. This thesis seeks to interrogate how searches for subsistence by different gendered and class groups within the villages frames the meanings that displacement come to hold for the members of these groups. While some academic studies (Colson, 1970; Baviskar, 1995; Dwivedi, 1999) caution against collapsing '*adivasis*' and 'displacees' into homogenous communities, there is little contemporary research that

examines the contours of this difference. Dwivedi seeks to understand the fractures among groups fighting against displacement in the following way,

‘[...] The approach to the problem was to first situate people in their different political-economic and other existential conditions and then to look at how the inter-locking of factors affects people’s risk perceptions and actions. It was noted that these factors between them characteristically reflect differences and divergences...’ (1999: 26)

In a similar vein, Baviskar notes,

‘[...] the Andolan<sup>3</sup> has focused on displacement and the injustice of it, setting aside questions about class and caste conflict in Nimar. Among the many layers of oppression, the Andolan concentrates on addressing the overarching cause of displacement, the injustice done [...] by citydwellers and wealthy farmers in Gujarat, and ignores the conflict between classes within Nimar.’ (Baviskar, 1995: 221-222)

In both these cautionary voices, heterogeneity and conflict is constructed along socio-economic lines or those based on the access to livelihood strategies by the displaced *adivasis*. Missing in this literature is a focus on the memories of displacement and migration and the conflicts in the construction of their histories at an individual and collective level by the displacees. It is this lacuna that this thesis seeks to fill.

On the question of memory, it is literature on the memories and events that surrounded the partition of India that has been the one genre rich in questioning the claims to a ‘community’ and the place of memories in constructing community

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<sup>3</sup> Andolan refers to the Narmada Bachao Andolan, the group which is at the forefront of resisting

identities in the aftermath of tremendous fragmentation and dissolution of social and emotional ties in the wake of such violence and the ruptures it creates (Das, 1995; Menon and Bhasin, 1998; Pandey, 2001). While not comparing the 'actual' violence of the partition to the experience of dislocation due to the forcible nature of the displacement, the building of the Ukai dam was a cause of tremendous reorientation of the social, emotional and economic worlds of the displacees. I draw on a notion of fragmented 'village community' through research into memories of displacement according to social status, gender and generation. To this effect, each of the chapters look at the process by which the identity of a displacee is constructed in particular ways in the resettled villages that serve to exclude certain groups, in as much as they assert the dominance of others. That this is not only a constructivist process, but reveals as much about the subjective experiences of marginality is illustrated by exploring the startling different memories or the absence of these completely in the narratives of certain landless groups, such as the sugarcane cutters, within these villages. Moreover, the emphasis on memories reveals not only a process of reorientation and adaptation of economic, social and moral worlds to post-displacement environments but also opens up the assumption of a 'village community' in the pre-displacement villages within cultural discourse. To this extent, the thesis attempts to challenge an arena not addressed so far in literature on displaced communities, wherein the pre-displacement villages seem settled homogenous groups. My research with the Vasavas displaced by the Ukai dam challenges this assumption, and raises the question of whether in trying to understand displacees' attempts to rehabilitate their lives in the resettled

environments it becomes necessary to take into account the disparate histories of migration of the households in the pre-displacement periods?

In this thesis, then, 'migration' and 'displacement' are overarching concepts that indicate large processes of change. Displacement due to Ukai undoubtedly affected lives in all the resettled villages. However, within and between the narrative of this 'big' event are also hidden the lives and stories of the more fragmented and ordinary, 'normal' processes of migration that rural households undertake on a regular basis--- both in the pre-displacement period and in resettled villages. In order to understand the markedly different perception of Ukai displacement among the landed and the landless in resettled villages, it becomes important to understand the remembering of the Ukai displacement within a context of the lives of sugarcane migrants, who constitute a large proportion of oustees in the present resettled villages.

Thus, in this thesis, migration runs as a significant strand through the memories of various migrations of the displacees---both in terms of the event of dam-induced displacement and in terms of migrations to the pre-displacement villages for livelihoods. However, in the post-displacement period, labour migration is the lived experience for a large number of the displacee households in their search for subsistence. In other words, the relationship of the labour migrants to the displacement and to impoverishment continues in their everyday lives. The later chapters of this thesis are concerned with the labour migrants from these 'resettled'



villages. In trying to explore their relationship to displacement as well as impoverishment, one of the questions that emerge as central to this understanding regards why do they migrate to the sugarcane fields every year?

In this thesis, I look at the phenomenon of seasonal labour migration. This labour migration is also of a rural character centred on the growth of a capitalist agricultural economy in the region of south Gujarat. My thesis then is located within the ambit of studies from western and eastern parts of India that examine the nature, impact and process of intra-rural migration in the wake of the Green Revolution in many parts of the country (Breman, 1985, 1994; 1996; Teerink, 1990; Rogaly *et al*, 2002; Rogaly and Rafique, 2003).

Intra-rural migration needs to be defined in this context. In explaining labour migration, scholars tend to use the concept through many terms---circular migration, return migration, wage labour migration, cyclical migration etc. I use the term in two senses: that of 'circulation' as Breman (1990: 48) defines it wherein '[...] there is a persistent, continuous return to the place of origin for a shorter or longer period'. To further clarify the nature of this migration as distinct from 'return migration', Mitchell (1985: 30) distinguishes the terms 'circular' or 'seasonal migration' as '[...]the process in which people periodically leave their permanent residence in search of employment at places too far away to enable them to commute daily, stay at these labour centres for extensive periods and return to their homes'

In the instance of this thesis, these periods last from 8 months to 10 months of the

year. However, seasonal migration is distinct from out-migration since for those who participate in it, there is regular return to their home areas accompanied by a 'territorial separation of obligations, activities and goods' (Chapman and Prothero, 1983: 598). In other words, there is little possibility for eventual settlement in the places of work.

Seasonal migration is also a useful concept to characterise labour migration, since it involves not only individuals but entire households of men, women and children whose labour power becomes a valued resource during the trip. Breman has stressed this household based nature to circular migration in his studies.

'[...] circular mobility accompanies the labour strategy of an entire household and cannot be reduced to the behaviour of an individual. The price demanded by circulation is detachment, for a shorter or longer time, of one or more working members of the household' (Breman, 1990: 51)

In the situation where resource starved displaced villages only offer starvation to the landless, this household dimension to migration is not only a strategy to increase resources during a work trip, but is also a desperately important tactic to at times stave off impending death of a family member and/or household through chronic hunger.

In recent years, rural migration in development studies in India has been researched in a very detailed manner asserting the idea that 'migration should be seen as the norm rather than the rule, as an integral part of societies rather than a sign of rupture—an essential part of people's livelihoods, whether rich or poor' (de Haan,

1999: 30). De Haan is wary of positing migration as a choice and voluntary, wherein merely a behavioural context is highlighted. He acknowledges that the impact of migration at national and international levels increases inequalities, but also argues that migration is inevitable since they are essential aspects of populations' livelihood strategies. In this he argues against Marxist and structuralist models such as Safa (1982), Standing (1985), Breman (1985) that see labour migration within wider contexts of the transition to capitalist relationships wherein migration is not a question of choice but the only strategy for survival especially for those with no or unviable resources such as in conditions of landlessness, unemployment, social and political marginalisation. De Haan then argues for recognition that migration need not be a disjuncture in the society's history, suggesting that migration '[...] is usually part of the population's survival strategies, and even disruptive forms of population mobility tend to build on earlier migrations. Migration movements are embedded in society's strategies to obtain livelihoods, and socio-cultural structures give migration particular forms...' (de Haan, 1997: 15-16).

De Haan's work, its findings and conclusions are oriented towards contesting the structuralist analyses of labour migration as a survival strategy, and attempting to explore the possibilities of agentic action on the part of migrant households making the decisions of the place and mode of migration. Recent work from eastern parts of India (Rogaly *et al*, 2002; Rogaly and Rafique, 2003) also raise the hypothesis that such seasonal wage labour migration contributes to economic and social investments in their home villages and becomes a preferred livelihood strategy over generations.

It became important to engage with this recent approach in my thesis in trying to place the landless migrant displacees within identifiable classifications of migration literature and understand the perception of the seasonal migrants over two generations since their displacement. The multi-spatial location of the study with one group of people led to a blurring of categories, so that those landless displacees without any means of subsistence in the home villages slipped into the category of annual seasonal migrants by migrating as sugarcane cutters for eight months of the year. To what extent could migration be conceived as 'a norm', a part of their remembered histories? More importantly, to what extent would the labour migrants themselves perceive their seasonal migration as a part of their survival strategies only, without also raising questions about how they came to be limited to such strategies for up to two generations? It is in trying to understand the emotions and the modes of exploitation that surround the decisions to turn to labour migration that it becomes difficult to identify seasonal migration as merely a part of their survival strategies in the ways that the term implies. The notion of survival strategies, that became central to approaches to poverty and development in the 1970s, has been valuable in exploring the ways in which the poor and the marginalised imaginatively employ strategies and symbols to keep and access the essentials of life (Redclift, quoted in Leiten and Nieuwenhuys, 1989: 2).

There is also an emphasis, as discussed in de Haan, on the importance of the mobilising of social networks in developing survival strategies. Social networks are also mobilised in the form of seasonal migration discussed here. Omvedt (1978:

193) has discussed this form of establishing networks and seeking employment within a category of informal debt bondage on plantation economies at the end of the nineteenth century. Within this system, many of the migrants were drawn into migration through indebtedness to intermediary labour contractors. In other words, the recruitment agents shared the same social background as the migrants often sharing social or kin ties and village background as well as the language. However, this could not lead to permanent out-migration since the workers were paid a wage sufficient only to maintaining themselves during the limited period of their work. The labourers then could not be considered free agents in any sense of the word, since their labour was restricted to certain recruiters through practices such as payments in rice, indebtedness to the labour contractor, and housing tied to employment (Teerink, 1990: 6).

Such labour contracting practices continued with the industrialisation of agricultural practices. Not only do they serve the interests of capitalist expansion of agriculture, it was important as a means of supplementary income at the household level for the impoverished peasants. For Breman, debt bondage is a crucial factor that causes people to migrate seasonally:

[...] capitalist infiltration of the hinterland economy occurred in a manner which, generally speaking, did not lead to a complete proletarianisation of the working masses and a concomitant system of labour relations. A large proportion of those leaving their home areas were unfree in a double sense: recruited in a state of dependence, and forced to return home by being tied to the means of subsistence there' (Breman, 1990: 39)

In other words, primordial ties as well as bondage ties work together to ensure a

steady supply of labourers for the sugarcane factories every year, and leave very little room for the labourers to opt out of this strategy of survival if they should so decide.

While of vital importance in creating a perspective that forefront the perceptions and strategies of livelihoods of the marginalised, the concept of survival strategies has also been criticised in terms of limiting itself to addressing the questions of power relations in the wider socio-economic context. In other words, the focus on the ability of the poor to mobilise at an individual or collective level of social networks still does not address the questions of perpetuation of the conditions of domination and marginalisation in the socio-political context, and the possibilities or otherwise for the subjects concerned to break out of this system. As Benjamin White (1980: 23) notes in his critique, '[...] the understanding of how societies or groups within societies to free themselves of poverty lies not in the analysis of choice itself, but in the analysis of the system of constraints that limit choice (such as) the relationship between households and between classes in rural society'. As Breman has argued, migration to the sugarcane fields creates inequality in the home villages rather than having an equalising effect (1999: 31). This is because the terms of the work relations between the employers and the workers are set within a profit-maximising capitalist agricultural economy that results in conditions wherein there is no or minimal possibilities of building up savings for the migrant workers.

This aspect of seasonal migration from western India is in contrast to the condition

of migrant workers from west Bengal and Bihar where it is the possibility of earning wages and sending remittances to their home villages that seem to be important factors determining seasonal migration streams. It is an argument that constitutes a vital aspect of migration literature that argues for acknowledging agency within migration streams (de Haan, 1997; Rogaly and Rafique, 2003). One would have to critically look at an analyses of migration as a livelihood strategy to the extent that in many situations of migrations for survival, migration and the form it takes, may not be 'consistent with the populations' social and cultural values which structure the patterns of migration' (Breman, 1999: 30), but may actually stigmatise the migrant populations within the home villages by identifying them as hopelessly dependent on larger forces of production, reproduction and resource use, and the cultural and social dimensions of power relations embedded in these, a situation not unfamiliar in the displaced villages of Ukai.

I concur with Breman's argument (1999), in trying to examine the impact of the Ukai dam on the villages from the perspective of the displaced villagers. The Ukai dam not only created an underclass in terms of inadequate compensation measures in its resettlement policy. Over time, it has encouraged and has come to represent a pattern of development in the region downstream of the dam that needs a mobile labour force and sustains patterns of seasonal migration. As Mukta writes in a different context (1995), 'the ramifications of this project [...] has had a profound impact on the nature of social relationships', especially in the Surat district of western India. It has consolidated the economic and political power of the sugar

barons in the region, reinforcing the dominance of particular caste groups at the expense of the *adivasi* and lower caste groups in the cultural hierarchies in the region. Critically, the large scale irrigation projects such as the Ukai and Narmada dams have also transformed the nature and substance of class relations in the region, by consolidating the dominance of the rural agricultural elite over a local landless labour and the migrant labour force. Their economic, political and cultural dominance is so overwhelming that it can dictate conditions of wage contracts, labour demand and supply and minimum wages regardless of legislation or customary practices in this regard (Mukta, 1995: 101).

One of the most drastic effects of the transformation of the social relationships has been the link between the displaced people of the Ukai project and the growing numbers of seasonal migrants to the sugarcane fields of south Gujarat (Breman, 1985). The work documents the process of pauperisation that seasonal migrants, including a large number from the displaced villages around the Ukai reservoir undergo, through their migration cycle. Seasonal migration and the resulting decline of the household that is caught up in a debt trap introduces different layers of displacement to the lives of these migrants. Seen through the eyes of many of the first generation displacees, it could be argued that seasonal migration was simply an extension of the conditions of displacement, a process that has been discussed as a risk of displacement in policy literature on development induced displacement (Thukral, 1998; Cernea, 2000; Fernandes, 2000). For many of the later generations born in the resettled villages, the lived experience of seasonal migration is more akin



to Breman (1985; 1996) and Teerink's (1990) observations. Breman's work (1985) shows that such seasonal migration is very much within the realm of the regional social and economic relationships by setting up long-term continuing relationships between the place of work and the places of recruitment that are the home villages of the migrant labourers. Thus, while for the migrant labourer, seasonal migration is the only source of livelihood; for the economy, the continuation of the migrant labour streams are as vital to the perpetuation of its mode of production, and hence, ensuring its continuation would be vital to its own interests. In this sense, the seasonal migration resulting through different kinds of forced migration events has been interpreted within a predominantly Marxist-structuralist framework of dependency theory wherein the migrant labourer is locked into a global capitalist system and moves between the pre-capitalist home economy and the capitalist work space regions. The structural circumstances of a capitalist economy then severely restrict the decision making spaces of the migrant labourers (Amin, 1974; Standing, 1981). Breman's work (1985; 1990) shifts its emphasis slightly from the above mentioned works in explaining seasonal migration not in terms of 'capitalist' and 'pre-capitalist' modes of production but the cyclical movement of unfree labour in a society which has not matured to its 'full growth' (Breman, 1990: 74). In other words, Breman's work takes into account the economic and political processes within which migrant labourers act. As can be seen from his large body of work on the sugarcane migrant cutters, Breman's approach allows him to understand the perspectives of the labourers on the economic and social relationships within which their livelihoods depend, and often pose trenchant critiques of it, without negating

the oppressiveness and limitations of the ability of the labourer to act and make decisions regarding their own lives within such an economy.

Although this is the framework within which I examine the emergence of seasonal migration in the displaced villages, and its perpetuation over the last three generations, I also contend that the experience and dynamics of continuous and on-going multiple displacement through seasonal migration from resettlement sites has yet to be sufficiently explored or understood. This study, then, addresses questions about the meaning and memories of displacement, experienced in various modes by the displaced Vasavas in the Ukai region. The various meanings and memories of displacement are located within and inform the lives of very poor *adivasis* whose overriding concerns focus around questions of livelihood in the short term.

In sum, the initial displacement and subsequent loss of control over the means of sustenance through landlessness has resulted in a “secondary displacement”, which could also be characterised as “seasonal migration”, whereby the migrants travel downstream for casual agricultural labour for eight months of the year. Memories of displacement, however, remain vivid, 30 years after the event and non-*adivasi* persons are looked upon with suspicion. What I would like to emphasise in this section is that the actions of the community cannot be understood simply within the framework of labour migration, but has to contend with their identity as 'displaced *adivasi* persons' and the embodiment of this memory in their social world.

In this thesis, I try to identify the displaced villagers among whom I carried out the fieldwork within literature on labour migration and displacement since both conditions are present in the core of the life in the villages. In other words, 'seasonal migration', 'internal migration', 'displacement' and 'oustees' are overarching concepts that refer to large processes of change. In this thesis, there is an attempt to examine the changes wrought by a big event of the Ukai dam. Yet, between and within the narrative of this event are hidden the stories and lives of the more fragmented and ordinary normal processes of migration that rural households undertake on a regular basis. In the resettled villages, then, there are large differences to the weight attributed to displacement through Ukai as felt and carried by the landed and the landless in the villages. As mentioned before in this section, this thesis attempts to answer the vital question that emerged in an attempt to understand the various strands of migration and displacement in Ukai---that although Ukai displaced 25,000 households, why did this displacement not have the same resonance for the most marginalized sugarcane cutters from resettled villages, as it did for the landed from the same villages? Answering this question necessitates and understanding of the literature and conceptualisation of both overarching concepts of displacement and seasonal migration. I examine this literature within India's development path per se, and as emerging in response to certain assumptions of development and progress in developing countries around the world. In adopting the 'western model' of development in the 1950s and 1960s, India embarked on a path of development that was premised on capital accumulation for different socio-political players. This necessarily then created a logic of the economy and polity that

favoured the growth of certain areas as the core developed regions within the country, while peripheralising the others. The displaced villagers of this study are located very much in the peripheral regions of the national and international schema of development at the time of their displacement in the 1970s and continue to do so, however, in different ways today. Much of the nature of peripherality and marginality from regional and national development processes has been documented through the studies of rehabilitation policies among those displaced and the impact of the dam projects on the lives of those displaced in the subsequent years immediately following displacement, for better or worse in the qualities of their lives, as mentioned in the discussion on development-induced displacement in the section earlier. In this thesis, I explore the different tenors of a peripheral existence based on the location of the displaced villagers according to their age groups, gender and socio-economic status.

### Impoverishment, Development and Hunger

Hunger and dislocation are the two overwhelming realities found in the aftermath of large-scale models of development. Much of the work emerging from India, especially around the Narmada dam (Baviskar, 1995; Hakim, 1996, 1997; Dreze *et al.*, 1997; Fernandes, 2000) has raised this issue and indicated to post-displacement conditions being characterised by food insecurities, changes in diets, fears over daily meals and pauperisation of the affected groups of people. Hunger pervades this literature without being raised in a specific way through close examination of what

loss of entitlements to land might mean along with other dimensions to the trauma of dislocation and social disarticulation. Hunger, in the literature in displacement, has so far remained a 'given' of displacement.

In the context of the emphasis in the literature on displacement so far, I seek to locate Sen's work on hunger understood as conditions of living and hardship in his concept of endemic hunger (1989). On the other side is Cernea's work on displacement, outlining the characteristics of impoverishment among the displaced populations around the world in terms of landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalisation, morbidity, food insecurity, loss of access to common property assets and social disarticulation (1995; 1997; 2000); all of which are basically problems of the loss of access to entitlements in Sen's work. This missing link in theoretical work between hunger and displacement and dislocation of populations, though, has not gone unnoticed. In a significant article, Hastrup (1993) has remarked on the neglect of the study of hardships, such as endemic hunger unless they are on a massive scale that in anthropology acquire the dimensions of 'total social facts' such as famine (1993: 728). While some of the limitations stem from the classical orientations of the discipline that favoured the study of whole, well-functioning and bounded social systems; there are more difficult issues of representation, writing and conceptualisation involved. In looking at questions of endemic hunger, Hastrup writes of it as an experience of hardship that is 'continuous with ordinary life and not outside it' (1993: 734). In this sense, she echoes Jean Dreze (2004), who writes about the need for conceptualising the right to food as not only a question of

nutrition, but a right that is fundamental to the quality of life and democracy in that it presupposes access to education, health, other institutions and strategies of possibilities for its citizens (Dreze, 2004). The very collective nature and obligation of the social collective in ameliorating such hardship means that the experience and recognition of it depends on the politics of recognition and explanation of such facts within the collective. While for Dreze, this is an index of the vitality of democracy in the polity, for Hastrup, hunger involves a particular quality of suffering, that although has become fixed in visual images, escapes the 'hardness of categories' that social science representations demand through their language (1993: 732-733). Both the everydayness and long term hardship caused by displacement and hunger are aspects of human suffering that are difficult to represent in writing to the extent that both are out of the realms of the bounded and are experiences in the contemporary world that have no assurances of leading towards stability in the social system eventually. Felt hunger has been written about extensively in anthropological literature (Douglas, 1975, 1977; Richards, 1985; Boyce and Hartmann, 1988; Kahn, 1988; Scheper-Hughes, 1998). However, few studies write on the lived experience of hunger, rather than writing about hunger, its causes, dimensions and effects. Hunger, as an existential state embodied in individual and collective lives seems far more difficult to write about than deconstructing it into various rationalisable categories. Those in the grips of chronic hunger are addressed through explanations based on a crisis situation---whether due to the forces of nature or due to market crises (Watkins and van de Walle, 1983; Watts, 1983). Moreover, felt hunger is not only difficult to write about in academic literature; it is also difficult to speak about.

This is an aspect encountered in the most evocative works on felt hunger like Boyce and Hartmann's book (1988) on the silent violence of hunger in Bangladesh and Scheper-Hughes work (1998) on the hunger experienced in the shanty towns of Brazil. Hunger frames the lived experience of the poorest in these villages so that it acquires a quality of being an unchanging present. The skewed context of the quality of everyday life becomes both embedded in its unchanging quality, and yet reveals itself as skewed in terms of the disparities with their immediate surroundings. It is in living with such stark and oppressive contradictions, not just metaphorically but present in the material and visual aspects of everyday existence that even speaking about hunger loses its directness or coherence as an articulated condition, but finds expressions in language and everyday life that indicate to strategies for coping or mediating through such a situation and the social forces that continue to perpetuate it. It is in trying to understand the felt experience of hunger, that in chapter 6 of the thesis I use the expression 'talking around hunger', rather than 'talking about hunger'. In other words, in my thesis, I link the existential conditions of displacement and hunger as they are perceived, thought and felt about, sometimes appropriated by different groups within the displaced villages. This links the felt experience of hunger intrinsically to practices of domination within different groups in the villages. It also links memories of the conditions of hunger and displacement in the villages as an arena of appropriation by the landed groups within the webs of representations at the village level. In the chapters in this thesis, I have approached the condition of hunger --- the appropriation of this trope, the contours of its perception and as a felt experience ---as it is mediated by age, gender and social

status among the displaced villagers.

The attempt in this thesis to discuss 'talk around hunger' then links it to Dreze's and Sen's work on entitlement analysis in the manner in which it embeds hunger within a web of social, economic and political relationships and yet moves this critique ahead to address questions of capabilities and freedoms. According to Dreze and Sen, 'entitlement to food depends on what we can acquire [...] the mere presence of food in the economy, or in the market, does not entitle a person to consume it. In each social structure, given the prevailing legal, political and economic arrangements, a person can establish command over alternative commodity bundles [...] these bundles could be extensive, or very limited, and what a person can consume will directly depend on what these bundles are...' (Dreze and Sen, 1989: 9).

While this view of the creation of hunger lends it the potential that could span a range of situations that enable or disable access to food, Sen has been criticised within the literature on social development for not relating the concept to the social science usage of this term. His concept of entitlement then allows the reader to assume agency, however, it limits the usage to the terrain of legalities---- 'entitlements refer to what can be obtained legally, if not by explicit legal right' (Gasper, 1997: 289). According to Gore (1993), the explicit limiting of the domain of entitlements within that of legalities allows Dreze and Sen to explore questions of the actual access of the poor to food and also examine various conditions under



which states mediate access during food insecurities. This links the concept of entitlements to food to questions of equity centrally, and thus to the whole project of development and the implication of the state in this project. Rather than abstract formalism that he has been criticised for by Gasper (1997) and others, Sen's framework for examining the conditions that create hunger and restrict access becomes quite central to examining the conditions of impoverishment elaborated by Cernea among dam-displaced persons. It is an especially useful project since, as discussed earlier in the introduction, the relationship of the state to the displacees is quite intricate----on the one level it is a direct and active agent in creating conditions that encourage food insecurities, and on the other through its obligations to rehabilitate people it is equally implicated in constructing new legalities for exercising agency. The latter is an aspect that has become equally relevant in the displacee-state relationship in the last decade when international funding agencies like the World Bank have recognised the need to integrate rehabilitation as part of the dam building proposals (Morse and Berger, 1990). It is then quite surprising to find lacunae in the development literature on displacement that at best allude to work with Sen's framework in their studies on the impact of displacement and of the policies of rehabilitation (Dwivedi, 1999, 2002).

In this thesis, in the particular case of the Ukai dam, the absence of a resettlement policy at a national or state level would not render the concept of entitlements irrelevant to the analysis. Absence of policy in this case does not mean an absence of measures to address questions of resettlement by the state agencies, which were

carried out almost towards the end of the project around 1969. One could then say that this would have limited the scope of the entitlement constructed for this group of displacees and led to a piecemeal putting together of entitlements through negotiations with other non-government organisations. Here the construction of economic, social and political entitlements through land and cash compensation, and creation of training programmes, health facilities and schools is counter-balanced by the destruction of economic, social and political networks that sustained these groups in their interaction with other groups and communities in the region---both processes occurring simultaneously through the exercise of state power and law. Given that the latter fell outside the scope of entitlement analysis as defined by Sen, there would be a limitation of the analysis within this framework. Along with the idea of entitlements that are central to Sen's arguments in the analysis of famine; *Hunger and Public Action* (1989) also employs the idea of capabilities to extend and expand the idea of alleviating hunger as not referring to just food insecurity but also an ultimate goal of human well-being. 'Formally, a person's capability is a set of functioning bundles, representing the various 'beings' and 'doings' that a person can achieve with his or her economic, social, and personal characteristics' (Dreze and Sen, 1989:12). In other words, access to regular and healthy meals is only one aspect of being alive and healthy.

The concept of human well-being is aided also by access to health care, education, clean drinking water, and basic sanitation facilities---all these aspects being integrated as indices into the UNDP's quality of life index. Capabilities, then, are an

index of human well-being and of the ability of the individual to choose their possibilities for action. In this sense, they also indicate to the possibility of freedom. Capabilities, defined through the availability of opportunities and skills, determine the possibility of this freedom. In the region of research, loss of villages and lands through displacement enables one not just to understand the loss of entitlements by Ukai dam displacees, but also of the capabilities, both at the individual and community levels. Seen within this framework, it would be possible to understand the process by which development creates hunger and marginalisation through the destruction of capabilities.

In the context of this thesis, however, understanding 'hunger' in the displaced villages is not just about the loss of capabilities and entitlements. In other words, Sen's framework, valid though it is, carries the limitations of the orientations of the subject area he comes from, and to which he addresses quite strongly in his earlier work---that of economics. In this thesis, I also examine hunger as the trope of loss and scarcity in the post-displacement period. Hunger in Ukai refers not to acute periods of famine, but to times of chronic hunger, or in Sen's terms, 'endemic hunger' (Dreze and Sen, 1989). In references to the garnering of entitlements, the metaphors used by the dam displacees of the foods eaten, to the size of the bodies, to the strength or weaknesses of bodies due to the hard work, or due to the ease of life lend a very corporeal dimension to the conditions of endemic hunger and marginalisation. Chapter 6 analyses centrally the ways in which the experience of hunger is articulated, talked about and narrated. At the same time, a focus on the

language of hunger in this thesis emphasises and discusses the different ways that endemic hunger in this area is subject to critical reflection within the villages.

There is much empirical and ethnographic literature from all around the world on the awareness of the poor on their lack of access to food and their strategies or the lack thereof to address these with regard to their friends, neighbours and kin. Agarwal, notably, has contested Sen's particular conception of the non-agentic and passive image of a hungry person through ethnographic data of practices of food sharing and storing among poor women (1994: 89). In this, she re-looks at the expanse of Sen's concept of entitlements, broadening it to include informal practices of claiming entitlements rather than remaining circumscribed within a rather legalistic conception of entitlements present in Sen's work. Agarwal's concept of 'exchange entitlements' (1990) refers as much to strategies of the marginalised groups within communities, notably women, to gain access to resources and address questions of hunger as to a critical awareness of the structures that enable or restrict access to food and concurrent resources. In a gendered analysis (1994), Agarwal has sought to illustrate the construction of these claims to entitlements within a theoretical framework of 'passive resistance', wherein women would steal food from their households to share it with a starving friend or store it for their personal use claiming it to be the dues for the amount of unremunerated work put into household chores (1994: 88). Although, resistance, passive or otherwise, is not an analytical category in this thesis, extended entitlements does help explain the strategies of livelihood for assuaging hunger employed by the women and the landless migrants

in the displaced villages as well as their awareness of the structures of power within the villages and those that draw them into relationships of debt bondage through their sugarcane labour contracts. As is examined in chapter 4, extended entitlements at the village level and in terms of kin ties allow for the migrant labourers to maintain a tenuous hold on claim to resources at the village level as well as by calling on kin ties when under the threat of continuous endemic hunger and complete destitution.

In the structuralist tradition much of the work on hunger has tried to understand food as an organising principle in social relations and a mediating element in social relations, in other words, 'food is not just good to eat, but also good to think' (Douglas, 1977). In contrast, works that focus on the lived experience of hunger seek to understand hunger as an experience embodied in the individual and collective lives of the hungry, so that hunger pervades and saturates everyday lives in these groups without having to explicitly articulate it and framing interactions and hierarchies within and outside the villages, as well as posing a critique of these (Boyce and Hartmann, 1988; Scheper-Hughes, 1998). Food for the migrant labourers from Ukai forms a central metaphor in articulating their states of resourcelessness and destitution. Even more centrally, it is the reason for the seasonal migration to be undertaken and continued endlessly over a generation or more. Understanding the concepts of hunger and marginalisation in the lives of these workers requires an understanding of the manner in which food occupies spaces of language, everyday concerns and criticisms of their existential conditions, within the

displaced villages and on their journeys to and from these villages.

The discussion on 'talking around hunger' does not engage with the idea of resistance or passive resistance, akin to the work of Agarwal cited above. The exercise of power for the poorest in the displaced villages, where the fieldwork was conducted (the landless households who are seasonal migrants) is much more diffused and entwined in relationships that seem to offer them some possibility of sustenance and in those (non)relationships that withdraw the entitlements that could offer legal or customary redress. Here I refer not just to significant agencies of authority that turn a blind eye to the exploitative contractual conditions of the contractors who hire groups of landless for seasonal work, but also bureaucratic agents in the *taluka* headquarters who ignore petitions for water facilities in the area, or do not register the migrants on the electoral rolls 'missing them out, because they were not in the villages when the households were being registered' (*Talati*, Fort Songadh, January 2002), or delay in compensation payments for displacement 30 years on. One would also refer here to significant political and social figures within the village whose interventions and choices create hierarchies within the villages and exacerbate the marginalisation of certain groups.

In sum then, this thesis does not explicitly focus on resistance to hunger or the lack of entitlements, but the ways in which the different social groups and the two genders refer to the question of hunger within the villages to refer to the injustice of the resettlement measures; how gender, hunger and displacement is thought about

and discussed and the ways in which hunger comes to pervade and embody the lives of the sugarcane cutters who are among the most marginalised of the displacees. The thesis thus looks at differential ways that hunger is experienced, talked about and shared across generations of displacees and by men and women in the resettled villages.

### Social Suffering

The theme of suffering underlies the discussions of hunger, displacement and labour migration among the Ukai dam displacees. Suffering is an inextricable part of displacement in the way in which the state is bound up in the relationship of perpetrator of injustices and of redress for the displaced groups. Given the complexity as well as the everydayness of this encounter, it is social suffering that suffuses the underlying framework of analysis rather than development, given the neglect of this region by the state. Moreover, suffering in this thesis underlies not only the present condition of hunger of the displacees and the labour migrants. As will be explained in the next chapter on methodology, the phrase '*abdha vethvi*' keeps coming back in the interviews and fieldwork in the villages. Translated, this vasavi phrase literally means 'to bear suffering'. It is a phrase used by migrants and non-migrants to refer to their lives. While for the migrant cane cutters and women, the points of pastness of this phrase may even stretch to conditions in the pre-dam period, for the non-migrant displacees the phrase refers to the period during and after displacement. Suffering is part of their memories and their present existential

conditions. '*Abdha vethvi*' also reminds us of the existential conditions of the tribal peasantry in their history of the relations with their, mainly non-*adivasi*, landlords. Mentioned in records among the Munda and Oraon peasantry in eastern India (Das, 1996: 500), and also among the peasant groups in western India (Shah, 2001: 435), *veth* or *veth begari* referred to the free services rendered to the landlord by his tenant. It existed as part of the system of feudal relations whereby such services formed part of the structure of obligations that the landlord could demand of his tenants. According to Das, this could mean cultivation of his *khas* land, which could include ploughing, digging, planting or sowing, harvesting, storing the grain or carrying the landlord's burden on his travel (Das, 1996: 501). The change in the form of patronage relationships in contemporary India due to the incursions of a capitalist economy<sup>4</sup> (Breman, 1993), meant that although *veth begari* is no longer a part of the contractual obligations of the landless peasantry with the farmers, it continues to form part of the network of informal obligations between the poor and the more powerful groups. In *adivasi* areas, influential and important persons in a district and the local bureaucrats continue to enjoy the hospitality of the *adivasis* in the villages they travel to as part of a 'misrecognised' code of hospitality. Failure to provide food, drinks and hospitality could risk potential withdrawal of favours from the powerful---a fact that is not taken lightly in the resource-starved displaced villages. Expressing the powerlessness and dependency for their sustenance on the

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<sup>4</sup> Breman (1993) describes a change in the nature of obligations from patron-client relationships to one based on contractual labour in a capitalist agricultural economy. Patron-client relations were based on a tie of debt bondage that was determined by a lifelong employment and extra-economic ties of the labourer to the farmer and a social security that this relation gave to the labourer (1993: 59-65). With the onset of a capitalist agricultural economy and more labour-intensive methods for farming in the region, the relations between the farmers and the labourers changed from the patron-client ties to those based on contractual relations and a casualisation of labour contracts resulting in the withdrawal



more powerful groups in the area through an invocation of a historical feudal set of obligations, the displacees continue to emphasise the injustices that are not only specific to the construction of the dam but tied in to a historical mode of relationships between them and the non-*adivasis* in the region. This is further reinforced through the appropriation of the trope of hunger and suffering among the sugarcane migrants in the villages as representative of all their lives after displacement. Unlike discussions on hunger, talk about suffering or the condition of '*abdha vethvanu*' continues among the migrant labourers to the fields of Gujarat. This reinforces the sense that conditions of extraction and exploitation continue to form a core of the lives of the displacees and the migrant workers in historical memories and their lived experience.

In this thesis, social suffering is addressed through two tropes: a. that of the appropriation of memories of displacement by the landed groups in the villages and its effects on the other socio-economic groups, b. the contours of suffering as experienced and perceived by the landed classes as different from women and the migrant labourers in the villages through the substantially different understanding of the term 'displacement' in their lives.

In discussing the first trope, one could say that it represents the ways in which the concept of 'social suffering' is employed in different contexts and with different shades of meanings. I use this in the sense explained by Kleinmann, Das and Lock in their volume *Social Suffering* (1997). Suffering is socialised in their understanding

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of extra-economic obligations, and pauperisation of many of the landless labourers in the region.

as borne from social forces and can have devastating impacts on human experience and subjectivity, especially among the poor and powerless across poor and high-income societies (1997: ix-xi). This is a broad and abstract description of suffering that has arisen from within the field of medical anthropology centering on issues of representation and articulation of pain (Scheper-Hughes and Lock, 1987; Good, 1991; Kleinmann and Kleinmann, 1994; Das, 1995). The understanding of the impact of violence on subjectivities at individual and collective levels demands a focus on the many-layeredness of the violence in the experience of those affected by it. To this extent, Kleinmann (1997: 7) seeks to understand the intensification of suffering through the creation of images by professional and bureaucratic agencies such as 'the state, market, media and academia' (Kleinmann and Kleinmann, 1996, 1997; Cheunsatiansup, 2001). The creation of such public images of suffering serve to appropriate the tenors of suffering by essentialising the core of these experiences and serving to detach them from the subjective nature of distress and hardship of '[...] local people and local worlds' (Kleinmann, 1997: 7).

Further, according to Kleinmann, the essentialising of experiences of distress in this manner further serves to individualise suffering. It also denies the possibilities of generative practices within local moral worlds, and leads to the danger of labelling and pathologising localities that do not comply with the conditions attached to external assistance (Kleinmann, 1997: 8). This is an experience not unknown to *adivasi* groups in Indian society. The labelling and pathologising of such communities leads them to be regarded within discourses of the state and non-

*adivasi* society as wild, unpredictable and backward. In vernacular non-*adivasi* languages, a descriptive term given to *adivasis* is '*janglijati*' (the wild community). According to Hardiman (2002: 176), this term referred to all *adivasis* in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and under British rule. Skaria (1997) has traced the genealogy of the connotations of wildness ascribed to the *adivasis* during colonial rule by the British, the nationalists in the period following independence and in the more recent postcolonial debates. Wildness ascribed to tribal groups took on differing tropes. Whereas in the colonial period, it was associated almost with a childlike innocence and primitiveness; the post-colonial tropes saw the wildness of the tribes as evidence of backwardness, especially in relation to the caste system, that needed to be overcome and 'modernised' (Skaria, 1997: 735). In the post-colonial period it was often the needs of unifying the new nation that informed the earlier negation of the distinctiveness of the tribe and caste (Skaria, 1997: 729), and suggested a historical continuity between the two social forms (Ghurye, 1960). In other words, the labelling of the *adivasis* in terms of a quality of wildness served the needs of the agencies ascribing these terms rather than highlighting any aspect of the subjectivities of the communities so described. As described in chapter 3, the Ukai dam displacees also have not escaped being characterised through similar expressions of backwardness and wildness within the state's discourse of dam-building.

Any analyses on development-induced displacement, especially in *adivasi* areas, cannot but locate the suffering caused due to displacement within the framework of

a state-community relationship. The official history of development tends to describe dams as the 'temples of modern India' (Thukral, 1992; Khilnani, 1997; Singh *et al*, 1997). On the other hand, the suffering caused due to dam-displacement has been articulated in different studies on displacement through the representation and expressions of the pain and trauma within local worlds (Colson, 1970; CSE, 1987; Dreze *et al*, 1997; Nayak, 1999; Cernea, 2000;). Therefore, while the state's discourse on displacement due to development projects in India, has tended to play down the extent of destitution and suffering borne by the displaced in favour of the benefits of mega-development projects, literature sceptical of the perceived benefits of development has tended to equally frame its discourse within a state-community relationship wherein the state is held responsible for the suffering caused due to such development projects (CSE, 1987; Thukral, 1992; Parasuram, 2000). Recent works do examine the specific impacts on interactions within the displaced groups from a gendered point of view and in this problematise the notion of a community in the post-displacement period (Parasuraman, 1993; Thukral, 1996; Srinivasan and Mehta, 2000). However, while focusing on memories of displacement in order to understand the meaning of displacement in the lives of the Ukai dam displacees, patterns of narrating displacement were not only gender-based but also differed according to the 'sense of belonging', and the socio-economic status of the household within the displaced villages themselves. In other words, the points of pastness that a household could trace in terms of its history of movement were enormously varied and affected the present-day claims to being a displacee and the rights to compensation that the evoking of that condition raised. An attempt to view the impact of the displacement

on people's lives needs an approach that seeks to forefront these displaced subjectivities. A rich tradition of interrogating power relations through the subjectivities of the powerless has existed within the framework of subaltern studies in south Asia since the 1980s. Although the initial agenda was framed in terms of a critique against the elitism within the historiography of Indian nationalism, its framework for analyses sought to explore '[...] the politics of the people...' (Guha, 1997: xiv) wherein the '[...] parallel to the domain of elite politics there existed throughout the colonial period another domain of Indian politics in which the principal actors were not the dominant groups of indigenous society nor the colonial authorities but the subaltern classes and groups constituting the mass of the labouring population [...] This was an autonomous domain, for it neither originated from elite politics nor did its existence depend on the latter' (1997: xv).

Notable within the subaltern tradition are two aspects: 1. to avoid the rigidities and pitfalls of economic reductionism of the orthodox Marxist ideology while simultaneously retaining the emphasis on relations of domination and exploitation (Sarkar, 1998: 83). 2. the recognition that 'power relations incorporate a decisive layering' (Mayaram, 1998: 9). The displaced villages are subaltern in relation to the state, but also deeply fissured and internally stratified. Analysts within the subaltern tradition are constantly trying to negotiate the latter fragmentation; and wary of constructing and celebrating a notion of a traditional polity/ community (Mayaram, 1998: 9). At the same time, in re-examining the concept of 'community' they are wary of decontextualising relations within a subaltern society from larger contexts of

domination. While criticising just such a move in some of the later studies, Sarkar calls for sensitive usage of 'community' and 'fragment' within a framework of microhistory (1998: 94), which is marked by 'an insistence on context, exactly the opposite of the isolated contemplation of the fragmentary' as advocated by post-modernism (Ginzburg, 1993).

The contextualisation of this study within the framework of a paradigm of development sponsored by the Indian state with its uncritical focus on capitalist agricultural growth is an attempt at critically examining the construction of the displaced Vasavas as the Other---a homogenous community of victims. There is no disputing the fact that the Ukai dam displacement shattered the politico-economic, social and moral worlds of the Vasavas and their pre-dam villages; however, 30 years on this group of displacees also experienced intense power struggles within and between resettled villages. In this sense, the 'violence of development' has acquired a many-layeredness so that it becomes difficult to imagine this as a simple dichotomous state-community relationship. Guha's observations about 'community' in his study of the death of a low-caste woman (Guha, 1987) are incisive and poignant in the context of the resettled villages of Ukai. He observes that such a subaltern 'community' is characterised by conflict and brutal exploitation, and also marked by power relations 'sited at a depth within the indigenous society well beyond the reach of the disciplinary arm of the state....'(Guha, 1987: 144). This problematises the notion of the subaltern community; and in the instance of the Ukai displacement 30 years on makes the category of 'victims of displacement' highly

charged and problematic. This, however, does not mean that displacement was not a shattering and traumatic event in the history of these villages. It is the recovery of this story and the story of subsequent attempts of individuals, households and villages to rebuild their lives that my fieldwork and subsequent writing attempts to understand and document.

An emphasis in this thesis on oral history, memory and their narration through personal and collective stories of the displacement allows just such an analysis of its impact on lives and comparison with the pre-displacement lives. Further, the presence of a very strong 'collective' narrative was evident in the markedly similar mode of narrating displacement among socio-economic, gendered and generational groups. In understanding the construction of such a powerful collective story, the methodology then moved away from a semi-autobiographical mode of remembering alone and relied to a large extent on the oral history method, a post-structuralist perspective of recording collective narratives that emphasises subaltern narratives and their production within contexts of power. According to Portelli, its pioneering proponent, the accent in oral history is on the meaning of the narratives told and their role in the production of the speakers' subjectivities, rather than a reconstruction of the historiography of the events being researched (Portelli, 1991: 91). The usefulness of oral history is that it links the individual subject to the constitution of a collective narrative, and in this links the individual perception of suffering and distress to a felt collective experience of marginality and exploitation. In this manner, the collective narrative was culled out from individual recollections

and concrete details of what happened to individuals and households during the move from one settlement site to another.

An emphasis on the documentation of individual recollections and concrete details in remembering is akin to 'memory work', a concept developed by a group of German feminist scholars (Haug *et al*, 1987 cited in Redman, 1999), and a semi-autobiographical method that relies on theme-based recollection of memories by individuals. A key characteristic of this method is the focus on a particular theme or incident, so that the work of remembrance involves concrete details of sights, smells, sounds and feelings surrounding this with a minimum attempt to interpret, analyse or select within the interview according to any criteria of 'relevance' (Haug *et al*, 1987 cited in Redman, 1999: 137). However, the aim in fieldwork was not on autobiographical details, but the nature of collective narratives and public narratives evident in individual narratives so constructed on the theme of displacement. This emphasis on the subjective aspect of remembering and the different contexts of power located therein, introduces the various constructions of self among the displaced groups as not only as belonging to one or the other social and cultural classifications in the non-*adivasi* and bureaucratic discourses, but as a specific historical condition of 'being displaced' and 'being displacees'. This allows for an understanding of the manner in which the suffering and marginality experienced due to the displacement and the state indifference in the post-displacement period, is at the core of their histories and the substratum of claiming identities as both '*adivasis*' and 'displacees' *vis-a-vis* various non-affected groups (*adivasi* and non-*adivasi*) due



to the dam and other development projects.

So far, oral history and narrative-based research in Asia on critiquing violence in the lived experience of marginalised communities have focused very specifically on the state-community interaction through the construction of local histories that contradict, challenge and critique official accounts in various ways (Hardiman, 1987; Vasavi, 1996; Mayaram, 1998). Here, social suffering is produced through long-term and institutionalised and bureaucratic practices that are characterised by Kleinmann (1996) as the 'soft knife' of long-term oppression. Such practices reflect a sustained process of discrimination through neglect and marginalisation of competing and alternate histories. In Mayaram's study, this is sought not so much through the articulation but the absence of the descriptions and allusions to the violent events of the partition in the Meo community's oral tradition. According to Mayaram (1998: 10), this is indicative not so much of a loss of memory regarding the events nor of the inexpressibility of pain into language as much as a resistance against the normalisation of violence in the language of the state about the events of partition. Silences around the killings at the time of partition serve by their enforced absence as a critique against the 'forgetting' of the state and the complicity of the non-Meo society in this official normalisation of the partition events. A contrasting approach is that of recent studies that have illustrated the way in which the lived experiences of suffering are transformed into a politics of collective empowerment through specific modes of remembering and forgetting (Adelson, 2001; Cheungsatiansup, 2001). In these studies, there is a strong demarcation between

official memories and counter-memories of individuals and collective groups. Cheungsatiansup's discussion of the production of marginalisation among the Kui tribal group within Thai politics is suggested as an outcome not of the indifference and erasure of their histories within the history of the Thai state, but due to the bureaucratic practices and the ideology of the Thai welfare state that suggests the production of an official history by overwriting specific collective histories (2001: 11).

The remembering of the Ukai dam by the displacees fails to fall into these two forms of subaltern counter-narratives. As indicated earlier, it is a much more messy space wherein dam displacement is constructed within a framework of 'betrayal' of the state within which an entire generation of Vasavas in the villages were considered complicit, whether through their ignorance or otherwise. Indeed as Mayaram observes, '[...] the subaltern world is hardly an autonomous realm' (Mayaram, 1998: 9). The post-displacement generation explain their suffering within a framework of 'betrayal' defined through lack of adequate compensation and, simultaneously, the appropriation of the actuality of hunger and destitution in the lives of the landless in resettled villages. Here, it seems that two arguments of subaltern studies can be juxtaposed in understanding the violence of dam displacement on the subjectivities of the displacees and their attempts at survival and sustenance:

1. Amin's cautionary observation (1995) against the construction of an autonomous space for subaltern narratives. In his study of a peasant riot in northern India, he

observed that the manner in which individual peasant's recollections relied for coherence within the narrative on the established official historical accounts. These individual narratives, which also countered and contradicted the official accounts at specific junctures, were however framed within the mainstream nationalist discourses on non-violence, guilt and responsibility for violence. Chapter 4 of this thesis examines the construction of a claim of betrayal and the demand for justice within a statist framework of compensation measures.

2. The power-laden strata within the displaced villages that allows a homogenising of social memory and creation of a unified collective history wherein the dam displacement is posited as a 'critical event'<sup>5</sup>. This process as discussed in Chapter 4 also allows for the appropriation and 'smoothing' of the life-histories of the landless, marginal farmers and the settlers in the pre-dam villages. Further, it affirms the subaltern premise that the subaltern world is permeated by representations and categories of the state's version of development wherein other modes of sustenance (such as migration) and household histories of endemic hunger in pre-dam villages can be appropriated as examples of the impact of dam displacement on the lives of the villagers.

Above all else, it needs to be recognised that the story of the Ukai dam is undoubtedly an undocumented, 'forgotten' tale of yet another instance of the 'violence of displacement'. Since the late 1980s, there has been an increasing awareness and critique of the 'violence of development'. Spanning various subject

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<sup>5</sup> Das (1995) defines a critical event in terms of a paradigmatic change in the social and moral worlds of collectives that fundamentally alter the nature of economic, political and social relationships within

areas the concern has been in articulating the impact of the ideology and practice of a rationalist and technology-based model of development (Nandy, 1988; 1987; 1990; Shiva, 1988; 1991; 1993; Kothari and Mehta, 1990; Marglin and Marglin, 1990; Alvares, 1992; Scheper-Hughes, 1998) on widening the disparities within developing societies and the further immiseration and disenfranchisement of the socially and politically marginal groups within these societies. These works range from a critique of the impact of large technologies on human populations affected by them---as in the case of dams, industrial projects, military projects that injure, displace and marginalize their own populations to an exploration of the manner in which science, defined through technological innovations becomes the new '*mantra*' of the post-colonial states that legitimises all sorts of disruptions caused in their citizens' lives in the name of 'social development'<sup>6</sup>. Taking this critique further, feminist and sociological studies have attempted to understand the tenor of silent violence that development wreaks on the lives of women and the strategies evolved by women to survive in the face of this violence (Boyce and Hartmann, 1988; Shiva, 1988; Scheper-Hughes, 1998; Ramphela, 2002). However, while narrative research and critiques of development have been explored in sophisticated ways, there is relatively little literature that employs memory work over a demarcated time-span to trace the remembering of the violence of development projects among those

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self-referential communities.

<sup>6</sup> While Hartmann and Boyce (1988), Scheper-Hughes (1992), Shiva (1988) and Mehta and Kothari (1990) are instances of microstudies that excavate the nature of this violence through introductions and attractions of cash-cropping, capitalist agricultural systems and modern allopathic techniques; Nandy (1990), Alvares (1992) and Marglin and Marglin (1990) represent theoretical frameworks that argue against the 'violence of development'. Nandy's essays (1990) examine the philosophical foundations of a 'scientific temper' that seduces the elite and middle classes in the developing world into the project of development. Taking this argument further, Marglin and Marglin (1990) begin an exploration of the alternative rationalities that resist the march of 'scientific development'.

displaced and adversely affected by such projects. In this study, I focus specifically on the remembering of the displacement due to the Ukai dam, its role in the re-constitution, or the failure thereof, of community networks and hierarchies; and the place of the remembering and forgetting by specific groups of displacees in assigning responsibilities for displacement, rehabilitation and compensation.

Furthermore, I also examine social suffering in another sense among the Ukai dam displacees. Specifically, trying to understand the experiential dimensions of suffering in the Ukai region frames the writing within a 'view from below' approach. In the thesis, then, suffering is not unknown to any individual life, yet what lends it the social character is its geographical diffusion and historical depth. Social suffering in this framework has structural causes and frameworks. Focusing on the differential memories fractures the 'community' of the subaltern that bear the violence of state indifference to their livelihoods and life-worlds, but it also gives an incomplete picture into the relation between development projects and the production of suffering in the displaced villages. In this I agree with Paul Farmer (1997:263) on understanding the production of suffering in lives begat by large-scale social forces. He observes, '[...] such suffering is structured by historically given (and often economically driven) processes and forces that conspire---whether through routine, ritual, or, as is more commonly the case, these hard surfaces to constrain agency. For many [...] life choices are structured by racism, sexism, political violence and grinding poverty.' In Ukai, while some of the households have achieved a relative measure of security of sustenance over 30 years, for a majority,

mostly sugarcane cutters, insecure livelihoods are further threatened by illnesses, debts, isolation, fear of harassment by forest officials and threats of social and sexual violence in their work places to crystallise into hard and sharp faces of individual suffering<sup>7</sup>.

This framework illustrates the manner in which bureaucratic and nationalist narratives exert their hegemony over their populations, and in this create and further the marginalisation of specific groups within a 'community'. In this thesis, the perceptions and expressions of those impacted adversely by development projects do not necessarily state a case for a notion of resistance to the development ideology of the Indian state. Rather, I aim to explain and delineate the various processes of displacement, pauperisation and hunger, taken together, as defining a condition of social suffering that begins from the forced uprooting and displacement due to development projects in India during a particular period. The thesis, in other words, attempts to depict the historical, social and political forces from the late 1960s up to

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<sup>7</sup> This argument could be taken further, to link the continuing destitution of the Ukai sugarcane cutter within global models of growth and reduction of poverty. The continuing dislocation of the displacees as migrant labourers and sugarcane cutters due to inadequate resettlement programmes finds validity within models of production and labour dynamics advocated by international institutions such as the World Bank. The World Development Report (1995) was drawn up on a basis favouring an increasing informalisation of the labour market. In consonance with neo-classical economic arguments, it argued against a formalisation of the labour force, the dismantling of which allows more jobs to be created (World Development Report, 1995: 26). As Breman (1996) critically observed, '[...] Capital is footloose, and that is how it operates most successfully; on the other hand, labour has to obey whimsical commands and to submit unconditionally to its erratic flows around the global economy' (Breman 1996: 13). The resettled but landless and marginal landowners eke out part of their subsistence through this migration and informal participation in the sugarcane economy, which is the only avenue for earning a livelihood available to them so far. The Ukai dam draws and binds the Vasavas in Bordha into the paradigm of state-sponsored development more than just metaphorically or momentarily. The local worlds of destitution are reasoned within the logics of regional, national and international frameworks of progress and economic growth and acquire legitimacy within a language of progress and sacrifice. However, further detailed analysis on the policies of international institutions and the continuing story of displaced lives falls beyond the scope

2000 in the region of the Ukai dam and its hinterland that created and continue the deprivation and suffering experienced, perceived and articulated by the more marginalized among the displacees. The differential memories of the displacement that vary along class, gendered and generational lines demarcate a conversation regarding the dam, displacement and development in this area as more complex than one that can be framed within the outline of varying narrative histories of the community or official state histories alone.

### Conclusion

The thesis predominantly looks at the complexities of the aftermath of displacement in the lives of displacees. As mentioned in the sections earlier, there has been much work on the perspectives of forced migrants regarding their lives and their struggle to eke out a living. These have been based on livelihood analysis in development studies, in the study of lived experiences of the poor and in the studies that try to understand the links between the global political economy and the ways in which global relationships affect the lives of the poor and the marginalised. In this study, I try to look at the impact of a project inspired by a global belief in a particular path of development and its continuing impact on those who faced a forcible migration through this. This is studied through the perspectives of the displaced to see how the remembered experience of displacement defines and demarcates groups in the displaced villages along generational, class and gendered boundaries. In considering

the aftermath of displacement and in the process of resettlement in the lives of the displacees then, there continues to be a tension in the way displacement is remembered, experienced, talked about and in terms of the differential consequences of all of these in the lives of displacees. In this, the violence of technology-based development projects continues to be at the forefront of social suffering long after the actual event of introduction of a particular technology. The effort in this study has not been to focus on one element of the development ideology, e.g. the technology of the hydro-electric projects, but to treat displacement, resettlement and the continuing secondary displacement faced by sections of the resettled groups as parts of a continuing narrative of development. This thesis makes a contribution by bringing in the question of memory and remembered histories to 'development', or rather, to the fall-out of a development project, which made the displacees relocate from their land, village and community.



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### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **Displacement and Rehabilitation in the Ukai Hydro-electric Project:**

##### **Rendering Suffering Invisible?**

The Ukai dam was completed in 1971. It was one of the largest and the most ambitious projects introduced by the government of Gujarat undertaken at the time creating one of the largest man-made reservoirs in Gujarat covering an area of 200sq. miles (Mankodi, 1992: 72). Built on the river Tapi, it had a variety of aims, spanning from control of floods to irrigation and electrification of south Gujarat. In terms of the latter aims, which are repeatedly emphasised in government documents hailing the project, the Ukai dam has undoubtedly changed the agricultural landscape of south Gujarat. This was a fertile belt of the state marked by cultivation of cotton, paddy and fruits on the central and western belts of Surat district. The eastern region of the area was hilly and cultivation was mainly based along the fertile lands stretching by the Tapi river. The dam has affected both regions of the area around the Tapi river in extremely diverse ways. While a system of irrigation canals has made intensive monocultural cropping increasingly profitable in the western belt; the eastern region has benefited in a more limited manner, much more in terms of controlling the floods that the river is remembered for in popular memory in the region.

The building of the Ukai dam had and continues to play a significant part in the history and politics of development in Gujarat state. It was not only the first dam

to be built with Indian expertise; the Ukai dam also re-aligned state boundaries between the two newly fragmented states of Gujarat and Maharashtra. While the official history focuses on the first; the latter outcome of the Ukai project is no less important at the level of the political landscape of Gujarat, and also on the minute ways in which it has completely transformed the lives of the villagers whose political universe changed from being in Maharashtra to now living in Gujarat state. Apart from this shifts in political identities, the Ukai project displaced around 100 villages and 50,000 households over three *talukas* (Chaudhari and Choksi, 1971: 2-3). The ambitious development aims of the projects juxtaposed alongside the lack of a coherent resettlement policy by the government created, and continues to create, an enormous question over the legitimacy of the project.

These contestations over the meaning of development that Ukai promised were discussed intensely within legislative, bureaucratic and NGO spaces. Foucault re-defined the usage and meaning of the term discourse to refer to a set of practices, linguistic or otherwise, that allowed an understanding of how meaning was made possible through forces of constraint and production (Escobar, 1984: 378). In other words, it could be argued that meaning and legitimation would be created in and through discourse. This chapter then looks at various discourses--- legislative, bureaucratic and NGO---which drew different segments of the polity into the logic of the need for the Ukai dam. Specifically, it examines the various processes of planning and legitimisation by which the construction of the Ukai multi-purpose project transformed political and economic and social landscapes

of the region, and continues to dominate the landscape of the area where it is built. The dam has also had a profound impact on the lives of the people who live in both the command and the obey areas of the dam. Breman (1985, 1993) has very incisively noted the transformation in socio-political and economic relationships in the region downstream of the dam and the suffering and polarisation of society caused due to the introduction of capitalist agriculture in the region over the last 25 years. This chapter focuses on the bureaucratic, legislative and NGO discourses during the period when the dam was being constructed, and analyses the ways in which these discourses rendered invisible the suffering of the displacees upstream of the dam. It tries to understand the context within which resettlement and rehabilitation did not emerge as arenas of importance, thus contributing to an administrative culture of neglect on the part of the policy-making and implementing body of the state.

### The Ukai Multi-purpose Project: Contexts

The building of the Ukai project took place at a time when the Indian state's energies were concentrated on the economic transformation of the country. The construction and operationalisation of the Ukai hydroelectric project occurred at the time of major food shortages across the country and the onset of the Green Revolution---in other words, a period of transformation in the technology and relationships in agriculture in India (Frankel, 1972; Shiva, 1991). This section tries to locate the Ukai project within the national imperatives to modernise on the one hand, and the state/local interests of an emerging industrial and landed

bourgeoisie.

Dam building was an integral part of the modernisation plans of the Nehruvian Congress government after independence, so that about 160 major dams were being planned or constructed one year after Indian independence (Singh, 1997: 66). Along with the construction of heavy industries such as steel, dams were a dramatic part of the modernisation infrastructure of the state. They were also part of a technological solution to harness the latent resources of the country. In formulating such a specific need for technology, the Congress hark back to the nationalist concerns raised regarding the prosperity of the country under colonial rule, and in the post-colonial periods. Significantly, as observed by Prakash (1999), the nationalist agenda in the pre-independent period mapped out the terrain of modernity and a delegitimation of British rule based on an economic critique of colonialism. This critique was based on the charge that colonialism had not only drained India's resources, but that the technical infrastructure developed by the British had inadequately utilised India's 'standing reserve' of resources and that it was within the logic of colonialism to keep the colonies sufficiently underdeveloped to enable the extraction and drain of raw materials. The answer to the recurrent famines, growing landlessness, poverty and falling agricultural output lay with the further development and utilisation of the technological infrastructure that was the colonial legacy to India. This could only be done under a sovereign state. The economic critique of colonialism by the nationalists has been analysed by Chatterjee (1994) as divided between the 'inner' and the 'outer' domains as the space of a sovereign nation and the space

under imperialist control. In independent India, the new State sought to define nationhood through the reclamation of the 'outer' domain. In other words, public projects like dams were not only major elements of an agricultural policy, they were intrinsically linked to the definition of a modern, emerging and independent India that sought to right the selective colonial exploitation of India's resources. This also entitled the State to demand sacrifices from its citizens, erstwhile subjects under colonial rule, in the cause of 'national development' and national pride (CSE, 1987; Khilnani, 1997).

In post-colonial India, national development, and development more specifically in the 1950s was determined by the 'western' model of development. Though unpacking this model proved to be contentious between the industrialists, planners and politicians, especially since models of capitalist development in the West varied between various western nations themselves, studies observe that nationalist understandings in India in the 1950s were basically centred around a 'commodity-based' approach, that implied a process of accumulation (Breman 1985; Chatterjee, 1994: 208). Modernity and development were represented by heavy industries of steel and metal, concentrations of labour and capital in industry and agriculture and improved means of transport and communication. The developmental state that emerged in post-colonial India in the 1950s and 1960s defined itself through its ability to determine the course of development defined in terms of a linear path of capital accumulation for all sections of the Indian polity. In terms of the logic that this enforced oneness of the Indian polity implies, Nehruvian ideology ensured that the character of the 'developmental

state' in India involved more ambiguities in the relationship between democracy and development than those faced by other developmental states in south-east Asia (Mitra, 1990). In modernising through industrialisation, the Indian state on the one hand adopted the path of a developmental state akin to other south-east Asian states. This meant the existence of state-led modernisation projects (Robinson and White, 1998: 1), controlled competition within the corporate sector and autonomy granted to the economic bureaucracy. Such a structure of the developmental state was premised on the assumption of the existence of strong authoritarian regimes. The 1960s-mid-80s saw an argument that held that development in poor societies required the existence of strong states with centralised regimes in order to succeed (Gordon and White, 1998:1). The existence of such political structures within the flourishing economies in post-war Japan, Taiwan and South Korea affirmed such arguments.

Under the circumstances, the existence of state-led modernisation projects under a democratic polity has been subject to local level socio-economic interests and has led to discussions on the viability of developmental progress in India. In the discussions on the developmental state, the status of the Indian nation-state as a viable and successful example of a developmental democracy has been ambiguous. On the one hand are studies that regard the Indian developmental state as a 'failed' state (Herring, 1999: 306-334), since despite having a strong reliance on the civil service, the bureaucracy has played a more important role in implementing developmental projects rather than being involved in formulating them akin to other east Asian states. In characterising India as a 'failed

developmental state', China stands as a point of reference not hampered in its development goals due to its lack of commitment to liberal democracy (Woo-Cumings, 1999:14). On the other hand, the Nehruvian commitment to a democratic Indian state has led to studies on post-colonial Indian state to be characterised as a resilient example of post-colonial bases of power attempting to create new ones to widen its support base (Mitra, 1990). According to economists such as Mitra (1990), this allows the developmental agenda of the state to be implemented 'steadily'; however, it also protects the state from exclusive domination by either labour or capital.

Nehru's insistence on maintaining an incommensurable contradiction between two divergent patterns: the imposed unity of planned development and the uncertainties of democracy, without subsuming the latter to the former has encouraged a very different model of state-civil society relations from that of the development states in south east Asia, and led to a much more problematic need for persuading and legitimising the developmental projects of the State at the national and the local contexts. These definitions of the 'strong' and 'weak' Indian state have ignored the nature of the social classes that affect the direction and policy of developmental states. Particularly in India, the national policy in the 1950s-60s was led by leaders from the western educated, middle class and landed classes whose interests and ideologies often curbed the demands and interests of marginal and subaltern groups, such as the *dalits* and the *adivasis*. The history of the Ukai dam through its construction and up to more contemporary times follows this problematic of the clash between the ideologies



and interests of the developmental state and the needs and the demands of the displacees. In examining official and non-governmental discourses I will attempt to examine the manner in which different groups in the government and civil society were drawn in to the logic of the project and its stated benefits. In looking at the inter-generational memories in the subsequent chapters in the thesis, I trace the difficulties of legitimating this promise in the subsequent years to a subject populace upon whom development was imposed from above.

The path of economic modernisation and development in post-colonial India was framed through the path of economic planning by bureaucrats at the Planning Commission. At one level, it was the attempt to assert the claim that the poverty-stricken and underdeveloped erstwhile colony could take charge and transform the scientific and technological models of development of Europe for its own benefits (Chakravorty, 1987; Prakash, 1994; Chatterjee, 1994). What one then finds in the immediate years following independence is a convergence of scientists, economists and engineers to decision-making spaces. Their emphasis was on instrumentalising abstract western scientific concepts, as well as indigenising them to address questions of poverty and underdevelopment of the Indian polity. It was not just Nehru who identified a scientific temper of the nation with its ability to plan and rationalise political decisions. One of India's foremost scientists, Meghnath Saha, an astrophysicist of international stature, was instrumental in conceiving of a planning commission to take charge and direct economic policy in post-independent India. He emphasised the need for this on the basis that '...India could not afford the luxury of pure science

research; science had to serve industry' (Prakash, 1994: 193). Indeed the planning commission was defined as a de-politicised body. As Chatterjee describes, 'through the institution of planning, the attempt was to remove the assignment of national priorities from the domain of politics' (Chatterjee, 1994: 202).

The relationship between the state planning commission, economic policy, and the society that emerged subsequently during the 1950s and 1960s has been much more problematic than that of a relative de-politicisation of policy by solely the expertise of scientific and technological elite. The aligning of development with a de-politicised body of experts required a bureaucracy to mediate development, i.e. to implement and monitor development projects. At the same time, for various historical reasons, the Indian State retained the structures, procedures of selection and work for the civil services, police and the army from the colonial period. What were retained were also several aspects of civil and criminal legal tenets and structures. It is in this sense, that at one level, 'planning' in its post-colonial form became an articulated response to the attempt to legitimise and make one's own the colonial legacy of mapping and the technologies of making an organic whole of India's vast and diverse geographical and social space (Chakravorty, 1987; Patnaik, 1988). In the ideological spheres, planning was an objective space for experts to meet challenges of technological and industrial growth, defined in terms of a western model of progress; and of self-sufficiency in agriculture that was seen essential to maintaining and feeding this sustained growth. At the socio-political levels, the democratic developmental state retained

the emphasis on commoditisation of land and agriculture, and forests through the continuation of colonial tenets in this sphere. The initial policy of cash compensation in the resettlement programmes of hydro-electric projects such as Ukai was based on an 1895 Land Compensation Act which enforced the state to pay a cash compensation based on the prevailing market prices for any land that it acquired from a private owner (CSE, 1987; Mankodi, 1992; Ukai Navnirman Samiti, 2001).

Within the Planning Commission, there was an evident continuation of the colonial irrigation policy transformed politically into a Nehruvian ideology of 'modernising' India (Chatterjee, 1994; Khilnani, 1997). In the first and second Five-year plans, the emphasis on major and medium irrigation projects was evident. Major dams were preferred over minor irrigation schemes due to what the planners called 'the stability' of the major dams in terms of storage capacities in the first Five-year plan. About 22.2% of the plan outlay for public sector projects was allocated for dam building (Singh *et al*, 1997: 82). In the second Five-year plan this emphasis was maintained in fiscal and policy terms with the plan emphasising the need for trained engineers, i.e., scientific and technical expertise to meet India's irrigation, hydroelectricity and food security needs (Mitra, 1990; Singh *et al*, 1997: 82-83). Although agricultural policy was still subordinated to the industrial sector, both in policy and in fiscal terms during this period, agricultural planning through planning and technology was still the pervading solution to the perceived and projected food security and electricity crisis in India (Raj, 1973; Bardhan, 1984).

According to the logic of the early Five Year Plans, dam building seemed to be the 'technological fix' that addressed a number of economic, political and nation-building issues in post-independent India. It projected the symbolic strength of India's capacity to build large-scale industrial projects based on models of industrial development in the USSR. Between 1952 and 1979, 869 large dams were constructed all over India (Singh *et al.*, 1997: 83). Idealised forever in the Indian planning canon by Nehru as the 'temples of modern India', they also seemed the ideal solution to the projected rapid increase in India's population and the simultaneous need for the independent state to address the multiplying food security needs. The electricity generation potential seemed to satisfy the hunger of the rapidly emerging industrial sector and urban domestic sector. Between 1951 and 1971, the industrial, railway and commercial sectors accounted for nearly 75% of the total electricity consumption in India (Agarwal *et al.*, 1993: 168). Class-based analyses also suggest large dams as resolving some of the political imperatives of the newly emergent Indian state. These theses suggest that in the absence of any one ruling class, but several powerful demand groups especially with interests in water politics and the need for electricity, construction of dams reconciled the existing power hierarchies with meeting the state's imperative to modernise (Raj, 1973; Bardhan, 1984; Rudolph and Rudolph, 1987). Singh observes that the post-independent irrigation policy did not disturb the structure of water rights that had been laid down during the colonial rule since the Indian state needed the support base of the landed elite (1997: 86). It is also significant in this regard that until 1979 the largest number of dams were

planned and constructed in Maharashtra and Gujarat (341 and 160), the heartland of the sugarcane lobby, cotton cultivation and a fast emerging industrial bourgeoisie. The thesis of the influence of class interests and water politics becomes more emphatic in considering that this was also the period when nearly 40% of Maharashtra was declared drought-prone, and most legislative debates in Gujarat on agricultural policy focused on the need to address issues of drought in central Gujarat and Saurashtra, and of floods in south Gujarat. An alternative viable solution would have been to strengthen the existing structure of check dams and canals and invest in a series of small and medium hydro-electric projects rather than emphasise and invest resources in large hydro-electric projects that would take longer to build and hence hardly address the existing water crisis. According to this debate, the regional level politics favoured large hydro-electric projects influenced in a large part by dominant landed and industrial class interests (Singh *et al*, 1997).

One of the criticisms of this observation of the importance of dams in India is that it tends to look at the newly independent Indian State as an expression of dominant class interests. In this then it ignores the very powerful 'planning and modernisation' debate in the immediate aftermath of the partition and independence that influenced much of the decision-making and institutional structure of the industrial and agricultural policy of post-independent India in the 1950s and the 1960s. It is in this sphere that Kaviraj (1988), Chatterjee (1994) and Prakash (1999) suggest the autonomy of the state, rather than one which merely balanced class interests in the determination of its policies. While the

national policy of Five-Year plans made the crucial decisions on the overall picture of the Indian economy, its translation at the local levels was mediated through a structure of local and class interests, as well as the manner of implementation by a regional bureaucracy and its own interpretation of the national plan.

### Ukai as a bureaucratic enterprise

With the regional-level politicians being subordinate to the decisions on policy sanctioned at the national level, it fell effectively to the bureaucracy to implement, persuade and perpetuate the technology of large dams as the solution to the issues of poverty in local contexts. In India, the location of dams were largely in hilly and forested areas, inhabited by social groups like the *adivasis* who were on the fringes of the Indian socio-political structures. Karl A. Wittfogel's work (1967) on 'Orientalist Despotism' examines the relationship between authoritarian forms of exercising power and the control over water rights in the society. Though the form of exercise of power differs fundamentally between the development state in India in the 1950-60s and the form of oriental despotism that Wittfogel constructs in his work, it is a work that is pertinent in drawing attention to the mediation of bureaucracies in enabling hegemonic control over water resources in a polity. Wittfogel has remarked on the characteristics of large scale and state-controlled works of irrigation to spawn centralised regimes (Wittfogel, 1967). The national planning commission in India spawned a large bureaucracy, not just in terms of the actual number of persons

involved in implementing the technological miracles, but also in the nature and constitution of this bureaucracy. Historical studies have noted the presence of a large number of engineers and scientists on the various projects (Patnaik, 1988; Chatterjee, 1994; Prakash, 1999). This emphasis on engineering and calculation was also reflected in the conception, construction and evaluation of these projects. The productivity tests of technological projects, especially irrigation works, were heavily dependent on financial criteria to the exclusion of social costs. This is a criticism that has become more trenchant after the 1980s with the emergence of a vital and articulate environmental movement that consolidated its critiques against the construction of the Narmada dam. Apart from their technical expertise, the nature of implementation of such large influential projects in a landscape marked by poverty raised large questions about the nature of social conflicts created during the building of such projects. In the absence of a national resettlement policy at this time for the displaced groups, it was also left up to local level leaders, the engineers and revenue officers to stitch together acceptable compensation criteria for those whose villages were submerged. In instances such as Ukai, this meant that the class contexts of most such groups were entirely divorced from the needs and experiences of the displacees. In other words, a national policy that favoured large hydro-electric projects and whose implementation was mediated so directly by local level dominant interests allowed an exacerbation of the already existing hegemonic dominance of certain groups in the constitution of regional and local socio-political landscapes.

The Ukai project was not constructed solely within a local context of class

interests. It was conceived and sustained, both financially and ideologically, at the national level through the Planning Commission and Five Year plans. In this, the Ukai hydro-electric project was an integral part of Nehru's vision of a modern India, wherein progress was mediated by a scientific temper. The rationalist approach to development has faced increasing criticism, most recently from Foucauldian studies on development in the Third World indicating that a consistent feature of development has been through the objectification and ordering of various processes of change in local contexts through calculable criteria. This is not only a consistent feature of the concept and language of development, that determines and is determined by the nature of state-sponsored processes; it also introduces nation-states into a global trajectory of progress. Although scholars such as Escobar (1984) and Nandy (1988) write about these processes in terms of their disciplining power on the subject populations, this chapter seeks to go beyond this argument by examining these processes in terms of the ways in which bureaucratic practices objectify and invisibilise the large scale destitution and suffering.

One of the features of a scientific temper has been its penchant for accumulating measurable and ordered information and statistics. The history of the Ukai project as found in the official documentation is no different. Most reports on the project begin with the depiction of the Ukai project as a feat of construction and engineering, demonstrable through a gamut of numbers and construction drawings. The language of the Government of Gujarat report on the Ukai dam, published in 1972 for government circulation demonstrates this presentational



device and begins with the following foreword,

‘Ukai dam is a dream come true [...] The earth-cum-masonry dam is nearly 5 kms. long and 69 mts. high. It will impound 8,51,000ha.m.of water in the reservoir. The earth dam ranks first with regard to quantity of earthwork (sic) among the Indian dams so far completed. The radial gates on the spillway are among the largest in India. The diversion channel which happens to be the largest open-cut diversion attempted anywhere in the world is itself equivalent to a medium-size project...the uniqueness of the project lies not only in the magnitude of its components but also in the manner in which technical problems were tackled. The topography, geology and standing pool of water at the site formed by the Kakrapar Weir called for an unconventional layout of locating the spillway and the powerhouse on the left bank and blocking up the main gorge by an earth dam. The fact that it would not be possible to complete the entire earth dam in the river channel in a single working season necessitated diversion not only of fair weather discharge but also of huge flood discharges [...] In spite of the heavy odds, economy was not lost sight of...’ (GOG, 1972, foreword).

The foreword eulogises technical feats and it is significant that of the 19 chapters in the report, there is just one chapter at the end of the report that looks at the social dimensions of the project, i.e. land acquisition and rehabilitation. The other 18 chapters relate to various aspects of dam design and construction (16 chapters), costs of different parts of the dam construction (1 chapter) and overseas aid for the project (one chapter) (GOG, 1972, Contents).

Along with this, in official literature Ukai has a linear history. ‘[...] In terms of the time scale, the construction of the Ukai dam was one of the speediest projects in India, being completed within 6 years, i.e. by 1971.’ (Govt. of Gujarat, 1972: 2). The project was sanctioned by the Planning Commission in 1961. The only

hurdles in the construction arose due to floods in 1969 and 1970, and a delay in beginning the project from 1961-66, the reason for this being the Sino-Indian conflict in 1963 and the Indo-Pak war of 1965. Most financial and manpower resources were committed to the project only in 1966. In the official history of the project, the only delays in realising the project that could be recognised and permitted were national level emergencies. Agitations against the land acquisition procedures in local contexts were not sufficiently threatening or recognised as slowing down the speed of construction. The language in which the *adivasis* refused to move is couched in patronising terms of the backward 'tribal': '[...] To move the tribal people from their ancestral homes and isolated riverside habitations, was a difficult proposition. They had never been faced by such a contingency and they could not grasp the possibility of these villages ever getting submerged when in the past even the highest floods within living memory had never affected them [...] Some of the tribal people were even unable to grasp the fact that they had become citizens of free India, and still believed that Queen Victoria was the only ruler [...] In such circumstances, land acquisition presented serious problems and had to be tackled with great tact and patience... (GOG, 1972: 186-187)

They are mentioned in a single paragraph towards the end of the report, and the reader is reassured with a following sentence on the 'practical foresight' of the government in coming to a reasonable compromise over compensation. This is then followed up in the appendices with a series of tables on the resettlement measures implemented in the villages. All the information regarding the number of villages to be partially and fully submerged is not forefronted in the main text of the report, but buried in the tables in the appendices along with much information on the number of schools, hospitals, wells and lift irrigation projects

to be built in the resettled villages; and the costs of the project (GOG, 1972: Annexures). It is the language and descriptions of the project of this kind that situate it within a national development programme of creating electricity and alleviating food insecurity issues for the country, rather than paying heed to the human scale of devastation that the building of the dam necessitated at the local level. Through the language and presentational format the human costs of the project are presented as 'manageable'. This emphasis on the manageable aspects of the project also circumscribes the unmanageable problems such as trauma and the chaos experienced by the displacees within rationalisable categories of 'tact and patience' exercised by the bureaucrats and the engineers. The chaotic and obviously uncontrollable processes of rebuilding lives with minimal entitlements is explained by infantilising the *adivasi* displacee as 'backward and ignorant' (GOG, 1972: 185-189). Further, it not only subscribes to the image of the *adivasi* as ignorant and backward, a debate that occupied a large space in nationalist discourses and popular understandings of the *adivasis*; but simultaneously raised questions about their ignorance and involvement in the nation-building enterprise through raising questions about their loyalties to the British Raj.

The Ukai report is also quite interesting in the manner in which it juxtaposes the statements about the main aims of the project with the questions about the benefits of the projects. The main text begins with a depiction of an uncontrollable river. '[...] Although water is essential for sustaining life; it is often the uncontrolled fury of a flood that destroys life and property...' (GOG, 1972: 1). However, instead of stating this as one of the objects of the project, it

goes on to look at the importance of water in an agriculturally-based economy like India, and the importance of raising the irrigation capacity of the country to meet the demands of a fast-growing population (GOG, 1972: 3-5). This trope of the dual usage of the dam in confronting immediate dangers in the local contexts where the devastation caused by periodic floods in the Tapi was all too known, with the threat of starvation at a national scale continues through the report raising the necessity of the project to altogether urgent levels. At the end of each of these scales hangs the sceptre of devastation and death. To reinforce the threat caused by floods, the report devotes much of its introductory chapter in listing the year-wise devastation in terms of the loss of life and property caused by flooding in the years between 1968-70. In contrast, details on the layout of irrigation canals and its potential as well as the benefiting areas from the hydroelectric power generated are left sketchy (GOG, 1972: 20-22). The following is the statistical information presented and repeated about the project in the entire report. The main benefits of the project were stated to be flood control for 4, 71,800 inhabitants of Surat city and 90,000 rural inhabitants. Also envisaged were a development of an extensive network of irrigation facilities and the harnessing of electricity.

The Government of Gujarat's document on the Ukai dam envisaged bringing an area of 1,52,400 ha (3,76,600 acres) under irrigation through channelling the reservoir waters through a network of irrigation canals in the western region of Surat district. Moreover, the project was also believed to have the potential to hold perennial water supplies to irrigate about 4 *lakh* ha (1 million acres) of land

and crops. It was believed that this would also enable reclaiming of about 16187 ha (40,000 acres) of saline coastline (GOG, 1972: 3). There were 4 turbines of 75 MW each installed with a hydro potential of 300 MW (GOG, 1972: 5, 20). The latter is the only information regarding the technological infrastructure of the dam, along with diagrams and a eulogy to the indigenous expertise of the Indian engineers that built the earthen wall of the dam (GOG, 1972: 20-21), by no means a small achievement.

The overall impression then that the report creates about the benefit of the Ukai dam is that it would be the 'technological marvel' that would address the distress caused by the periodic flooding of the unharnessed river and resolve the questions of increasing food production in the area without explicitly detailing the ways in which this could be done by the Ukai dam. In such bureaucratic reports then, the legitimacy of the dam seeks to be established through a juxtaposition of spectacular events of distress with its productive significance in the national context.

To all intents and purposes, the groundwork for Ukai as an irrigation project seemed to be in place by 1970. However, its significance as an irrigation beneficent project emerges vividly in examining its place in the bureaucratic structures of the region. It was part of a south Gujarat region for irrigation, a region demarcated in the irrigation ministry for a series of medium and major dams in the south Gujarat region. To this effect bureaucratic zones were set up in the state level irrigation ministry. The offices were classified according to the

presence of a medium or major dam in the area and were known as the Madhavan dam office at Valsad, the Ukai dam office in the Songadh-Surat region and the Karjan dam office in Bharuch district. The co-ordinating centre for the construction and maintenance was located at the irrigation cell in Baroda. There was a specific office that oversaw the construction of canals and irrigation networks which was based in Surat (pc, Resettlement Office, Fort Songadh: January 2002).

Further, in consonance with the idea that the Ukai project was predominantly a construction-based project, the offices of the officials in charge of the project were mainly those of engineers ---at the head of the entire Ukai hydroelectricity project was the office of the Deputy Executive Engineer, while the person in charge of all matters relating to the dam site and the Ukai project colony was the office of the Executive Engineer. However, given the scale of the villages and the population to be displaced, the structure of the offices at the dam site were divided into two main groups----one in charge of issues relating to the construction and maintenance of the dam and the power station, and the other in charge of issues involving the displacement and resettlement of the populations. Civil officials with the required technological training and engineering background were in charge of construction related aspects, while land acquisition and rehabilitation issues were assigned to the revenue and irrigation departments and were under the charge of the deputy collector in the ministry of irrigation. Engineers were in charge of the departments called the earthen dam portion, construction, masonry, lift irrigation schemes, colony maintenance and

subdivisions of security and the recovery of electricity charges from the Ukai project colony areas as well as other areas supplied electricity by the project (GOG, 1972; pc, Fort Songadh, January 2002).

The idea behind delineating the bureaucratic structures around the construction and maintenance of multipurpose projects in this region is to depict the maze of structures that categorise and divide the different dimensions of the project. Where is resettlement located within the administrative discourse and the siting of various departments within the project administration? In the official literature published in 1972 on the Ukai by the irrigation ministry, resettlement measures are discussed in a detailed manner along with the statistics of the population and the villages to be displaced only in the annexures of the Ukai Project report (GOG, 1972). This, in effect, sidelines the concern around resettlement in the overall policy framework as perceived by the bureaucratic agencies in Ukai. As discussed earlier, the main text of the report talks about resettlement in terms of the difficulties in overcoming the ignorance of the *adivasis* of the area to 'educate' them about the beneficial dimensions of the Ukai project for the country. In this manner, the official discourse on resettlement already set the stage for constructing the story of the Ukai project as one of the primitive *adivasi* vs. modern technology. Resettlement in this framework was about persuading and managing displacement of the *adivasis* rather than addressing issues of the loss of livelihoods and the chaos and confusion that follows therein.

This marginality of the resettlement concerns is also reflected in the funding

structure of the project. The marginality of resettlement policy in the Ukai project is evident in the amounts demarcated for two similar activities----area redevelopment around the Ukai project and resettlement and rehabilitation costs. The amount estimated for the former being Rs. 51.50 *crores*, while the amount demarcated for the latter was Rs. 1.37 *crores*. Resettlement had always been an aspect of the Ukai project, given the huge number of villages affected by submergence (170) and the number of families displaced as a consequence (13, 101)<sup>1</sup> (GOG, 1972: annexures).

Furthermore, the marginality of resettlement issues within the framework of the project is also reflected in the physical location of each of the departments. The very siting of the offices of each of these departments of the project is illustrative. In other words, post-construction, the Ukai rehabilitation and resettlement office is situated in Songadh town; while post-construction most of the offices of the construction and maintenance as well as the irrigation office were shifted closer to the Gujarat Electricity Board housing colony near the Ukai dam that houses most of the staff involved in the maintenance work involved in the dam. This demarcation of official sites has its positive and its negative aspects. It does locate the rehabilitation office closer to the Collector's office as well as the *taluka* level bureaucracy, but it also effectively demarcates the boundaries between the Ukai project as a development enterprise and the people whose livelihoods the development project usurped. There was little or no exchange of

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<sup>1</sup> These are official figures that are contested by other reports of local research organisations that calculate the households displaced as 52,000 (Chaudhari and Choksi, 1971). Moreover, these are only the households that received compensation. There are many more unrecorded households, especially of landless labourers in the pre-dam villages, that migrated further into the urban slums



reports with the other departments of the Ukai project, except when it concerned issues of the submergence level of the reservoir every year and providing data related to the expenditure of the annual grants given by the central government for public service schemes in the displaced villages. Since 1987, this work has also reduced considerably and the rehabilitation office no longer administers the process of revenue collection in the displaced villages, much to the ire of its staff who are now engaged in disbursing the annual grants to the villages via the *taluka* administration, which employs its own staff to administer revenue collection. The rehabilitation office however is still engaged in renting out land in the partially submerged zone for cultivation. Their electricity connections are routed via another grid and another district, which makes them more dependent on forces beyond their control, such as having to liaise with another district authority rather than the one that is answerable to their elected representatives. In a structure of responsibility, the Ukai project then falls beyond the purview of the electorate and their political representatives in Songadh, though it is located within the same administrative region and in whose history they are so deeply imbricated.

At the level of the administrative practices that involve the production of reports and of statistics that represent the policy frameworks and practices of the project, it could be argued that demarcating their offices from those of the resettlement department also facilitated the perception that the questions of resettlement and those of the maintenance of the dam no longer belonged within the same project framework. In putting this question to the current deputy collector in charge of

the resettlement office, he confirmed this demarcation within the project staff itself, arguing that the resettlement office was to be phased out and integrated within the *taluka* level land revenue office in a few years' time. The argument in the administration is about the length of time since the period of displacement--- that 30 years since the resettlement makes it increasingly difficult to account for this group of persons as 'displaced people'. While this is an argument with its own validity especially in terms of operational reasons, it also raises questions regarding the status of documentation on the ownership of partially submerged lands in the reservoir region. Much more to the point, it leaves the displaced in a no man's land; they are displaced but now resettled in development-starved villages, leaving them to compete with the non-displaced economic and political interests for funds and resources. Furthermore, over the next few years, there are plans to allocate and sell this land to the cultivators in the displaced villages, based on its initial survey reports of 1963-67. This does not change the status of the department vis-à-vis the Ukai project as much as it increases the personal authority of its staff, composed mainly of clerks employed from the local region in allocating ownership rights to people in the resettled villages. The office is to be disbanded in a few years' time, which would then legally cease any responsibility of the state in the resettled villages, and state records would erase the category of 'displaced villages' in this region. This move would not only put the displaced villages in a limbo, it further erases displacement and its associated issues for the displacees from the official memory of the Ukai project. In other words, such a move assumes that forced displacement is a time-bound process. With the passage of time, then, the displaced villages cease to have the claim of

being 'displaced' even though there might exist very obvious issues of entitlement building to livelihoods, issues that have neither been resolved in policy nor have policy changes been implemented.

Thus far, I have attempted to look at the official bureaucratic discourses around the legitimisation of the Ukai project and the marginalisation of resettlement concerns within the bureaucratic, fiscal and spatial framework of the project. Unlike the technical aspects of the Ukai multipurpose project, the resettlement and rehabilitation component was not an integral part of the project design. This is evident from the demarcation of the resettlement office from the other departments of the Ukai project and the powers it held vis-à-vis the other departments within the structure of the project. However, a large bureaucratic component of the project at the time of its construction was occupied by the land acquisition department. Land acquisition did form a major part of the project, and this seems to have been reflected in the size of the bureaucracy (though still small compared to other departments) in charge of the displacement and the resettlement aspects of the project. There were two land acquisition officers in charge of displacement and a large office consisting of survey officers and their support staff; a deputy collector level officer in charge of the whole department and scores of other land revenue officers, solicitors and clerks. NGO participation was also solicited to facilitate a smoother displacement from the villages and later, resettlement. At the *taluka* level, there was an advisory committee called the Ukai Resettlement Advisory Committee (*Ukai Punarvasavat Salhakar Samiti*) consisting of 21 members ranging from the

deputy collector of Surat and Bharuch districts, 2 resettlement officers, the forest protection officer for the Surat circle, the district development officer for Surat and Bharuch districts, various officers from the Ukai dam, co-operatives and agricultural officers, and significant members from the different talukas that were to be affected by the submergence. Any disputes that arose in the resettlement were referred to the advisory committee before the state government took its decision on the course to be adopted. That advisory committee was disbanded in 1972, soon after the operationalisation of the project makes its role in facilitating displacement rather than rehabilitation quite stark. The other staff remained with the office until the mid-80s when most acquisitions were completed. Today, the resettlement office consists of two officers, two clerks, a secretary and driver. The clerks who have been with the project often reminisce about the two blocks of buildings occupied by the resettlement staff until ten years ago, when the number of staff was cut down to the present size with a number of tasks in the displaced villages being given over to the taluka collector's office. Indeed, at the local levels the efforts of the Ukai project seemed to forefront land acquisition and speedy resettlement rather than rehabilitation of the displaced populations.

In the absence of a definite rehabilitation policy at the national level, the Ukai Advisory Committee, the resettlement office and local bureaucratic cadre were crucial in stitching together an acceptable set of resettlement measures. The core of the resettlement policy of the government was initially based on cash compensation for the amount of land lost by individual households (Mankodi, 1992; Ukai Navnirman Samiti, 2001). This was modified into a set of definite

measures that included a house plot in new resettlement sites and compensations in terms of a maximum of 4 acres of agricultural land for cultivators. At the village level, compensations involved provision of cremation grounds, village squares, metalled roads, school buildings and wells in villages that were to lose these facilities due to the submergence. While this should have facilitated the creation of a locally acceptable set of resettlement measures, the absence of representatives from the displaced villages made the measures alien to the awareness of the displacees. Moreover, despite the presence of the Advisory Committee the implementation of the measures depended on the officials at the resettlement office. These were mostly men and women who were upwardly mobile, upper caste members of the professional classes in the region, with educational backgrounds in law and the civil services. Although they did not share the educational background and training of their counterparts in the construction divisions of the project, among the 5 land acquisition officers and clerks that I interviewed, all of them talked about their belief in the dam as a path to the technological development of the region. Their interviews, however, still voice the dilemmas of implementing measures that would promote this development.

'[...] The dam has benefited the region. You don't even have to go upto Bardoli. Just ask the villagers around this area. The sugar mill at Vyara was a result of the dam. And that is a tribal area. No, the dam has its good and bad sides. Especially with the resettlement. That should have been handled better. That is the only blot on the dam[...] Otherwise, till today I think development must continue, and the dam has done a lot of good in this barren area.' (pc, Fort Songadh, January 2002)

On the one hand, most of their recollections of implementation of resettlement of the 170 villages affected focused much more on the aspects of displacement rather than resettlement. Implementing the land acquisition programme of the government was far from a bureaucratic exercise for many of the staff involved in the project. According to one of the erstwhile land acquisition officers, the implementation of land acquisition was such a disturbing event that many of the staff of the resettlement office asked to be transferred or retired and moved away once the project was completed (pc, Ahmedabad, August 2002). Indeed, to speak to the erstwhile lower level cadre in the resettlement office one has to travel to various towns in the neighbouring *talukas* and regions. Among those who have stayed, a cynical weariness, and occasionally, wariness have replaced the earlier euphoria. This is not surprising, for the resettlement office has recently been accused by a local NGO of misappropriating funds, extortion and discrimination vis-à-vis the displacees. According to one of the clerks at the resettlement office, 'After the disbanding of the Ukai Advisory Committee<sup>2</sup>, the implementation of compensation deeds was entirely unmonitored in the project office. The resettlement office had no provision of monitoring and everyone was out to make as much money as they could. This posting was known to be a prime posting. Cheaper materials such as cement and cheap parts for lift irrigation schemes were used in the displaced villages. No one ever checked whether these projects worked. It was enough to tick them off on paper as having been set up.' (pc, Fort Songadh, January 2002)

Despite the corruption, as discussed earlier in this section, this bureaucracy also consisted of persons with an abiding belief in the beneficial power of the project. Critical works of the conjunction of science, technology and state power (Nandy,

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<sup>2</sup> This was done in 1972, after the completion of the dam.

1988; Shiva, 1991) have indicated to the emergence of a scientific and technological elite in developing countries such as India where in Nandy's words 'science becomes the new reason of the state' (Nandy, 1988: 10). There is not just an emergence of a scientific and technological elite, it also extends its hegemony over aspiring professional groups and members of the rural and urban middle classes in the developing countries who, in turn, provide legitimacy for the spectacle and promises that large technological projects provide. The logic of the development state allows an alienation of a lay population from emerging scientific, technological and bureaucratic elite speaking a very different language of development.

This hegemony of the ideology of technological development also brought its own logic of justifications. Some of the project staff interviewed verbalised this dilemma as the problems among the resettled villages having arisen due to the absence of a rehabilitation policy in the 1960s.

'[...] what is wrong with the Ukai project? It has given electricity, brought prosperity to this whole region. Otherwise, this area would still be a jungle [...] Now, everyone comes and talks about the *adivasis* and resettlement. I have many coming and saying how much it has helped them. They are trying to grow *sherdi* also [...]' (pc, Fort Songadh, January 2002)

'[...] The dam has benefited the region. You don't even have to go upto Bardoli. Just ask the villagers around this area. The sugar mill at Vyara was a result of the dam. And that is a tribal area. No, the dam has its good and bad sides. Especially with the resettlement. That should have been handled better. That is the only blot on the dam[...] Otherwise, till today I think development must continue, and the dam has done a lot of good in this barren area.' (pc, Fort Songadh, January 2002)

‘The dam is beneficial [...] look in Songadh *taluka* itself. Singlekhanch, from where you can see the dam. No one criticises the dam there [...] And if you talk to people there they will tell you. The people in the displaced villages have partly created their own problems. They had never seen money before. The years after resettlement---the *adivasis* were buying radios and *paans* for hundreds of *rupees*. Just throwing it away. Of course, the villages are poor now. What do you expect?’ (pc, Fort Songadh, January 2002)

Here for many of the individuals associated with the project, Ukai was still ahead of its times in terms of the wide-ranging compensations that were made available to individuals and villages in the 1960s. According to this logic, it was the *adivasis* who did not understand the benefits of the facilities and compensation that was offered and frittered it away through infighting and conspicuous consumption. One finds this arguments not only among the engineers in charge of the construction and maintenance divisions of projects, but also among the some of the younger staff in the resettlement office who were appointed to their posts after the operationalisation of the project.

There are a few critical voices within the project. Many of these concerns around the project are voiced by erstwhile officials who worked ‘in the field’. For one land acquisition officer who opted for voluntary retirement from the civil service after his tenure at Ukai, being part of the Ukai project raised doubts regarding the beneficiaries of such modernisation projects, and also brought home the absoluteness of authority that the state could claim in the interest of modernisation. He decided to leave,

‘[...] not because I thought the project was not progressive. There are many studies [...] now, that



show otherwise, but I did not know this then. But it was the way the project was built. There was such a contradiction---all this talk about benefits. But in the field we were there only for lining our own pockets...and the adivasis bore the brunt [...] we could ask them for anything as government officers. From asking them to work on the dam to providing us with food if we went around to their villages. They are very generous people. Those who did not want to leave their villages were threatened with court cases [...] I began to wonder who we were working for? [...] I could not stay there.’(pc, Ahmedabad, August 2002)

### Legislative debates

The Gujarat state legislature debates provide an arena of the manner in which dam-building was a site for competing class interests and the validation of the scientific solutions of the developmental Indian state. In these terms, the Ukai dam is discussed in the legislature during the question time allocated for irrigation-based issues, even though the irrigation potential of the dam takes centre stage only around 1966, and the dam is discussed from then on in terms of an irrigation and hydro-electricity project. This is in stark contrast to the reports produced by the engineering core of the project that until 1972 continues to define Ukai’s value as an effective flood control measure.

In these early years of 1961-62, when the project was still at the stage of the drawing board, much of the discussion around the building of the dam concerned building up a case for the project. Between 1959 and 1962, the Tapi river flooded twice causing considerable damage to Surat city and the nearby villages and fields. The case for the project then, has two seemingly contradictory strands: one

that justifies the urgent need for the Ukai project in terms of its ability to check floods—a very specific need confined to the areas around the Tapi river, and the other in terms of combating ‘recurring droughts in the region’<sup>3</sup>—a threat of water and foodgrain scarcity that could be argued was part of a national debate on achieving self-sufficiency in foodgrain production. Many of the debates in the legislature refer to the necessity of creating structures for conserving water resources to protect against periods of scanty rainfall and crop failures. Ukai dam enters these discussions only as one of the many schemes that would address the above concerns. However, none of these speeches in the legislative assembly refer explicitly to the years or the regions of Gujarat where the threat of the drought seemed imminent or pervasive. An exception to this is a sole reference during the 1961 session in the assembly discussing budgetary allocations for irrigation schemes in the state. In his speech, the representative from Saurashtra mentions the water scarcity due to a dramatic decrease in rainfall in the region and its gradual desertification (GOG, 1961: 772). His proposed solution concerned construction of multiple small-scale irrigation and water conservation measures such as tubewells, check dams and projects to stem the salination of the region due to the incursions of the sea. Moreover, the small-scale projects are seen as interim measures until the larger schemes are completed, which could take upto a decade. In other words, the small-scale measures serve as stop-gap arrangements for irrigation at the local level in the absence of any larger schemes, or until these larger schemes are completed. These series of debates in 1961-62

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<sup>3</sup> The contours of this region change over the debates ranging from that encompassing north and central Gujarat, to Saurashtra—the western region of Gujarat state, to a generic reference to Gujarat as a ‘drought prone’ region that regularly fell short of the national estimates of food grain production (GOG, 1961-69)

reveal a very real felt threat of the recurrence of poor rainfall and the sceptre of drought in areas of Gujarat. While the threat of water scarcity is a documented concern in official surveys even before independence, it is in the juxtaposition of the threat of floods and droughts on one level that creates images of an underdeveloped region at the mercy of the vagaries of nature. The faith expressed by speakers in the need for large schemes to ultimately supersede smaller ones reinforce the Planning Commissions insistence on 'conspicuous technology' as the long term solution against nature.

An apt example of identifying underdevelopment through such juxtapositions is found during discussions in 1962 by an MP from Pardi taluka in the Surat region, which today is one of the main beneficiaries of the irrigation projects that the Ukai dam spawned. Noting that the larger schemes like Ukai and Kakrapar could take upto 25 years to be constructed, he urged for the implementation of small-scale water conservation and irrigation schemes. Surat district and the south Gujarat region is characterised by him as one prone to droughts, which is 'underdeveloped' and having a considerable *adivasi* population (GOG, 1962: 694-695). Small-scale projects are the solution proposed by him to alleviate the 'destitution' of the marginal farmers and the landless in this region. In contrast, local *adivasi* narratives speak of their lands on the Tapi river in the pre-dam period as some of the most fertile in the region (Fatubhai, Amalpada , April 2002; Gimhabhai, Vajhpur, September 2001; Patel, Vajhpur, September 2001; Talati, Fort Songadh, January 2002). According to their stories, these were the times when they were required to hire labour from the plains downstream of the

river from the Bardoli, Pardi and other regions of Surat district. Historical studies refer to the presence of rich Patidar peasantry along with the adivasi cultivators cultivating along the banks of the Tapi all the way into Khandesh region in Maharashtra. This was a cotton growing area to the north and sugarcane cultivation was spreading to the south and west of the Tapi river, along with other crops such as rice, millet and vegetables. In terms of the national indicators, the area would be categorised as a low productivity region characterised by an absence of commercialised farming<sup>4</sup>. The MP's presentation feeds into the discourse of the *adivasi* and the region as a 'backward' area needing to be uplifted in a stereotypical fashion. It is a discourse that is located within a concern for increasing the overall supply of agricultural produce in the state, and the solution proposed is that of irrigation projects and supplies of electricity to feed the need for the mechanisation of agriculture. At one level, these concerns then respond to a national goal of self-sufficiency in food grain production and 'modernisation' of the country in terms of technological development. Simultaneously, the discussions on the distribution of benefits of irrigation to cultivators in the eastern and the western directions from the Ukai dam, and terms of resettlement reveal the political influence that the Patidar and other caste Hindu peasantry exercised on the regional politics of Gujarat (GOG, 1961: 766, 778 ; GOG, 1969: 4372-4373).

In the 1960s, Ukai was the pride of all multipurpose projects in Gujarat. It came

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<sup>4</sup> The cultivation of cash crops however, did not imply the presence of a market economy. Until the 1950s, traders and usurers bought or claimed a large part of the harvest at the farm itself, especially in adivasi areas, which they later sold at the market (Breman, 1993, fieldwork notes, 2002). Much of the agricultural produce in the *adivasi* areas was grown based on subsistence needs, rather than for the market.

after the Kadana and Kakrapar projects, which had been under construction for about 12 years before, and whose completion seemed tentative. Kakrapar weir also seemed to be beset with construction problems (GOG, 1965: 920-922). The project was situated at that point in time, where it represented the path of development that the nationalist project envisioned---scientific and technological development through indigenous expertise addressing questions of poverty and self-reliance. In the legislative debates of 1962, when the then opposition leader who was also trained as a civil engineer raised questions regarding the techniques of canal building in one of the projects in central Gujarat (GOG, 1962: 717-720), he was rebutted by the then Minister to leave questions of techniques and construction to the younger and practising lot of civil engineers. 'The legislature had an obligation to support and respect their expertise instead of questioning it', was the response of the Minister of Irrigation and Agricultural Development (GOG, 1962: 722). Within such a context of nationalistic fervour in scientific expertise for development, it was rare that doubts would be raised regarding the existence of this multi-purpose project. This was also the policy environment where rehabilitation of displacees due to public projects was rarely regarded as an integral part of the projects. The Gujarat government had been planning to carry out land acquisition for Ukai according to the 1895 Land Acquisition Act wherein displacees who lost land to public projects were compensated in cash according to the estimated market value of their land.

The legislative discussions on resettlement of the *adivasis* for the Ukai dam

reveal the contradictions faced by the decision makers within a developmental state such as India, that tried since independence to balance the demands of both democracy and development. In the debates in the state legislature, the questions of dams and Ukai in particular, was rarely discussed in the context of a need for rehabilitation measures. When such debates did occur, the tension between addressing development as an ideological goal leading to social justice and the more pragmatic interests of moderating such radical demands were visibly present as will be shown in the discussion below. At the same time what is evident in these debates and among the more radical demands for a compensation policy on the basis of social justice is the pervasiveness and unproblematic nature of the idea that the demands of social justice could co-exist with the jostling of social interests that would benefit from the material gains that development projects made possible to realise.

In the legislative sessions, the questions of resettlement were taken up on only two afternoons within 10 years of the planning and construction of the dam (1961 and 1969), the explicit call to debate these questions on the imperatives for 'social justice' was introduced by MPs from the higher caste communities benefiting from the construction of the irrigation networks. However, the course of resolution of the issues raised also revealed the powerful interests located within these groups that discouraged the more radical and egalitarian resolutions of the distribution of benefits from the project, leaving the speeches of the radical MPs as momentary shots in the dark. The three speeches characterised resettlement as a question of social justice, and focussed on the issues of land

compensation and land re-distribution (GOG, 1961: 767-768; GOG, 1969: 4353-4358). In 1961, Jashwant Mehta, an MP from Mahuva, raised the question of the resettlement of tribals due to the Ukai dam for the first time in the legislature. He suggested a compensation policy based not on the 1895 Act, but in terms of a 'land for land' policy. If this could not be possible, he argued for levying an additional tax on the farmers benefiting from the project. The money incurred from this additional tax could then be used to distribute a 'reasonable amount in compensation to those farmers who had lost their land due to displacement' (GOG, 1961: 766-768). He argued this as a matter of 'social justice' where in people who lost their lands due to public schemes would be entitled to compensation from the state as a matter of justice. However, his case for the displaced farmers was set within an abiding faith in large multi-purpose irrigation projects. The speaker earlier in his speech also called the Ukai project 'the lifeline of Gujarat' and applauded the allocation of 22% of the third Five Year Plan's budget towards irrigation schemes in the state.

The second discussion was introduced by a legislator from Umreth constituency in Surat district, which was demarcated to be one of the main beneficiaries of the irrigation project of Ukai, in 1969 at a time when resettlement was in full swing. He provided evidence of the injustices of the manner in which resettlement was being implemented. The speaker protested against the means of valuing the land that was to be submerged. He regarded that valuing agricultural land to be submerged at Rs. 600 per acre was too little compared to the market value of Rs. 3000-4000 per acre of that land. In terms of the policy of compensating

landowners in the old villages with land, he argued that the compensated land of 4 acres was too little to subsist on and would push the already underdeveloped villages into further poverty. At the same discussion, another MP identified 5000 acres of land available in his *taluka* (Mangrol) as well as land in the nearby *taluka* of Umarpada that could be used for redistribution among some of the displaced villages. He also suggested opening up of some of the land demarcated as forestland downstream of the river (GOG, 1961: 778).

Progress on the Ukai project brought to the fore the conflicting interests as regards the interests in garnering the benefits of the Ukai dam. By 1968, the benefits to the region downstream of the dam were quite evident. One of the MPs speaks about the value of land downstream spiralling three-fold to four-fold. The interest of the government of the time in not upsetting the status quo of power relations between the eastern region of the district inhabited mainly by *adivasi* groups and the western area that was politically, economically and socially influential through its role in the nationalist movement in Gujarat and in emerging as the heart of the co-operative movement was also evident. In the debates on the nature of compensation to the displaced in the Ukai project, one of the demands raised by some of the MPs representing the *adivasi* areas of south Gujarat was on the redistribution of land in the areas benefiting due to the dam (GOG, 1969: 4370). In negating these ideas, the then Minister of Public Works cited the density of population downstream of the dam that made it impossible to relocate more people to this area (GOG, 1969: 4372-4373). He also dismissed the idea of redistribution of land in the area to benefit by the dam by suggesting the



task as impossible to implement. The reason he cited was that the western region of Surat district was characterised by small landholders rather than middle and large land holdings, which he claimed made the task of redistribution extremely difficult for any agency. Breman's work (1993) as well as historical accounts of south Gujarat in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Choksey, 1968; Enthoven, 1975; Hardiman, 1987) indicate the skewed landholding patterns in the region whereby most of the land was owned by a relatively small proportion of Parsis, Vaniyas and Patidars---often under different landholding arrangements such as tenancy and mortgages. Re-distribution of land would have needed to directly challenge this caste-class conglomeration perpetuated through the hegemony of a few groups.

On compensation, the government took the view that they were paying higher compensation than preceding cases, and would take steps to acquire the land 'only where its officials met resistance to displacement' (GOG, 1969: 4372). The minister also elaborated on the steps taken to advise those who received compensation about ways to save the money and use it for more 'constructive' purposes such as investment in land or education, thereby directing the questions of social justice into tested institutional channels. For this purpose they had set up training programmes in various skills such as carpentry, ironsmithy, tailoring and fishing. In order to stress their seriousness regarding the compensation and rehabilitation measures, the state had also published a booklet on the rehabilitation measures planned by the government and information on the Ukai multipurpose project itself. In perpetuating the archetype of the *adivasi* as the

illiterate (*abhan*) and gullible (*bhola*), the Minister also announced the setting up of a programme for 'educating' the displaced *adivasis* on the productive ways of spending the compensation money rather than on conspicuous consumption. Rather than addressing questions of usury, he also urged them to invest the money in state sponsored small savings schemes to 'protect the money from the clutches of moneylenders' (GOG, 1969: 4374).

### Displacement

Confronted with a politics of progress imposed by a heavy-handed state, underlined with a threat of acquisition without compensation if they resisted, the event of displacement forced the displacees to hope for the best in circumstances outside of their control. The bulk of the villages were shifted between 1967-69. For most villages situated away from the dam, this was an unexpected event. The larger villages were aware of the impending displacement; however, the actual move itself seems to have been extremely arduous and traumatic. A study conducted by a local research organisation in 1971, two years after all the resettlement was completed, notes the fear and distress of the displacees in the resettled villages to the questions on the adequacy of compensation. They write, '[...] before the displacement of the villages, similar surveys were carried out. As a result, when we went (to the villages) the people felt we had come to displace them again. To questions such as 'was displacement adequate?' the people shivered in fright and would reply, '*saheb*, we don't want even one more *paisa*. We don't want to go anywhere from here. It was after we were given money that we were forced out; now we don't want to look at any more money...' (Chaudhari and Choksi, CSS report, 1971: 53-54, my translation)

The survey further noted the widespread anger, confusion and fear in the villages two years after displacement. Rumours abounded fuelled by remembered experiences. One of the rumours prevalent at the time concerned secondary displacement. Some of the villages had been shifted more than once while the height of the dam was being negotiated. One of the legislators talked about overhearing a conversation between two *adivasis* in the relocated villages that ‘[...] we are worse than the animals in the forests with this dam. Now we roam the countryside without even knowing if that is our own. There are no more tears left to shed.’ (Vasava, GOG, 1969: 4362) While the debates in the legislature focused on setting up institutions such as education and vocational employment as part of their rehabilitation package, field level workers such as primary health care workers, teachers and NGO workers were writing about the widespread anger against the non-*adivasis* and, specifically, anyone associated with the Ukai dam or the government. The CSS report wrote about the absolute refusal of the displacees to record their household details with any non-*adivasi* as well as their refusal to participate in any government employment scheme that required travel outside their villages (1971: 52). Medical workers recollect their experiences of having to travel the *chaudkheda* villages in a convoy of 3-4 vehicles to protect each other for fear of attacks on their convoys by the *adivasis* in the event that the medicine administered had ‘no effect’ or ‘took longer than usual to take effect’ (pc, Jamkhedi, January 2002).

In defining social suffering, Das regards it in terms of ‘what political, economic

and institutional power does to people and how these forms of power themselves influence responses to social problems' (Das, 1997: ix). The displacing of people and relocating them at various sites was a political and bureaucratic exercise, in which most of the villagers did not know about their impending displacement until the trucks arrived to take away the displacees and their belongings to the resettlement sites. This did not mean the villagers were unaware of the construction activity on the dam downstream. Ironically, the dam had given employment and sustenance to a large number of landless and migrant *adivasi* households who had themselves been fighting hunger and poverty for generations. Many of these landless households had migrated to the region on hearing about the availability of land for cultivation and employment on the dam sites. However, except for a few significant elders, most households were unaware of the impending displacement. Their experience of enquiring about the 'strange' activities was marked by rudeness from the officials.

'[...] we saw these *madrasis* measuring the lands in our villages and fields. When we asked them what it was for, we were told that we would be told later if the government saw fit. And this was the next thing we heard and saw from the go'orment. They brought the trucks after a few months, and we were asked to take all our belongings and leave.' (Rameshbhai, Seltipada, October 2001)

In the *chaudkheda* villages, displacement was also marked by political and bureaucratic 'indifference' to the trauma of resettlement and coercion towards those *adivasi* villages that resisted displacement. On the one hand, the entire exercise of displacement left the villagers without a roof over their heads for months following relocation since the government did not extend any assistance in rebuilding houses in the resettlement sites. This meant that the displacees had

to rebuild their houses with the wood transported from the pre-dam villages, or had to wait for months for the forest department to grant them permission to cut the wood from the forests. In the absence of any roads or infrastructure in the new villages, the displacees found themselves suddenly and irrevocably cut off from their kin, neighbouring villages and economic and political networks, especially during the monsoon months. Those villages that anticipated such difficulties and refused to move were threatened with court cases and withdrawal of any compensation that they might be entitled to. In the displaced villages today, the villagers substantiate their stories of the coercion and brutality during displacement in citing examples of villages that have suffered in such a manner in the region.

'[...] The government was determined to build the dam. Where we went was not their concern. People suffered, and are suffering still (*khoob abdha vethi ane aaje vetha cche*). There is a village near here---Jungaloo Amalpada. No one has any legal land there. The *dohas* refused to leave when the trucks came. They said the compensation was not enough. And the government brought in the army and court orders. The *sipadas* made sure that everyone left the village, and they threw them in here. And as a punishment, no one got any compensation. All that the village has today is *jungle kheti*<sup>5</sup>' (Ganpatbhai, Amalpada, May 2002)

The literature published by a local Gandhian NGO substantiated this story without giving the details of the village concerned. Its narrative provides a similar description of the heavy-handedness of the state in displacing the villagers:

'[...] The government had encountered resistance from some of the villages. The people refused

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<sup>5</sup> *Jungle Kheti* refers to land cultivated on an illegal basis in the forests by clearing a patch of land, and at times with the implicit acknowledgement of local level forest staff who are bribed for

to move, demanding fairer compensation than they were being offered. When the government refused to negotiate, they also refused to move under any conditions. The army was called in, and the villagers were threatened with court cases and legal eviction orders. One of the villages was actually moved. It was at this stage that some of the villagers approached us, and we began work in this area....' (Ukai Nav Nirman Samiti, 2000: 10, my translation)

The felt callousness of the dam construction agencies and the government continues to be articulated today in terms of the stories about the dam building that are prevalent in the region. In these stories, the dam is not only an agent of displacement; it is the cause of deaths of the *adivasis* in the region who sought to earn a livelihood from it. One of the often repeated stories in the villages about the dam concerns the death of the *adivasi* labourers who worked on it during the construction.

'You should have seen the dam when it was being built. Full of people---carrying mud, building the houses, cutting the forests. It grew before our eyes. But no one had any regard/ care (*kadar*) for the people who were toiling to build it. At one point, the *sahibs* felt the work was going too slowly. They wanted more mud to be carried, and faster. Already people were working all day and all night. And those who would get tired would just sleep there. That was the worst job---carrying mud. Then the *sahibs* got the 'dozer in. It would carry the mud and dump it on the dam. So many people died under that mud---they would be asleep, or trip while carrying mud. The 'dozer would dump mud over them, and in the dark no would notice. So you see, that dam is built on our bones.'<sup>6</sup> (Sureshbhai, Vajhpur, September 2001; Babubhai, Seltipada, September 2001; Radtiyabhai, Limbi, November 2001; Karsanbhai, Amalpada, November 2001)

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permission.

<sup>6</sup> This is an account I could not verify. The officials and ex-officials deny this charge. The official accounts make no mention of these. The *adivasi* informants could not point out specific households in the area that had borne the tragedy of such a death; however insisted the accounts were true since many of the labourers who died arrived at the dam from distant villages in search

In this narrative, the violence of development is manifest through the literal burying of lives by the blindness of technology. The bulldozers are blind in their tasks at the cost of the rhythms of human lives, and their times of rest. The burial of the labourers also encapsulates the theme of betrayal that is analysed more extensively in the next chapter. The betrayal is of those *adivasis* who arrived to help in the construction of a technology that they believed would benefit them through granting them a source of employment and wages. Their unrelenting work and eventual death through the demands of technology and development projects also encapsulated the larger death of the way of life in the pre-dam villages.

While for the *adivasis* the displacement was a traumatic time; the legislators sought to address the most fundamental issues of resettlement including that of a loss of livelihood through a language of 'managing' and compartmentalising these into institutional spaces of education, medicine, re-training and monetary savings. In the official reports the resistance encountered while displacing people and of the widespread anger and chaos in the region about the way the whole move was conducted was buried within a small paragraph at the end of the report (GOG, 1972: 186). Such an official presentation of dam building and the emphasis on 'managing' resettlement, instances of resistance and disaffection of the local *adivasis* came to be treated as a local issue where solutions would be at the mercy of the local bureaucracy. As illustrated in the previous section, this channelled the language of social injustice into one of 'managing' resettlement through various means. More than this, it also curtailed the possibility that the

voices of anger and distress of the displacees could be heard beyond the strongly socially hierarchised local area of Songadh *taluka*.

When the chaos of displacement was communicated to the state level, it was presented just once in a two hour speech at the end of the construction work on the dam in 1969 by an MP from Songadh, Bhimsingh Vasava. He was also on the board of the Ukai Advisory Committee which gave him access to some of the contentious cases that came to the Board's attention about the implementation of the measures, and his speech in the legislative assembly 1969 graphically outlines the brutality and discrimination that made it such an unforgettable event in the history of the villages.

Corruption and mismanagement were rampant throughout the move whereby villages were either not informed at all about their displacement or misinformed. According to one of the conditions of resettlement, the local administration had to make provisions for the free transportation of the *adivasis*, the basic woodwork of their houses and all the household articles to the new sites. Vasava's evidence is substantiated with village-level anecdotes whereby this process was rampant with fraud, theft and extortion of compensation money and goods by the truckdrivers, neighbouring population and robberies *en route* to the new sites. He presented evidence where household articles were stolen during the move, and truck drivers extorted money from households to ensure the safety of their articles. The mismanagement of the resettlement programme and of the compensation also resulted in extortion rackets in the nearby town. Mr.



Vadodiya, another legislator, indicated to the rise in the number of *sarvodaya mandals* or co-operative societies who acted as brokers to deliver the compensation money to individuals in the displaced villages, charging fees ranging from Rs. 200-300 to do so. On arrival at the sites, the displacees often found that for months after they were taken to the new villages the material for the houses was not transported and people had to live in makeshift shelters. In the instance of one village this move happened during summer, and the villagers were forced to make their own arrangements to build temporary shelters over summer and the monsoon months (GOG, 1969:4361-4365).

Moreover, most of the lots of land provided for the houses included just enough space to build the house structures. According to Bhimsingh Vasava, the legislator from Songadh taluka, the landed households were provided with house plots of 80'\*60' in size, while the landless were provided with 40'\*30' plots. There was no facility for open spaces that served as compounds within which cattle were usually tethered or carts could be kept. In a speech loaded with bitterness, Bhimsinghbhai drew a comparison with urban middle class housing plots that felt the need for enclosed compounds with gardens, a strong feature of the quarters that were also constructed at Ukai for the officials, while the life patterns of the displaced and their basic needs were evidently not considered within the compensation programme.

In addition, he observed that the cultivable land entitled for compensation had been graded into four types with the valuation of each type ranging from Rs.

3000 per acre to Rs. 600 per acre. In examining the rehabilitation statistics it was discovered that most of the displaced persons were compensated at the rate of Rs. 600 per acre. There was a glaring contradiction in categorising the productivity of the old farmlands for cultivation, which had been in an area regarded as one of the most fertile in the region with black soil. Vasava questioned the criteria by which most of the submerged fields were classed into the least fertile grade in the compensation programme (Vasava, GOG, 1969: 4364).

Like the emphasis of the bureaucratic officials in presenting resettlement as a concern of managing and regulating distress, this speech too was subsumed within a larger discourse of 'disturbances in tribal areas' in south Gujarat around the time that needed to be addressed as questions of law and order instead of being subsumed within larger questions of tribal disaffection and social justice. In 1968 and later in the year in 1969, Vasava also made speeches in the legislature refuting allegations of a Naxalite movement among the *adivasis* in south Gujarat and the Dangs (GOG, 1968: 325-328; GOG, 1969: 4361-4365). In trying to highlight the causes of unrest among the *adivasis* in Songadh, Vasava's assertions are substantiated by fieldwork data that suggests that the Resettlement office in Songadh was flooded with court cases filed by displaced households complaining against inadequate compensation, the problems of displacement and the suffering of the displacees. In other words, it could be argued that the interventions of Vasava on behalf of the Ukai dam displacees were subsumed as part of the state level concern with agitations and unrest in that part of the state. In all events, Vasava's presentation provides a detailed look and is the only

official account available of the conditions that created so much anger and fear among the *adivasis* of government functionaries and non-*adivasis* expressing interest in their villages and lives.

### Voices of Dissent

The Ukai dam was an enormous success in its impact on agricultural production in the region downstream of the dam. The irrigation and hydro-electric potential of the dam has changed the face of agricultural production in the region, initiating socio-economic changes in the region that have been documented in numerous studies (Breman 1985, 1996). On the other hand, critique of the Ukai dam has also come from a number of non-government discourses, mainly on the aspects of the resettlement and rehabilitation of the villages affected by the project. The earliest voices of doubt were those of the Gandhian workers working under the leadership of Jugatram Dave, from the Vedchi ashram in south Gujarat. Although the location of their misgivings about the dam was problematic, the Gandhians participated in the rehabilitation at the level of planning and communication to the affected *adivasi* groups, while leaving the aspects of implementation to the government machinery. This alliance then left them essentially powerless to oppose corruption within the local bureaucracy that resulted in the virtual non-implementation of any of the promises made to the displacees at the time of the dam construction. Over the years, the culture of indifference at the policy level and the culture of neglect and corruption in the local bureaucracy rendered the post-displacement constructive work of the

Gandhians increasingly irrelevant and prone to suspicion among the displacees themselves.

The strongest criticism of the project is found around the 1980s, a decade after the construction of the project in a series of studies conducted by local research organisations (CSE, 1987; Mankodi, 1992). This critique focuses mainly on the environment impact and rehabilitation aspects of the project. Much of this critique reflects the larger discourse emerging at the time in India against large development and modernisation projects. Social, economic, technological and environmental problems of the dam in the following years have validated this critique. However, in forefronting this critique there could be a danger of assuming that dissent and scepticism to the project arose much after the project was built, and in a sense, validates present contemporary bureaucratic discourse that then render the above critiques as 'too little, too late' and therefore, redundant.

#### Misgivings from civil society: Gandhian interventions

Much of the narrated history of the civil society response to displacement in the region is two-fold: a. that which is narrated by the *adivasis*, discussed in the following chapters in the thesis, and b. the story told by non-displacees that includes Gandhian workers in the region, mainly educated or affiliated to the *Sarvodaya* philosophy, the government officials, officials working on the Ukai project and the people who live in the Ukai and Songadh townships---in other

words, a mainly *ujaliyat*<sup>7</sup> population. The dominant theme among the *ujaliyat* population about the *adivasi* response to the dam is that there were no protests about the construction of the dam, people from the villages-to-be-displaced actually went to work on it, and the only discontentment was expressed in terms of court cases filed later for delayed compensations. However, Gandhian workers in the area have another interwoven narrative---that of a severe exercise of state power, whereby the few who resisted or protested, lost any entitlements to compensation. The significant point of comparison is the Narmada movement. In the present climate, where the construction of the Narmada dam has polarised the population of the state, and the debate has come to be identified with the claim to a Gujarati identity, it was often mentioned by the displaced villagers and Gandhian workers in Songadh that Ukai was not like the Narmada in that there had been no protests *in the manner of Narmada*. Ukai had invoked a sense of pride and belief as to its ultimate benefits even among its sceptics and the displacees. The point of difference between the Ukai and Narmada projects was the response of the civil society and the displacees to the project. In this narrative, Ukai has been co-opted into the narrative of the development state. For non-displacees and the bureaucrats it was vital to know my stance on the 'Narmada issue', as it was called. The questions in this discussion centred on the conditions of rehabilitation and the manner in which these were addressed in the two projects. For the bureaucrats, Ukai was different from Narmada because in the 1960s there had been no rehabilitation policy, and therefore allowed the

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<sup>7</sup> 'Ujaliyat' is a term used to refer to the non-*adivasi* population in the Songadh, Vyara *talukas* of Surat district and in Valsad district---all regions with a large number of *adivasi* villages. It is basically a term employed by *adivasis* to refer to the Gujaratis in their region; today it has found its way into Gujarati as a self-referential term among the Gujaratis in this area

project to get away with paltry measures. This argument ignores historical facts that the Narmada movement also set a few precedences in terms of demanding a need for a rehabilitation policy at the national level. In absencing the nature of scepticism to the Ukai project, it constructed an uninterrupted history of the benefits of dam building in India. At the same time, this suggested that there was an implicit recognition among the non-displacees that there existed patterns in the construction of the project and its impact on the affected villages that demanded a particular form of response from the civil society, one that was missing from the history of the Ukai project.

But the Ukai dam had had its doubters even as the project had been announced. Foremost among those that raised questions about the benefits of the project for the local area were the Gandhians at Vedchi, led by Jugatram Dave who had been working for the upliftment of the Halpatis in south Gujarat for some time. Jugatram Dave traces the growing concerns among the Gandhians in his autobiography (1975: 260-261). Their interest in the construction projects in this region of south Gujarat were first aroused during the construction of the irrigation canals for the Kakrapar dam in the same district. The initial enthusiasm to participate in such mega-projects, which had the support of Sardar Patel, and were regarded as beneficial to the population, suffered from doubts when the Gandhian workers heard about the influx of expertise and cheap labour hired from outside the region through contractors. The Gandhians were especially enraged at the support this form of exploitation received from the prevailing ministers and officials in the Congress party, and it seemed to be a far cry from

the Sarvodaya ideals that Gandhi had believed in for the creation of self-sufficiency and upliftment of poverty-stricken rural areas of India. The Ukai dam construction and the compensation measures seemed to confirm their worst doubts---that it was encouraging a system that debilitated livelihoods in the affected villages rather than allowing the affected villages to build their livelihood anew. Jugatram Dave writes of the emergence of their demand about land compensation stemming from incidents wherein cash compensations were appropriated by moneylenders from the affected villages as soon as they were paid (Dave, 1975: 261-262). It was on hearing such stories regarding the proposed dam that Ramesh Desai, a Gandhian worker at Vedchi who had been working on education among poor communities, had been asked by Dave in 1967 to work in Ukai.

Rameshbhai's work with the Ukai displacees initially did not have any efforts oriented towards what had been the traditional focus of Gandhian workers in adivasi areas: programmes of '*sudhar*'---the improvement of what are considered by the mainstream middle-class Hindu society as the 'backward' aspects of *adivasi* life---abstinence from alcohol and meat, insistence on personal hygiene, and an attempt to subordinate the importance of tribal gods to their way of life. Rameshbhai's work, initially with the Ukai Advisory Board and later with his NGO, the Nav Nirman Samiti seems more to be based on elements of Gandhian Sarvodaya philosophy---programmes for primary, secondary, and vocational education, and employment generation schemes.

The initial efforts of Ramesh Desai and his workers were to negotiate better conditions of rehabilitation. At this time, there was an on-going resistance in the villages regarding the resettlement terms. According to the earliest set of resettlement measures, the compensation decided upon by the state was in cash to the amount of Rs.3 per *guntha* of land, i.e. Rs.12 per acre of land. Of this, the government deducted Rs.1.50 per *guntha* or 50% of the compensation money as stamp duty. After moving 3 villages, based on this system of compensation, the government met up with resistance with the next set of villages who refused to vacate their villages for such pitiful amounts. In retaliation, the government withdrew all compensation for all the households in the village. When further threatened with police intervention, the villagers filed a complaint at the district courts. The case, however, fell through in a few months when their lawyers defrauded them of Rs.18,000/- (Ukai Nav Nirman Samiti, 2001: 3).

The Gandhian social workers in the area took on this case. It was taken to the high court by the government. The government lost the case, and was instructed to pay a minimum of Rs.18 per *guntha* (Rs.72 per acre) as compensation. Ramesh Desai also negotiated with the government to divide the terms of compensation into four groups and accept the principle of allocating upto 4 acres of land to landowners. The amount of stamp duty was reduced from 50% to 5% (Ukai Nav Nirman Samiti, 2001: 9). These negotiations spanned about 15 months, so that the new resettlement measures were agreed upon only in 1969. During this period, he and other concerned Gandhians travelled through the villages to inform displacees about the new resettlement measures agreed to by



the government and raise awareness regarding the aims of the Ukai project. In this regard, Ramesh Desai disagreed with the government about their means of informing the villages about their upcoming displacement. This had earlier consisted of pasting eviction notices in village squares or relying on village *patels* and headmen to consent to the project, taking this as an indication of assent on part of the entire village. The Gandhian workers focused more on an awareness-oriented rather than a consent-based campaign, holding village level meetings in many of the affected villages to inform them about the upcoming displacement. Given that initially there was unfamiliarity with the language, they had to rely on translators such as village headmen and schoolteachers on the accuracy of the information conveyed to the villagers (Ukai Nav Nirman Samiti, 2001: 5).

Many of these negotiations occurred as part of the government constituted Ukai Advisory Board, formed in 1968 and comprising of a mix of district and local level officials, Ukai project officials, officials from the forest department and concerned citizens from the district levels and Songadh town. Most of the concerned citizens were non-*adivasis*, with histories of work in *adivasi* areas, and were local residents such as Ramesh Desai and Jugatram Dave. There were few *adivasis*---one of whom was an MLA in the Gujarat legislative assembly, Bhimsingh Vasava and whose concerns regarding the displacement has already been discussed in the earlier parts of this chapter<sup>1</sup>. The Advisory Board was a consultative body, which was convened to discuss various aspects of resettlement and come to an agreement on the measures for resettlement. Apart from Ramesh

Desai who was working with the displacees, only one other member of the Board might be regarded as having an intimate knowledge of the issues of resettlement through living in one of the displaced villages in Narayanpur. While the entry of the Gandhian workers had been through activities that challenged the government's policies (or non-policies) towards the displacees, their presence on the Advisory Board problematised their presence and stand *vis-à-vis* the displacees. In the eyes of the displacees in the years that followed, it irrevocably compromised their position by allying them with the dam officials and the government position. For the Gandhian workers, it was a double-edged sword. As one of the long-time workers of the Ukai Navnirman Samiti recounted in responding to my query on why the Samiti was perceived so sceptically in the displaced villages,

'it is a very complicated issue. It did not start out so complicated. But over the years, things were not as difficult for us---to get access to materials and amendments since Rameshbhai was on the Board. On the other hand, everything passed through the resettlement office, the government. And it was ultimately in their hands to implement the measures. Simple things like distributing the money allocated. If we have to wait months after the official letter, to see a *rupee*, you can imagine what it must be for the displacees. And our hands were tied. We could only advise on the Board. So we could see what was going on, we couldn't do anything. And then people begin to stop talking. They are very angry in the villages with all of this. And we are part of this.'(pc, January 2002, Fort Songadh)

This sense that the Gandhians workers were complicit in the suffering caused to the displacees by shoddy and insufficient rehabilitation policies also pervaded the thoughts and writings of Ramesh Desai in his later years (Desai, mimeo, unpublished; pc, Satyakam Joshi, December 2001). This was an aspect that

Rameshbhai had begun to realise before his death in 1990. Towards the last years of his life, he had grown enormously disillusioned with the government's measures for implementing its rehabilitation programme among the Ukai dam displacees. In an angry and hard-hitting article titled 'The Dam that was built on Ukai: Some Experiences'(mimeo, Unpublished) written two years before his death he describes the government as reneging on the facilities and concessions offered to the oustees. He accused them of adopting a cynical method of postponing decisions on assurances till they are given up on by the recipients. He also talks about his complicity and guilt of having acted as a mediator on behalf of the state, and having watched the subversion of the promised measures. Toward the end of his article, he wrote about a need for a collective repentance on his and his workers' part and for a new non-violent struggle to be launched in the area to implement the long-postponed assurances.

The Gandhian involvement in the area started with the construction of the dam, and its skewed resettlement policy. There had been a sporadic presence of Gandhian workers in the area, however, much of this was limited to villages close to the administrative townships than the interior villages that were cut off due to the absence of poor communication facilities such as those of roads, provision of health facilities, schools, post etc. In this light, Ramesh Desai's work in the displaced villages has been contentiously remembered among the displaced villagers. Unlike the earlier Gandhian intervention of social reform where cultural interventions were an important part of the agenda, Rameshbhai's work seems to have grappled with the issue at the heart of the interaction between the *ujaliyat* and the *adivasi*---the loss of land undergone by *adivasis*

through the years. This is a sustained demand during the resettlement, and continues to be at the forefront of his writings on the displacement of the *adivasis* in this area. His awareness-based campaign made many displacees aware of their entitlements to compensation. This is quite evident in terms of the popular memory in the villages and the *taluka*. Villagers are aware of his visits and his work, though they might not remember his name or might be sceptical about the nature and impact of his work (Navalbhai, Limbi, August 2001; Umeshbhai, Amalpada, May 2002; Nandadiyabhai, Amalpada, April 2002; Sariben, Seltipada, May 2002).

However, today in the villages, the name of Rameshbhai is mistrusted. There are many specific and non-specific charges made by the villagers. The specific charges are tied up with the 'Sarvodaya' schools in the villages and include charges of mismanagement and misappropriation of funds. Though these have never been proven---since many of the incidents have valid explanations from the Samiti's records; the non-specific charges are illustrative of a generalised sense of suspicion, anger and betrayal that exists in the displaced villages. The non-specific charges against Rameshbhai are those of being a collaborator with the state agencies during the period of resettlement and making false promises to the displacees in an attempt to move them to the resettlement sites. In this sense, Ramesh Desai's awareness work among the *adivasis* during 1967-68 seemed to haunt his later work in this area. In the face of the impersonality of the government's information campaign, Ramesh Desai, as an outsider and one carrying information about compensation, represented for many *adivasis*, as

allied to or in the employ of the state agencies. This perception was strengthened by the fact that Ramesh Desai had moved to the Ukai area with the construction of the dam, and was not a familiar figure in the area. In his initial years, he did not speak the local dialect and thus his interaction in the villages had been limited to Gujarati speakers in the villages that were represented by teachers or a few of the village elite. Jugatram Dave in his writing on the Ukai dam, gave some indications as to the difficulties that the Samiti workers encountered in this area. He writes,

'[...] setting up activities in this area was not easy. The people were in an extremely distressed state. To add to this, the area was new to us. The ministers in Gujarat and Maharashtra had used their foresight and transferred some of the area where the villages were to be affected to Gujarat, so that compensation work could carry on unhindered there. In this manner, Uccal and Nizhar talukas in the Khandesh area (of Maharashtra) were transferred to Gujarat. Our task was to familiarise ourselves with this population, effectively implement development works in this region, set up boarding schools, educational institutions, primary schools, secondary schools and vocational institutions. The people in this area were unfamiliar to us. One could not say that the workers completely agree with their ways. The transfer of areas has resulted in relative discontentment in the area. The Ukai Sarvodaya Yojana aims to be a soothing balm in this area...' (Dave, 1975: 263-264, my translation).

For Dave, the problems arose at the interface of the Gandhian workers and the displaced population and were exacerbated by factors such as the unfamiliarity with the population and the differences in language. While these may be valid reasons in themselves, it is also a perspective that does not question further the dislocation of known worlds that displacement caused for the *adivasis*, compounded by geographical transfers from one administrative set up of

Maharashtra to another in Gujarat forcing them into interactions with very different bureaucratic systems of the state. For a population that was largely illiterate and unfamiliar with Gujarati or Hindi, which were languages of the bureaucracy that sanctioned their compensations, the whole exercise must have been a confusing and humiliating exercise. Jugatram Dave's memoirs on Ukai seem to forefront the work of the Gandhian institutions among *adivasis* and to situate the role of the Gandhians in the area within a Sarvodaya framework.

Among the displacees however, there is yet another context within which Rameshbhai's work is discussed. Many years after the completion of the dam, the compensation had not been completed among many of the displacees. Under the circumstances, Ramesh Desai as a representative has continued to be accused in the villages of persuading them to move by making false promises. In contrast to Dave's reasons, some of Ramesh Desai's later writing on the Ukai dam in its bitterness and anger convey some of the generalised anger that pervades these villages to this day. In his own words,

'[...] since in those days dam building was believed to be for the development of the nation, we believed in the idea that we had to sacrifice something for the good of our fellow-citizens. To this end, we began to convince the affected villagers to take the compensation offered [...] sometimes the work became difficult due to the intolerant behaviour of the government, the uncooperativeness of their officers, their contemptuous and discriminating attitude towards the *adivasis*, and the fixity of the laws [...] however, at the higher levels of authority there was a general feeling of sympathy for the displaced [...] in terms of its attitude, the government stands accused of spreading misinformation, and mistrust as well as being shrouded in secrecy. It has not fulfilled any of the promises made in the resettlement measures [...] it has not resolved many issues associated with the resettlement [...] it has taken advantage of our trust in its enterprise

[...] this is why we have become sceptical and have to be on our guard.' (Desai, mimeo, unpublished: 9-10, my translation)

He goes on to list some of the resettlement measures that have yet to be implemented in the villages. These include availability of clean drinking water, access roads to the villages, within villages and to the fields, return of lands that were not submerged under the waters to the original owners, and implementation of development schemes in the area. While until this point the voice of the author seems to include the displacees within the shared world of anger at the attitude of resettlement agencies; there is also an acknowledgement and a possible window to the question of the fractious attitudes the *adivasis* had towards his later presence in the area. 'Due to the Ukai dam, we have begun to hold ourselves culpable of the anger and suffering in these villages...' (Desai, mimeo, unpublished: 10). In the post-colonial Indian polity, Rameshbhai's writings on the role of the Gandhians in exacerbating the conditions in the displaced villages reveals the dilemmas of Gandhian grassroots workers. On the one hand, they had ideological ties with leaders like Sardar Patel since the days of the independence struggle, who advocated a developmental state. On the other hand, they were dismayed at the fall-outs of the mega-projects for the local populations. Co-operating with the state and advising them on the humanitarian aspects of the technocratic projects seemed to be the role that Dave and Ramesh Desai saw for themselves *vis-à-vis* the state. In terms of their work *vis-à-vis* the *adivasis*, Hardiman has discussed paternalism as one of the aspects of the Gandhian approach to *adivasis* (1987: 207). Most sympathetic accounts of the displaced Vasavas are set within anecdotes that mention these populations as '*bhola*'---a

Gujarati word indicating an attitude of childish ignorance and innocence. The Gandhians then saw their primary task in the area as one of upliftment of a downtrodden people through the intervention of a developmental state. It was an agenda that could not be carried on under colonial rule, but which was in the nature of a Congress-led developmental state. The contradictions in this assumption in terms of neglect of marginalised populations by the development state was only revealed over the years, much to the disillusionment of many Gandhians like Ramesh Desai.

The scepticism of the Gandhians by the local population was also compounded in terms of the activities that the Nav Nirman Committee undertook after 1974. In addressing the destitution that the villages suffered following their displacement, Ramesh Desai focused much of the energies of the Nav Nirman Samiti on economic and educational activities. However, the very limitation of the Samiti's economic activities, both in terms of the limited number of villages they work in until today as well as the small-scale nature of their work renders it irrelevant in the perception of many sections of the *adivasi* groups. For many of the displacees, the economic activities carried out by the Samiti revealed a weakness and inflexibility in the Gandhian Sarvodaya model of rural development that through its small scale employment generation activities such as spinning and soap-making did not offer them a substantial alternative to redress a loss of the quality of life they enjoyed (Atmarambhai, Amalpada, January 2002; Navalbhai, Limbi, November 2001). In this sense, it had neither questioned the legitimacy of the usurpation of their livelihoods, and nor did it offer a strategy to rebuild a set



of viable entitlements that would allow them to create a life in the more technocratic world of the *ujaliyats*.

## Conclusion

This chapter has tried to examine the political and historical contexts surrounding the construction of the Ukai dam in the 1960s. The aims of development, primarily imagined as a 'technological fix' juxtaposed with regional and local level interests, allowed the legitimisation of the social costs of the project. In the larger focus on a scientific and technocratic view of development, the brutality experienced by those who needed to 'sacrifice' their resources in the national good was not solely in the crushing of their rights, but also in a total neglect and apathy towards the destitution that these sacrifices would create. This chapter looks at each of the terrains of the presentation and discussion on large hydro-electric projects, and the Ukai dam specifically. The terrain of the bureaucracy has been examined through a reading of the official published material on the dam as well as the examination of the institutional structures that were set up to implement the project and legitimated the project. It has examined the debates and decisions through which the project and ineffective resettlement measures were legitimised in the legislative spaces. However, the contradictions of following a developmental path through ostensibly democratic institutions and goals created and legitimised sacrifices from those groups of the national polity that were already marginal to mainstream life and livelihoods. This created unresolvable dilemmas for those in charge of implementing the project and

realising the dreams of development 'in the field'---whether they were bureaucrats or Gandhian workers. Their tragedy unfolded in personal lives and in their work only over time---in not being able to negate the promises of development but not being able to accept the process of the brutal translation of this development paradigm into brick and concrete constructions.

More importantly, the Ukai dam has had a significant impact on the developmental trajectory of south Gujarat since it was built. Though the initial perceptions of the significance of the dam for the region were conceived in terms of electricity and flood control, the irrigation network that it spawned in south Gujarat has completely transformed the political economy of the region. It has not only emerged as a green belt of monocultural sugarcane cropping and sugar manufacture; but has transformed social, cultural and economic relations between the adivasi hinterland and the irrigated western areas of the district. While there has been much literature on the transformation of economic, political and social relationships in the 'benefit' areas of the Ukai project, changes have been as dramatic and pervasive in the 'command' areas of the project. Inadequate resettlement has been just one of the legacies of the project. As part of this, the displaced villages have had to contend with changes in political universes, with environmental impacts of the dam that have resulted in a gradual reduction of rainfall in the region, and little prospect of rebuilding their lives without seeking employment outside the region. Economic, environmental and political factors have resulted in long-lasting changes in the Vasava villages. The following chapters focus on the impact of the dam on the displaced villages over a long

period of 30 years, and its impact on the social structures and hierarchical relations within three such affected villages.

## CHAPTER 4

### Displacement: Land, Generation and Gender

To begin with, one asks the question of what the scale and impact of Ukai dam was on the displaced villages? The displacement due to the Ukai dam submerged 100 villages and partially submerged 70 villages over 3 *talukas* in western India-- --Songadh, Uccchal and Nizhar *talukas* in the newly formed Gujarat state<sup>1</sup>. It displaced a total population of 52,000 people of which records note 5004 landed households with a total of 73,000 acres of agricultural land and 4885 landless households (Deputy Collector's Office, Fort Songadh, 1969: 3). The villages were mainly the home of the Vasava, Kathodia and Kotwaliya tribes, with larger villages inhabited by few Maharashtrian traders and moneylenders.

As has been mentioned in the earlier chapter, the villages were relocated over 4 *talukas* in Gujarat state---Uchhal, Nizhar, Songadh and Mandvi. Different methods were used in choosing particular village sites---larger villages with political networks in administrative towns were given a choice of sites; whereas smaller settlements faced the trauma and indignity of finding that they had to move when the waters of the reservoir began rising or government trucks arrived at the village to load household material to be transported to the allocated relocation sites.

This chapter attempts to examine the displacees' views of their displacement and

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<sup>1</sup> Parts of Songadh *taluka* and the Uccchal and Nizhar *talukas* were transferred to the newly-formed Gujarat state in 1960. Before this they had been part of Bombay state that was bifurcated in 1960 into Gujarat and Maharashtra states.

resettlement over three generations at the time of the fieldwork in 2000-2001. It examines the dominant tropes and forms of the stories of displacement and the meaning this event has acquired in the history and everyday lives of the displacees from a cluster of 3 villages, called resettlement site no. 3 in government records, in the Songadh *taluka*. It puts forward the argument that the memory of displacement has entered into several discursive arenas both overtly and subtly among the inhabitants of these villages. What I would like to examine closely in this chapter are the contours of this memory, across generations and gender, in order to show that what is constructed as loss and social injustice varies across different social groups in these villages. Displacement, as I hope to illustrate in this chapter, represents betrayal in terms of a meta-narrative in the Vajhpur, Seltipada and Amalpada---the three villages studied in this thesis. However, the emotions and relationships that carry the traces of this betrayal and represent this 'betrayal' seem far more fractured and fracturing than literature on displacement has indicated. It is particularly striking that the emerging landed interests in the three villages have appropriated the mode of remembering displacement in the three villages. That this group of persons is not a stable category is reinforced by competing narratives of different generations of men who seek through their versions of displacement to create competing claims over the scant resources offered by the state for resettlement---within and across the villages of Amalpada, Vajhpur and Seltipada.

The first part of this chapter lays the outline of the resettlement measures framed by the government for the affected villages, and the lacunae in its

implementation. The second part of this chapter discusses the centrality of the loss of land that is at the core of the Vasavas' sense of betrayal about displacement. The chapter then examines the different contours of this loss and betrayal for various generations, socio-economic groups and among women in the affected villages.

As has been argued in the earlier chapter, the Ukai project was characterised by the lack of a policy framework on rehabilitation as a result of which the resettlement and compensation measures were stitched together at the district level (see Appendix 1 for details of resettlement measures). This allowed for the evaluation and responsibility for the programme to be limited to the implementing authorities; and led to large-scale non-implementation of the agreed-on measures. However, the absence of rehabilitation measures as part of a framework of creating large projects which formed a modernisation agenda was not specific to the Ukai project and but a general world-wide trait, as seen for example in projects in China (Jing, 2003) and Zambia (Colson and Scudder 1971; 1992). In all these regions, the absence of rehabilitation concerns within the projects and its impacts on the displaced population raised systematic debates and doubts that coalesced globally in the 1980s as part of an environmental critique of modernisation projects. However, these came much too late for those displaced by the Ukai dam. While the resettlement and rehabilitation (henceforth referred to as 'R+R') debate has widened to include displacement within the ambit of the violation of civil and political rights (Lawyers Committee for Human Rights Report, 1993), violation of the rights to food, clothing, shelter and

social security (Brownlie, 1987) and the government's violation to the human rights to compensation (Lee, 1986: 532-567; Boven, 1992). The building of the Ukai dam and the fate of the people there has occupied a curious space whereby the experiences of those affected by Ukai are coloured by the then-promises of the government and the present-promises of R+R that have moved well beyond the earlier ones. The people of the Ukai affected areas, thus have had to contend with both the actuality of broken promises, and a totalising vision of what could have been. Various case studies carried out by independent research organisations, however, have cited, as in the case of the Narmada dam, the Tehri dam, the Hirakud, the Ukai and the Pong dam, the non-implementation by state agencies of the promises made during the conceptualisation of the project (Chaudhari and Choksi, 1971; Das and Charan, 1982, 1995; CSE, 1987). In several current instances, notably the Narmada, land remains at the heart of the struggles where land compensation has been promised to displacees, but in many case has not been identified as yet, while the work on the construction of the reservoir carries on. Betrayal, thus, remains the core of the arguments in the building of dams.

The increasing concern with inadequate R+R policies and their indifferent implementation has led to an emergence of a huge body of literature in east and south Asia that have examined the immediate aftermath of displacement on affected groups, highlighting the negative impacts of displacement on the socio-economic and cultural ethos of these groups (Colson, 1970; CSE, 1987; Thukral, 1992; TISS, 1995). In this sense, much of this literature has been polemical, a

fragment of a larger body of literature arguing against the macro-, technocratic and capitalist model of development adopted by many of the newly-independent countries in an attempt to emulate the paths to the perceived prosperity of 'the west'. On the other hand, are occasional studies on displacement attempting to research into 'subjective conditions of the victims of displacement' (Zwingmann, 1983). In the early 1980s, some such studies approached issues of displacement from a Freudian psychoanalytic perspective, attempting to identify types and conditions of post-displacement trauma among displacees of civil wars, natural disasters and development projects throughout the world (Zwingmann, 1983). What these different bodies of literature focussed on is a downward spiral in the economic, social and psychic worlds of displaced groups. This different genre of research also assume images and forms of loss, and how these negotiate their way into the post-displacement everyday lives and identities of displaced groups, often building up an academic construct of a 'community', welded together in their loss, creating a coherent identity for displaced groups of people.

More recently, there have been anthropological studies examining specifically the affected people's perceptions of their displacement and their own situation in the post-displacement period (Baviskar, 1995; Hakim, 1995, 1997; Nayak, 1999). While Hakim and Baviskar's work is located in a situation where displacement and resettlement is imminent in the Narmada valley, Nayak's work is based among the Kisan tribals displaced by the Hirakud dam 4 decades ago in 1957. Nayak finds the Kisan 'three decades later [...] still reeling under the trauma of their eviction from their homeland' (1999: 87), and looking for means of



redressal for the lack of adequate compensation at that time. Their response to their displacement enfolded dual processes: positing an identity as 'displacees' based on the assertion that their displacement had violated their human rights to land (1999: 143); and a strong cultural drive towards a unity and homogeneity through a deliberate effort by Kisan leaders to re-create the past through storytelling and revival of rituals with an aim to forging a political unity (1998: 3). Land is central in both spheres---according to the Kisan; it is an 'absolute need' because it is fundamental to their survival. What makes land central to life, rather than a fundamental livelihood strategy is the Kisan insistence not just on any land. When they refer to an absolute need, it is for Kisan land that is submerged beneath the reservoir. This land provides food---a vital nourishment for the body and their sense of identity; to their belief that that land is their place of origin, knowledge and which links them to their ancestral spirits (1999: 143-144). Land in other words, aids in production and the reproduction of their social and moral worlds. According to Nayak, 'through providing wasteland, the government has undercut Kisan<sup>2</sup> dignity and identity and become destructive to their way of life' (1999: 143).

While Nayak's argument is a study of the subjective reconstitution of a moral and social world destroyed by displacement; Hakim (1996; 1997) and Baviskar's (1995) studies concern the subjective anticipations and fears of resettlement. In Hakim's work (1995), the tribal concerns about relocation are more pragmatic and the prospects of social and cultural disruptions in kinship networks, dress,

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<sup>2</sup> 'Kisan' is also a term of reference for a 'farmer' in many languages on the Indian sub-continent

culture and ceremonies are secondary pre-occupations subject to flexibility in interpretation and forms of practice by Vasava individuals (1997: 143). The major concerns regarding resettlement again concern land, but not in terms of the intricate ancestral relationship that underlies the Kisan relationship with their land. The main Vasava concerns with regard to land lie in the fact that the new lands in the resettlement sites require many more inputs for agricultural production such as labour and fertilisers (1995: 145). Their response to the new resettlement sites lays more emphasis on the 'material' factors such as the presence of electricity in the new sites. These findings contribute to a growing body of recent literature (Baviskar, 1995: 220; Dwivedi, 1997; Srinivasan and Mehta, 2000), mainly located in the Narmada valley, that has sought to deconstruct the homogeneity of interests vis-à-vis resettlement among displacees. According to Dwivedi, resistance to development projects or acceptance of resettlement measures would depend on internal differentiation among the *adivasis* based on class and landed interests (1997: 34). To this extent, marginal *adivasi* peasants may be inclined to accepting resettlement with a hope of securing ownership of small plots of land (when resettlement measures promise these), while landed and middle classes among the *adivasis* might hold out until they are offered favourable opportunity structures (Dwivedi, 1997). Baviskar also notes the reluctance of the landless *adivasis* to join the NBA struggle against the dam, even though they risk losing their livelihood and community (1995: 220). What emerges through several such studies of societies threatened with displacement is the question of the loss of choice, especially for

marginal/landless displacees for whom the security from land is a fragile, but important, security in their life histories. These studies show that land and the relationship to land is a complex, and fractured, experience amongst groups of displacees.

Furthermore, rehabilitation issues in development-induced displacement raise questions of the extent to which displacement impinges on the identity of displaced communities. In Songadh *taluka*, apart from the '*ujaliyaat-*adivasi**' distinction mentioned earlier, there exists the '*ujadiyaat-*vasava**' distinction, between those villages displaced by the dam and those that did not undergo such displacement. The term *ujadiyaat*<sup>3</sup> is used mainly in the non-displaced villages to refer to the displacees. The range of connotations of the term is wide---varying from poverty and destitution of the area to specific characteristics of 'primitive', wild and dangerous. In using the term '*ujadiyat*', the non-displaced Vasava villages employ the descriptive terms used by other *adivasi* groups in the area such as the Chaudharis and the Gamits. The Vasava tribe is one of the lower ranking tribes in western India with the Chaudharis, Dodhiya Patels and the Gamits occupying higher rungs in the tribal status ladder. This hierarchy has been reinforced by economic and educational change within the *adivasi* groups (Shah, 1977: 82; Breman, 1985: 183). The Vasavas are the lesser-privileged *adivasi* group in terms of access to education and economic resources. However, with displacement and the non-implementation of many of the developmental

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<sup>3</sup> The term '*ujadiyaat*' is not to be confused with the term '*ujaliyaat*' which refers to the upper caste groups in the region and in non-tribal areas. '*Ujadiyaat*' refers to those displaced by the Ukai dam. Etymologically, the latter term has its root word '*ujadvu*' which is to be uprooted.

measures of resettlement has come a cycle of poverty, unemployment and destitution that clearly demarcates the displaced villages from the non-displaced ones. On the other hand, the location of the dam has also meant that the non-displaced Vasava villages have benefited economically from their position downstream of the dam. Along with this change has also come about a change in the access to economic, educational and social interactions with the non-*adivasis* leading to an aspiration for a '*sudherala*' lifestyle that includes aspirations towards abstinence, rejection of traditional Vasava marriage practices such as bride-snatching, and participation in mainstream religious discourses such as Pentacostal Christianity and numerous Hindu sects and sub-groups that are prevalent in the area.

The following sections examine the long-term impact of the displacement on the identity of the Vasava as a displaced group in this region. It also looks at the construction of this loss through a 'public' village level narrative that serves to represent and communicate this sense of loss to the non-displacees. Furthermore, the sections examine the divergence in the construction of the loss that the village level generalised narrative sets out from those of individual narratives across generation, social status and gender.

#### Narratives at the village level: the generalised village level narrative

In his study that examines the life-world of the Kisan tribals three decades after their displacement, Nayak remarks on the attempts by educated Kisan leaders to

forge a political unity among the displacees geographically isolated from each other through the displacement. One of the responses to displacement has been the creation of a collective memory based on dreaming about an 'ideal' Kisan world---which has been harnessed in a deliberate effort by Kisan leaders to recreate the past through story-telling and rituals (Nayak, 1998: 3). These processes involved in the relationship between memory and the past had been first remarked upon by Halbwachs (1992), who observed in relation to collective memory that tradition provides a space for the institutionalisation and contextualisation of memory such that past events are rendered meaningful (Hutton, 1986: 58). This necessarily implies that the way the past is recalled depends on the power of the group that frames its memory. Halbwachs suggests that through its traditions, a group colonises the past by 'locating images of its values in a landscape of time [...] the most powerful group crowds out the traditions of competing groups, or re-shapes them to conform to its own conceptions' (1986: 58). Halbwachs observations are particularly pertinent in the context of studies on development and modernisation that have been argued by scholars such as Escobar (1984), Nandy (1988) and Marglin and Marglin (1990) as based on a particular set of values and economic notions of progress and growth. However, despite this critique and empirical evidence that indicates to conflicts over assumptions of development and welfare in local settings, there is little work available that examines the memories of development and the promises of entitlements that it creates in populations. How could one address processes of remembering within the context of the Ukai dam displacees, wherein displacement has resulted in a physical and political marginalisation of

the displaced villages in Songadh *taluka*? To what extent are particular narratives about displacement an expression of certain interests to the exclusion of others, and an attempt to posit not only an identity, but also rights to specific resources, both natural and cultural?

In the villages of Amalpada, Seltipada and Vajhpur, the government officials, politicians, visitors living in non-displaced villages and development workers travelling through the area are told the story of displacement over and over. This is thus not a personalised account. All displacees enter into this account as part of a larger group of witnesses. There is a similarity to the chronological manner in which the story moves, as well as in the interpretation of what was lost during the displacement. The account is narrated mainly in Gujarati, the language spoken by the non-Vasavas indicating that in this form the story is directed outward, rather than within the villages. This is a story in the public domain---one that is remembered and transmitted to the non-displacees in the region. Importantly, it is a narrative most frequently articulated by the contemporary village leaders, some of whom were young men while others were children when the displacement occurred from 1967-69 in the three researched villages. That the story is not merely a rhetorical strategy is evident through the undeniability of the physical isolation, unemployment, scarcity of food and the presence of common illnesses such as anaemia, skin diseases, malnutrition, stomach-related illnesses in the resettled villages today.

The most commonly recited story of the years of the building of the Ukai dam

told to visitors has three definite stages: the *joona gaam* (the old villages) that were the utopian plains of fertile soil, water, abundant land, food and prosperity. Typical crops grown included rice (*dangar*), cotton, maize, *jowar*, *tuver*, green vegetables, chillies and tomatoes. In addition, cattle breeding and herding animals such as goats was common. Villages were isolated, but that allowed a semblance of control over their lives as villagers interacted with merchants from nearby towns to the extent of selling their crops. Labourers had to be recruited from areas downstream of the river during the busy harvest seasons. There were times when harvests failed, but the surrounding forests were abundant enough to provide alternate sources of food. This time of idyll and plenty was captured often by the men.

‘The Tapi was just a short walk from my house. I used to go there to bathe everyday’ (Fatubhai, Amalpada, April 2001)

‘There was so much fish in the river. We never had to worry about food’ (Devrambhai, Vajhpur, September 2001)

‘We had 30-40 acres of land for each house in the village. The people from the plains used to come to our villages looking for work in the fields. Now we have to wander aimlessly there looking for work’ (Nandadiyabhai, Amalpada, April 2001)

The second stage is characterised by the arrival of ‘*madrasis*’ and the construction of the dam. Accompanied by police or ‘*sipadas*’, these foreigners descended for a few days on each of the villages and the forests with their instruments and began measuring the villages and the lands. When queried by some of the village elders about their tasks and their instruments they were imperiously informed, or roughly prohibited from asking further questions and

told that they would be informed when the '*sarkar*'<sup>4</sup> saw it necessary. For many of the villagers, though this was not the first encounter with the state, it was the first time the '*sarkar*' had come to their villages.

'They came with their long sticks and red flags. They would walk upto to any field in the village and start measuring. Then they did the same with the houses. They would come with the *sipadas*. That is when we started wondering. We even asked them what they were doing. But the *madrasis* did not speak any Gujarati. They only spoke Hindi. And the *sipadas* threatened us when we asked too many questions. You will know when the time comes, this is what they said. And this is what we got to know---a life of nothing to eat and no land to cultivate.' (Ukajibhai, Seltipada, May 2002)

A few villagers remember leaving to work on the dam, the information having been passed down through friends or kin. There was work on the dam, and they were paid at higher rates than agricultural labour work. Many young and curious young men from the villages chose to work on the dam. It was daily wage labour, and some villagers worked on the dam out of financial necessity; but more frequently out of curiosity and boredom with agricultural work. However, the dam continued to be a site of destruction, metaphorically, and, according to some of the Vasavas who worked on the dam, quite literally.

'You should have seen the dam when it was being built. Full of people---carrying mud, building the houses, cutting the forests. It grew before our eyes. But no one had any regard/ care (*kadar*) for the people who were toiling to build it. At one point, the *sahebs* felt the work was going too slowly. They wanted more mud to be carried, and faster. Already people were working all day and all night. And those who would get tired would just sleep there. That was the worst job---carrying

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<sup>4</sup> This is a generic term used for the government officials and bureaucrats as well as the body of the Indian state.



mud. Then the *sahebs* got the 'dozer in. It would carry the mud and dump it on the dam. So many people died under that mud---they would be asleep, or trip while carrying mud. The 'dozer would dump mud over them, and in the dark no one would notice. So you see, that dam is built on our bones.'<sup>5</sup> (Devsinghbai, Vajhpur, September 2001; Ukajibhai, Seltipada, May 2002; Radtiyabhai, Limbi, November 2001; Paylabhai, Amalpada, April 2002)

The third part of the story is located in the move to the resettlement sites. After about 2 years into the construction, trucks began arriving in the villages. Some people were told they had to move and would be allocated new land near the dam. Houses were broken down and piled into one set of trucks, while people and their belongings were accommodated in another set of trucks and taken to the new sites. Those who resisted were threatened with police action, and when that did not work, they were threatened with legal action. The threat of court cases convinced most villagers to move, but the few who resisted were completely cut out of any compensation entitlements. Village leaders talk about one of the villages among the fourteen which resisted moving. The village leaders were arrested; and not a single household in the village was given *pattas* to any land or houses.

In the forest, the plots of land for houses were already marked out, and each household's wood to re-build the houses was dumped onto the relevant marked plot. This is how the villagers came to the '*navi vasahat*' (the new settlement).

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<sup>5</sup> This is an account I could not verify. The officials and ex-officials deny this charge. The official accounts make no mention of these. The *adivasi* informants could not point out specific households in the area that had borne the tragedy of such a death; however they insisted the accounts were true since many of the labourers who died arrived at the dam from distant villages in search of work.

The villagers were promised *pattas* of 3 acres of land, money and jobs. Some got the land and the money. Others are still waiting. And no one has been employed as yet at the dam site or the thermal station as promised.

The story is significant because it reflects the intensity of betrayal and anger felt against the forces that organised the construction of the dam, and promised to recompense the individuals and households affected adversely in the aftermath. In this, it remarks on the *adivasi* perception of the Ukai dam and the forces of the state. The construction of the dam destroyed lives, literally and metaphorically. In this narrative, that looks outwards, the primary relationship outlined is with the state and the agencies involved in the construction of the dam at various levels. On the one hand, the state is an active perpetrator of violence through its policy of forcible eviction of villages. On the other, it perpetuates destitution among the displacees through displaying an indifference to the difficulties of the displacees in their new resettlements. These include the government represented by the '*madrasis*', the bulldozers driven by the *sahebs* and the '*sipadas*'---or the police.

The generalised narrative is primarily a narrative by the by those who have displaced the elders, and have emerged as significant elders in the resettled villages. They have not only emerged as power brokers and political leaders, but also constitute the minority of landed men in these villages. Their generalised narrative forefronts the forcible nature of the displacement, and the nature of forcible power used by the state to achieve its aims. The coercive nature of the state machinery is further highlighted through contrasting and differentiating a

time of plenty before the construction of the dam with that of the period of evictions that were characterised by uncertainty, chaos and eventual destruction of a familiar environment and mode of life. That this is a synoptic narrative rather than a series of personal testimonies is reinforced by the nature of the stories narrated. Many of these that mark the death and destruction caused by the dam, such as the narrations relating the deaths of the labourers, did not occur or affect any of the members on the villages studied. And yet, they form part of the core of the narrated experience of displacement in this region. This is further emphasised by the fact that some of the stories that were talked about in the villages were also independently narrated in the non-displaced villages a little way downstream of the region. In this sense, the generalised narrative of displacement experienced in the Songadh *taluka* is not confined to the displaced villages, but drawn upon by even non-displaced *adivasi* villages to either illustrate the plight of the displacees or the might of the state, and the conflicting relations of the *adivasis* with the state in this region.

While in the narration of the generalised narrative in the non-displaced villages, the displacees emerge as a unitary disempowered group; within the villages itself the generalised narrative seeks to create a collective history of the displacement. In the recounting of this by male leaders in the villages, it is the examples of the most marginalised within these villages that are held up as representative of the trauma of displacement and the impact of this on the displacees. It is a well-known fact that the persons who went to work on the dam constituted for most part the landless and the agricultural labourers from the region. The landed

farmers in the pre-dam villages did not have any labour from the household to spare from the demands of agricultural activity in the region, it was those that had no such means of continued and assured subsistence that sought the construction activity as a means of earning a livelihood. The generalised narrative does speak of a few 'bored' young men looking for an adventure that work on the dam, or rather away from their villages, seemed to offer; however, these were few and worked for shorter periods until the unrelenting demand for their labour by the construction activity drove them away (Rajubhai, Vajhpur, September 2001; Karsanbhai, Amalpada, November 2001; Paylabhai, Amalpada, May 2002). In other words, the stories of the destruction wrought by the dam mainly befell the landless and the already marginal *adivasis*. The generalised narrative highlight this experience of the more marginalised *adivasis* in the pre-dam period in raising the brusqueness and imperiousness of the state to the questions of ordinary villagers in the region. While in some villages like Seltipada and Vajhpur, information about resettlement was not communicated by the government bureaucracy nor the Gandhian workers to anyone; larger villages like Amalpada were informed about resettlement and even offered a choice of resettlement sites by either the staff of the Resettlement office of the Ukai dam or the Gandhian workers (Ukadiabhai Buddhuhai, Amalpada, May 2002). In such villages, it was through the village social hierarchy that information was supposed to percolate to the other villagers, according to the Ukai dam officials (Resettlement booklet, 1971: 4). Thus, the anger of the officials faced by the villagers on asking questions relate to the experience of those less influential in the social and political structures of these villages. In other words, the generalised narrative, in

being a story recounted by the male leaders of the village, is not necessarily a story of their experiences. It seeks to relate an experiential story and create a collective history of the villages based on the experiences of the most marginalised in the villages to demarcate the suffering of the event of the Ukai dam displacement.

It is in the generalised narrative that the state-community relationship is sharply characterised through the trope of suffering caused by various 'betrayals' through the displacement and into the post-displacement period. These betrayals are experienced in the refusal of the *madrasis* to provide answers to the villagers' enquiries; in the burial of the labourers working on the dam and in the inadequate compensation provided to the villagers after displacement. Although the focus is on the lack of compensation and betrayal by state agencies, the images of deliberate deception, indifference and death recur in the generalised narrative. A detailed enquiry and life-histories reveal that the men and women on whose deprivation and suffering the generalised narrative is based were and continue to be marginal to the economic, political and social life of the pre-dam and the resettled villages. However, the narrators of these stories of suffering are primarily those men who own some amount of land in the resettled villages and consequently have had to rebuild their lives within the resettled villages. The generalised narrative, in other words, that depicts a collective sense of deprivation is an attempt to articulate a collective sense of injustice; but one that is expressed by a particular group in the resettled villages that consist of aspiring men with interests in leadership and the security of some land. In this sense, the

generalised narrative cannot be thought of as a representative narrative, wherein the more articulate speak for all groups in the villages. The memory of displacement enters the stories and life-histories of the landless in completely different ways from that of a collective sense of injustice. An examination of the different histories of the landless is taken up in the next chapter. However, it is on the basis of this observed difference in the displacement narratives between the landed and the landless that this chapter examines the generalised narrative as an appropriation of the trope of suffering by the young landed men and leaders in the resettled villages.

The generalised narrative, then, marks out the construction of the dam as a significant event in the history of the displaced villages. In the historical and anthropological works on memory and remembrance in Indian literature, an event has been defined in different ways. In writing about a riot in north India that forced Gandhi to call his non-violent movement to a halt in 1922, historian Shahid Amin (1995) has defined an event in terms of 'its distinctiveness, specificity and multiple peculiarities about it [...] the true significance of the event lies outside the time and place of its occurrence...' (1995: 9). The plot of the generalised displacement narrative indicates the construction of the dam as a moment that stands outside time, in terms of its persistence in memory and its perceived impact over life in the villages. Another characteristic of the narrative is that it does not so much describe an 'event', in Amin's sense of the term, as lays out the context for the construction of an event. In this sense, the generalised narrative is not simply about presenting an account of the construction of the

dam---it lays out an argument for the destitution, suffering and underdevelopment of these villages in the aftermath of the dam. This is evident in terms of the importance that the displacement has acquired for the villages and especially, those who have had to rebuild their lives in the resettled villages.

The reasons have not so much to do with the growing anti-dam movements in the nearby Narmada region, indeed few if any of the villagers know about the movement at all. However, it definitely has more of a link with the dissatisfaction with the incomplete compensation policies, wherein villagers are still awaiting cash compensation. More important than this has been the role of shrinking resources over the years, especially in terms of forestlands for pasture, common lands within the villages and private farmlands that have become the loci of bitter inter-household disputes.

The villages in Songadh *taluka* have been relocated upstream of the dam, on lands that were under the ownership of the forest department as reserved forestlands. During resettlement, the forest department gave up certain areas of this land for resettlement of the villages and the allocation of a maximum of 4 acres of cultivable land to those entitled to land compensation. Since this meant that the resettled households were hemmed in and restricted to specific sites, cultivation and cattle rearing could be foreseen as a livelihood strategy only for one or two generations. Over the years, fragmentation of land over generations has either led to unviability for cultivation as a means of household sustenance, and/or disputes between household members over the question of the size of their

inheritance. Many displacees do cultivate land illegally in the forest; however, it is a fragile livelihood based on the mercies of the forest guards who need to be bribed to look the other way and allow the plots to exist. Moreover, with the passage of time, and the growth in population, there has been a enormous pressure on the areas demarcated in the forest that allow the villagers to access the forest for produce such as firewood, fodder and wood for the houses. In the absence of any other development work in the area, more and more people have been forced to rely on illegal logging of teakwood. It is a cycle of struggle for sustenance that leads to more confrontations with the state. In the absence of the government's assurances of training being imparted for employment in the local towns, or of the initiation of any creation of employment and work in the region where the displaced villages have been relocated, the villagers regard their solutions, however short-term, as acquiring a legitimacy. While for many of the landed who, over the years, alternate means of livelihoods on land have evolved--such as sharecropping or renting land from the more marginal farmers in the villages; for the marginal and landless, the situation of a struggle for eking out a living continues to intensify over the years. It is in this context of neglect in the lives of the displaced Vasavas that displacement becomes a continued and continuing event in the lives of the displaced landless villagers, and one that no longer remains confined to the domain of memory. In this it differs from Halbwach's contested construction of the past (1986: 58) or even Amin's conceptualisation of peasants' remembering of an event as bearing traces of master narratives of the judicial discourse (1995: 118). In the evidence of neglect and indifference of the state to their welfare in the post-displacement, the



memory of the past event of the displacement and its injustice continues to be experienced and lived to this day in the displaced villages and the generalised narrative acquires a sharper edge for those who are narrating it.

During fieldwork in 2002, I encountered old men in the villages talking about a book or a list of compensation measures that the Ukai project had planned. They had been shown in 1969 to the *patels* in the displaced villages as proof of the fact that the government did have a resettlement policy for the people of the villages that were going to be submerged. In the villages they talk about this book as 'written promises'. It is popularly described as a 'list'---'[...] it is a list of the promises that the go'orment made to the old men....'(Navalbhai Gamit, Limbi, September 2001) was first referred to me in this form by a Vasava who had served as the deputy *sarpanch* of the villages for about 10 years in the 1980s, and who now lived in one of the non-displaced villages near Ukai. Subsequently, this 'list of promises' was mentioned in the villages where fieldwork was conducted by men who had been travelling to the resettlement office for various issues of compensation, land revenue and land disputes. The information about existence of this list passed by word-of-mouth, through *adivasis* working at the resettlement office as peons, and clerks. Over the years though, few persons from villages around the *taluka* had been able to acquire copies through their social and political connections in the resettlement office. These were often hearsay stories, and during the course of fieldwork I compiled a list of all of 2 men scattered over two *talukas* who were believed to have a copy of these promises, either as a photocopy or in a book form. These men refused to show the

'promises' to any person----in order to access the list one had to be introduced through 'reliable' persons. There was too much fear of the list being stolen or damaged. The inaccessibility surrounding the compensation measures had translated itself into secrecy surrounding them at the village level. The irony of this was telling in terms of the persons who possessed these lists in Songadh *taluka*---one of them was old and illiterate; and the other was a young man locally known as a thug in the villages.

The list of written promises was a small booklet published in 1969 by the deputy collector's office at Fort Songadh, the administrative town of Songadh *taluka* in which Ukai dam is located. It is published in Gujarati, the language of the state and is titled 'Information on the Resettlement Measures for those to be moved under the Ukai Dam Project (Surat District)'. The booklet is 13 pages long and contains a list of the fully and partially affected villages under the project, the various government resolutions (GRs) passed about the compensation that landholding and landless households were entitled to, and the *taluka* level authorities who were in charge of implementing the compensation measures. When they were published the booklets were intended for circulation among those seeking information about the resettlement measures of the government. They were mainly distributed among the government staff in charge of the project, the members of the Ukai Resettlement Advisory Committee and the persons involved with the Sarvodaya scheme. Over time, with the failure of any rehabilitation programmes in these villages the booklets have become confidential material for the bureaucracy, and in the context of a number of

amendments passed for modifying the original resettlement measures, they are irrelevant material for planning current development work in the displaced villages. Gandhian workers look on this as historical material, but find it difficult to work with the measures planned (Manjulaben Desai, pc, January 2002). Since 1976, there have been many GRs circulated that have served to either override the measures listed in this booklet or amend them in the larger context of changes and shifts in government policy especially with regard to environmental legislation and forest policy.

In circumstances where interpretations and the spoken word were so saturated with vested interests, the information booklet commands a sense of certainty and authority in the resettled villages. Villagers refer to the absence of resettlement measures in their villages against those they perceive to be present in this list, whose contents most of them have only heard about. The booklet has become a basis for confirmation of the injustice meted out to them over the years through a sustained renegeing on the assurances provided to them by the government. The possession of the booklet then has become a much sought after political currency in the villages. More than this, it is the certainty of the written word that allows the possession of the booklet to hold the perpetrating agency---the government to account. Moreover, the booklet also provides a written basis for many in the second generation, many of whom were children at the time of displacement, an undeniable historical fact and framework to explain the destitution of their villages. Many of these adults are aware that there would have been misunderstandings in the translation of the terms of resettlement, and there might

be certain popularly-believed assurances that would never have been part of the resettlement measures, but they regard the information as a critical part of their history of continued and continuing neglect.

This list of government promises acts as a point of reference for the injustice of displacement and a claim to entitlements among the male leaders in the villages. The hegemony of the written word in this case has allowed for a forgetting of the songs and stories of the chaos of displacement among the current generation of men who are decision-makers and heads of household in the displaced villages. In a simple sense, Shahid Amin's observation (1995) that the subaltern does not remain untouched by the master narratives translates in this case into the desire to possess the 'list' to establish the community's claim its entitlements.

The generalised narrative in this section refers to a general format through which the story of displacement due to the Ukai dam is narrated in all the three villages under study. Moreover, the concern in the generalised narrative is not about the validity of the dam itself. It is about the non-implementation of the resettlement measures promised at the time of displacement---specifically those that concerned land compensation and provision of facilities such as jobs and training for alternate occupations---arenas that concern specific gendered and class-based interests and aspirations. The generalised narrative is not solely a narrative device employed by definite social groups within the villages, for example, the landed men; but does overwhelmingly represent their concerns and aspirations in the post-displacement period.

### Displacement stories of the first generation<sup>6</sup>

This section moves from the preceding public village level narrative on displacement to the personal stories of displacement among the generation that had to take crucial decisions regarding the acceptance of compensation at the time of displacement. Old men and women now, their stories and their silences not only create a counter discourse to the official version of the building of the Ukai dam; they reflect a diverse and stratified society living in the area that was constrained by the assumption of a homogenous, forest-dwelling imagination of the 'tribal community' by the official discourse. This assumption and the problems associated with the disbursement of compensation either in the form of land and/or cash created many more rivalries, hostilities and cycles of violence within and between the fourteen villages; so that 30 years after the building of the Ukai dam the area of hilly forest land occupied by the rehabilitated villages is still known in Songadh *taluka* as '*junooni*' ---revengeful.

Vasavi characterises narratives as markers of collective and personal memories (Vasavi, 1996: 205). No doubt, the displacement has impacted the lives of men from landed households, who lost their ways of life and livelihoods substantially due to the displacement. However, for many of the men of this generation the personal stories of displacement are filled with contradictions and unanswered

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<sup>6</sup> The first generation refers to the generation that constituted the decision-makers and the village elders in the pre-displacement period. The second generation constitute the sons, decision-makers and village elders in the resettled villages today and the third generation are the grandchildren

questions to their ways of life and social codes and structures. Displacement, for these men, does not simply mark the histories of their village and a collective injustice meted out as the generalised narrative depicts. Displacement and the issues it threw open have left gaping wounds and bitterness in their lives. For some, the trauma has been so hard that it is transformed into medicalised conditions such as a loss of speech or withdrawal from everyday events---a condition the villagers characterise as 'having gone weak'. An old man in Seltipada refused to leave his hut in the resettled villages, or interact with any person, and died in the same state in 2000. Displacement then had direct traumatic impacts on individuals in these villages.

However, literature on narratives of trauma and pain takes this image of narratives further so that they are characterised not just as representational devices; they have been at the core of reconstituting shattered life-worlds. Mattingly explains narratives as '[...] not just about experiences [...] experiences are in one sense about narratives [...] the intimate connection between the story and experience results from the structure of action itself. It is a homologous event, not merely a referential one.'(Mattingly, 1996: 19). For many of the old men who faced displacement and resettlement, the experience and the narration of it indicates not only a state of incomprehension to vital questions, it has also resulted in a reconstitution of their understandings of their self and village society and the relationship between the two.

The individual, personal narrative as found in the generation that encountered displacement usually concurs with the generalised narrative in so far as the dam was built and a livelihood was lost. However, their narratives carry a sense of loss, more than a betrayal. This loss has many dimensions, the most obvious being the loss of land. However, the loss of land did not necessarily occur at the hands of the state agencies, nor in the manner that the generalised narrative dramatises. Two narratives of elders from two of my fieldwork villages indicate to the politics of resettlement within the villages.

Fatubhai is a landless farmer in Vajhpur. He sharecrops 1 acre of land near his village and rents an additional 2 acres from the resettlement committee in the district headquarters on an annual basis. In addition he supplements his income by fishing in the Ukai reservoir. Pre-displacement, Fatubhai was a landed farmer cultivating about 100 acres and 36 *guntha* of land. According to the 1969 rehabilitation conditions he should have been entitled to 3-4 acres of land in addition to cash compensation. He has received neither. He is not even entitled to claim any compensation. According to him,

‘People here will tell you how they were betrayed by the *sahebudyas*. What happened to me was different. I was betrayed by my own people. They were jealous of my prosperity. This village is like this---people have their eyes on others things and are too busy pulling each other down. That is why after 30 years we haven’t been able to do anything in these villages. The day the *madrasis* came to register our land in the *juna gaam*, it was morning. Only a few people knew about this. Some of the villagers came and told me that I was required in my fields that morning. Some labourers were stealing some of the *dangar*. I rushed off to the fields. But it was a trick. The *madrasis* came at that time, and these neighbours registered all my land in their name. I had about

100 acres. I could not even claim compensation. They received my compensation. I was betrayed by my own people.'

(Fatubhai Jhunjabhai Vasava, Vajhpur, September, 2001)

For Fatubhai, the displacement experience is marked by a distrust of the village of which he had been a member. He lives on the margins of Vajhpur, near the village of Seltipada and has re-established himself through his carpentry skills in the village. He has begun building his own social base in the village, but limits his interactions with Vajhpur as far as possible. In contrast, Rasik's father, Jermiyabhai insisted on relating his recollections of the displacement experience not in terms of his personal narrative, but as a conscious illustration of the foibles of the social rivalries and hierarchies of decision-making that led to their troubles. It was a self-reflexive account of a member of a village rather than the direction of either the generalised narrative or his personal experience. Jermiyabhai's account diverged significantly from the generalised narrative in the situation of his relating 'his' story---it was told in front of an audience of his son and his friends, who were repeatedly urging the old man that this was not the story I wanted to hear. To the old man, it was important to tell this account even if it dealt with a very different aspect of the general accounts of displacement, since I was there to study the village's history, and this story was part of the village's history. His status as a *poojari* (priest) in the village may have played no uncertain part in claiming an authority to comment and criticise the structures of authority in the village and depicting the troubles in the resettlement village as intrinsic to its socio-political structures, and the village's acceptance of them.



This is Jermiyabhai's narrative:

'It was through Ramesh Desai that we got to know about relocating us. He used to travel through the villages talking about this. Held meetings. Showed different locations to the *vadils* (the elders). Near Sarjambli, here at Pagaddhuva, near Akhiambli----and then it was decided to move here, to this site. We were also shown a site just downstream of the dam. But we rejected it. The quality of wood there wasn't right---for the houses. The land near Sarjambli also didn't seem very good. And the land near Pagaddhuva was not good for farming. It isn't very great land here. But it was because of Fatu's father---he was the Patel then. Had married off his daughter in the villages in Sagbara. Moving here was the closest for him than any of the other sites, so he decided on this place. That Ramesh (Desai) got some papers and he signed them'.

On asking whether the rest of the village had been able to see the new sites, he remarked,

'[...] they brought us over once, I think, to see the land. But by that time the Patel had already agreed to take it, so there was not much we could say. We were the 'little men'. We had to agree to what the Patel said. That is how it was.'

(Jermiyabhai Kotabhai Vasava, Amalpada, October, 2001)

Beyond the public generalised narrative recounted mainly by the second generation male leaders, the experience of displacement seems to be remembered very differently. In the personalised accounts of displacement, the focus of blame and disappointment are not only the external agencies of the state and the Ukai dam officials. In Fatubhai and Jermiyabhai's accounts, the experience of displacement is mediated through village level rivalries and social hierarchies. The emotions of loss and betrayal focus not merely around the submergence of their lands, but on the loss of entitlements to resources through inter-village

conflicts and allegiances. Further, in a strange contradiction, the telling of the generalised narrative also submerges the dilemmas faced by many of the village elders, like the *Patel* of Amalpada. The village heads and elders faced difficult questions of resettlement that would mean a break-up of household and village level kinship structures. The importance of marriage in creating social, political and economic alliances at the household and village level has already been noted in literature on *adivasis* in India (Deliege, 1985; Baviskar, 1995; Srinivasan and Mehta, 1999). The structures of decision-making at the village level then ensured that the *Patel's* decision to resettle the village close to his daughter's marital home would not be questioned by others in the village. However, the over-emphasis on social structures for explanations also discounts the reality of emotional ties that influenced the decisions on the choice of the resettlement site, in at least one instance of Amalpada. The *Patel* ignored the more fertile lands being offered by the authorities for compensation in favour of an area that would enable the maintaining of links with his daughter's marital village.

The first generation of elders also faced confusions that stemmed from the inability to access much of the information on resettlement directly without the need for translation. An examination of the literacy rates in the three villages tells a part of the story.

Of the few persons with literacy skills in the villages, one of the sources of confusions arose regarding the languages that the villagers were familiar with. The most commonly spoken and understood language in the villages is vasavi.

### Literacy profile of the fieldwork villages in 1961

Villages	Population	literate persons in the village
Amalpada	687	15 men 8 women
Vajhpur	283	10 men
Seltipada	113	1 man

Source: Govt. of Gujarat, 1961, District Population Census Handbook<sup>7</sup>, 16: Surat district, pp. 90-91.

Given the proximity of the villages to marathi-speaking areas, most of the literate adults in 1969 had received their primary schooling in marathi. The language of the administration and figures in the voluntary organisations in the area mediating the conditions of resettlement was gujarati. This unfamiliarity with the official language of communication also resulted in many persons signing away entitlements to compensation; and in the case of village elders misunderstanding the terms of compensation (Ukadiabhai Buddhuhai, Amalpada, May 2002). In Seltipada, this absence was keenly felt. No one was aware of displacement until government trucks arrived to carry them to the resettlement sites. Few households have also received any form of compensation.

Literacy and differences in gujarati, marathi and vasavi and their mutual incomprehensibility resulted in enormous confusion in the information about displacement and rehabilitation that was conveyed to the villagers. This is an

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<sup>7</sup> This was the last census in the villages before they were displaced in 1968-69.

aspect of the narrative that is missing from the stories of displacement among the first generation of men that experienced displacement. Furthermore, *adivasi* perceptions on education have undergone a change over generations in the displaced villages. I agree with Hardiman (1987: 133) who turns to historical records of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to find a pattern of reluctance among the *adivasis* in south Gujarat to send their children to the schools set up by the Education department. Part of this stemmed from their suspicion of the Brahminism, given that many of the schools were staffed by non-*adivasi* teachers who unhesitatingly employed practices of teaching for children loathed by *adivasis*---such as corporal punishment. More insightfully, Hardiman offers an explanation that forefronts the subjective understanding of the *adivasis* regarding formal education. As he points out, the *adivasi* view of formal education stemmed from an understanding of the effects of literacy in terms of its divisive nature that would leave their social world open to the intrusion and exploitation by non-*adivasis* and the state (1987: 113-114). In this manner, for Hardiman, the perceived 'progressive' benefits of literacy were in stark contrast to the tribal ethos of egalitarianism and not uncritically accepted by the *adivasis*.

In the *chaudkheda* villages, the poverty and powerlessness prevalent after displacement has thrust the *adivasi* displacee starkly into a confrontation with forces of development and the hierarchical ethos of the non-*adivasi* society. Within this context, literacy and education begin to occupy a pivotal role. Baviskar evocatively draws on this dilemma that face *adivasis* and development workers alike, when she gives the example wherein her literacy classes evoked

hopes among her informants that these would help their children acquire bureaucratic jobs (1995: 13). Among many of the male leaders and young men in the displaced villages and their parents today, education (and especially English education, courses in engineering, social work teacher training) has acquired a centrality in being able to break through the cycle of resourcelessness, unemployment and poverty that most of the households are caught up in. More than this, it gives them access to the language of the bureaucracy and the state. Literacy in the post-displacement period has acquired a strategic place in the lives of the displaced villagers. One of the contemporary village elders put it in no uncertain terms when he said,

'We don't need development workers in this village. We need people who can come and teach our children good Gujarati and English in school. Then we can send them for higher education. Without that nothing will change. We will never know what happens to us, just like during the flooding (*duban*)' (Rasubhai, Amalpada, May 2002).

It is within this context that the usage of the terms 'illiteracy' and 'ignorance' prevail within these villages. These are terms that are used interchangeably and used by the elders of the first generation as well as the younger contemporary male leaders and the young men to explain the immense reduction in the quality of life post-displacement. For the male leaders of the second generation, 'illiteracy' and 'ignorance' become terms of accusations towards their older generation who are the '*dohas*'---the old men. They are the ignorant *dohas* who never demanded a better deal, or frittered away the money offered in compensation due to their 'ignorance' of the language and working of the bureaucracy and non-*adivasi* society. For the old men, it is their 'illiteracy' that

made them ignorant of the ways of the 'gujaratis' whom they trusted to broker the deals of compensation for them. It was also their illiteracy that made them depend on outsiders to negotiate terms of rehabilitation, since they were neither familiar with nor understood the language of the *sahebs* to have a dialogue with the administration. It was also their ignorance born out of their illiteracy that made them 'run away' when they saw outsiders and made them rely on their village leaders to communicate with the non-Vasavas. The ordinary men of the first generation, who were not part of the decision making process in 1971, do not discuss displacement in terms of the flawed compensation policies; their narratives of displacement are marked by the guilt that accepts that their ignorance and illiteracy was responsible for the conditions of living in the villages they inhabit today. Very few of these men were forthcoming about their experiences of displacement in all the three villages. Questions on these were either met by a lapse into the general narrative of the loss of land; or by referring to what was termed 'a better person to talk to'---by which could mean the present village *Patel* or an *ex-Patel*, who would have been crucial in negotiating compensation claims. In other words, displacement and the remembering of displacement in particular ways by the second generation of landed men in the villages have also fundamentally shifted the perceptions and interactions between different generations in the displaced villages. There are very few *dohas*---who have retained their respected position in the village, both at a household and village level. These are mainly *bhagats* or *poojaris* in the village. For most others, the post-displacement period has been an experience of being stigmatised within the household and in the village structures of decision-making, especially

in Amalpada.

In Vajhpur and Seltipada in addition to the accusations of ignorance, the older generation also face other questions. Among these are accusations of abandonment or 'running away' referring to the forgetting of their religious icons in the confusion of resettlement. The younger generation in these two villages were dismissive of their *dohas*, who in their ignorance, left the idols of their gods behind when they fled the villages as the waters rose. One of the youths in Seltipada mentioned the leaving of their gods to submerge under the reservoir waters as the biggest mistake of their grandfather's generation, causing continued misfortune and problems in their resettled village. In Vajhpur, the men of the second generation described the event when the village actually went back when the waters receded 10 years ago to bring the idols of two of their gods and install them near the villages. The other two gods did not rise from the waters. These men in Vajhpur described the event as if the festival of *holi* had returned for that day.

In a context of a growing scarcity of livelihood strategies, a generational conflict is evident in many of the households in the villages. The most common form that this conflict has taken has been between fathers and sons within households. The older generation is unwilling to give up its hold on the ownership of land granted in compensation, while the second generation has begun demanding their share of land as inheritance in the absence of any other sources of sustenance. In the villages, the differing narratives of displacement also indicate to emerging sharp

generational conflicts.

The loss associated with land has created antagonisms between the different generations of men in Amalpada. Many of these are conflicts between fathers and sons, wherein the fathers were reluctant to pass the lands given to them in compensation over to the sons, who felt they were old enough to claim their ownership. This, associated with the perception that the older generation are the 'ignorant *dohas*' who never demanded a better deal or frittered away the money given to them as compensation, is evident in the narratives told by the men of the later generations. The narrative of the younger second generation men in the villages is both, a claim to the government as regards a betrayal, as it is to their fathers of depriving them of the available land. The old men's narrative is as much a testimony of the pitiful resettlement measures as a reply to the assertions of their sons.

### The diverse stories of three villages

Displacement has been experienced differently in the three different villages under study. This is not so much in the sense of betrayal and antagonism towards the state as expressed through the generalised narrative, which pervades the stories recounted in all three villages. However, the specific problems created by the politics of resettlement within each of the villages, emerging class interests, specific histories of each village in terms of their social, political and economic networks with the non-*adivasis* and traditional hierarchies among the



Vasavas have problematised the notion of a 'displaced community', and allowed it to be mediated through specific village level experiences.

And yet, despite the specific village level experiences of displacement, in the post-displacement period, the three villages under study were lumped together as 'resettlement site no. 3' post-displacement in the new revenue records. This also meant that in terms of physical settlement they seem one village. The resettlement sites of the three villages are within approx. 6 sq. kms, so that each of these villages is located adjacent to the boundary of the other separated only by a stream in the case of Amalpada and Vajhpur, and by a mud road in the case of Seltipada and Vajhpur. From an ariel view, the three villages could be mistaken for a single settlement. However, in terms of its official political structures, the three villages cannot behave as a single political organisation. Amalpada shares a *panchayat* with Gundi and Bavli---two other displaced villages located about 7 kms away from Amalpada; while Seltipada and Vajhpur share a *panchayat* with Bordha, located 10 kms away from these three villages. Given that there is an undercurrent of rivalry between the Bordha and Amalpada *panchayats* to garner limited development interventions allocated to the 14 displaced villages in the *taluka* villages, this rivalry also spills onto interactions between the villagers of Amalpada and Seltipada. This rivalry has been mediated through the heightening awareness of inter-Vasava hierarchies, as well as conflicts centered on the ownership of land among households in the three villages. This section attempts to examine two aspects: a. the experiences of the landed in each of the three villages, b. village level experiences that have

influenced the interactions and rivalries in the post-displacement period.

Several studies of *adivasis* in western India have indicated to differences within Bhils, Vasavas and other *adivasi* groups that are seen as the bases of identity (Deliege, 1985; Baviskar, 1995; Hakim, 1997). The distinctions, whether in terms of the Bhils of the plains or those of the hills (Deliege, 1985); or the *dungri-desi* distinctions (Hakim, 1997) among the Vasavas are not merely self-referential, but associated with definite characteristics that each of the groups applies to the other. While many of these definitions are coined across an *adivasi-non-adivasi* divide, these classifications may also apply to *adivasis* living in the plains, which are attributed characteristics closer to the non-*adivasis* in townships than to those living in the hills. In empirical terms and theoretical literature, this distinction has so far been located within the debate on the hinduisation of the *adivasis* and their incorporation into the caste system in India. This hill/plains divide has been a crucial element in the *adivasi* politics in terms of articulating relationships with the non-*adivasis*, *adivasis* in the plains, the developmental state and the politics of protest. One of the aspects that have received little attention in studies of resettled groups is the interface of the experience of displacement with the traditional hierarchies within displaced groups and its impact on social relations within the resettled and *adivasi* areas themselves.

The Ukai dam also split the displaced villages along already existing Vasava hierarchies in Songadh, Ucchal and Nizar *talukas*. Among the Vasavas in the

displaced villages, there exist different sub-groups---the *ambudiyas*, the *dehvaliyas*, and the *mathvaliyas*. These are loose categories based on areas of residence and the particular dialect of vasavi spoken by these groups. In other words, the Vasavas whose villages were located towards the eastern part of the Tapi river, in the hills and towards Maharashtra were known as '*dehvaliyas*'--- those from the area where the sun rises; while the Vasavas living downstreams of the Tapi river, closer to the non-*adivasi* townships and urban areas were known as the '*ambudiyas*'--- Vasavas from the area where the sun dips (sets). The *mathvaliyas* were the group that lived further in isolation in the hills beyond the *dehvaliya* region, located in present day Maharashtra, with the dialect that was substantially different from that spoken by the other two groups. After the construction of the Ukai dam, the difference between the *dehvaliya-ambudiya* has begun to correspond to the *dungri/deshi* divide (Hakim, 1997) and the hill/plain dichotomy (Deliege, 1985). Most of the 14 villages relocated in Songadh *taluka* are inhabited by *dehvaliyas*; with just 2 being mainly *ambudiya* villages. Most *ambudiya* villages are located downstream of the dam. Linguistically, the *ambudiya* speech is regarded as coarse and harsh, and the manners more crafty and self-seeking, learnt through interactions with the non-*adivasis*. The *dehvaliyas* regards themselves as bearers of a more dignified and 'honourable' Vasava way of life, in speech and social interactions.

In terms of the resettled villages in Songadh *taluka*, most of the resettled villagers regard themselves as *dehvaliyas*, while a few villages like Amalpada are inhabited by the *ambudiyas*. The Amalpadans after displacement thus,

discovered themselves cut off from the social and political networks built up in the old villages, and among a very wary group of *dehvaliya* villages. The tensions between Amalpada and the neighbouring villages after displacement were related by *bhagat* in Amalpada.

Back then, no one slept outside. We used to shut our doors tight and sleep. The people from Selti(pada) and Vajhpur also used to get really angry with us. Why did you have to come here from downstream, they would ask. They were from areas close by. Their farm lands were close by----some of them are only partially sunk by the reservoir waters. Sometimes during the dry season some of their lands still emerge, and they cultivate them. We lost all our lands. So we came here with nothing then.

( Jermiyabhai Kotabhai Vasava, Amalpada, October, 2001)

Jermiyabhai's narrative carries the experience of hostility and intra-village fights that the Amalpadans were embroiled in the period immediately following their resettlement. This is an aspect of his narrative that is quite specific to the village narratives of displacement in Amalpada, rather than Vajhpur or Seltipada. Though conflict over land was one of the major issues for this conflict, it also indicates inter-tribe hierarchy between the different villages in this area. Jermiyabhai's mention of the idea that the Amalpadans were people from 'downstream' is significant in this regard. The villagers of Vajhpur and Seltipada consider themselves to be *dehvaliyas*; while those from Amalpada are regarded as *ambudiyas*. The *dehvaliyas* claim a higher status among the Vasavas, whereas *ambudiyas* are considered coarse and cunning with a high incidence in the practice of witchcraft. The latter issue is a major one, limiting inter-dining and marriage practices among the two sub-groups. To have a village of *ambudiyas*

who were socially and politically dominant with networks in the administrative and trading towns, looking to expand their land holdings must have been a potentially threatening situation for the neighbouring villages, which already had land interests to protect. To this day, the neighbouring villages look on the Amalpadans warily, limiting as far as possible social intercourse with them, despite efforts of village elders from all 14 villages to play down the sub-groups among the tribe in favour of a common identity of being 'displacees'.

The inter-tribal differences were also evoked between the villages in a context of a dramatic fall in the availability of resources. In Jermiyabhai's narrative the village level loss is primarily associated with the loss of land. Given that unlike the other two villages, the *juna gaam* (old village) of Amalpada stood at the foot of the dam and was completely submerged, the loss of land is irretrievable to the villagers unlike those in the other two villages. The landed households in Amalpada received cash compensation and plots of land. In addition, the networks built up with the administrative and social hierarchies in the administrative township of Songadh over the years by the Amalpadans has ensured that most of the households cultivate some amount of land in the forest, with the implicit permission of the forest department. Much of this land is unregistered and illegal. Consequently, Amalpada has the highest number of landed families among the 14 displaced villages in the *taluka*---about 65 families from the 236 households (27.5%). 'It stands as number 1', one of the village elders proudly but surreptitiously informed me. It is well aware that this 'number 1' status could work against it, and I was repeatedly urged during the initial

household survey by members of the households not to show them as better off than the others, or else the development programme initiatives would be diverted to other villages. This anxiety also may stem from the fact that the areas in the forest cultivated by many of the households in Amalpada have not been legalised. In this sense, the struggle to recover land in this village has another dimension apart from the total loss of their lands---it also is a struggle to be able to expand and legalise the lands they have been able to cultivate. In Amalpada, then, displacement is remembered as a move from losing all their lands, to being the largest landowning village among the displaced villages. Rasik's father's recollection of 'having come here with nothing' is echoed by many households in Amalpada. Among the landed and village level leaders, displacement and the story of the post-displacement period is one of a struggle to restore Amalpada to its former pre-eminence. The old village of Amalpada is remembered as a flourishing village situated on the main road to Navapur, the largest market town for Vasava villages in the region. The landed families of Amalpada had over time during the pre-displacement period built up a network of social ties and trading relationships with non-tribals primarily Maharashtrian traders in the township of Navapur. With displacement these ties were jeopardised. For the landed households of Amalpada displacement meant more than just a loss of land and compensation---it meant a loss of political, economic and social capital over other *adivasi* villages in the region. This is evident in the stories of two of the largest landowners in Amalpada:

Haanh...we lost nearly everything. Yes, we got 4 acres as compensation [...] but what can one do with that? My father worked hard to keep up the relations with the *seths* that we had [...] that is

what helped us today. (Fatubhai, Amalpada, April 2002)

Everyone talk about the land lost during displacement. Land can be got back [...] what Amalpada needs is help from contacts. It has to be the no. 1 village. (Rameshbhai, Amalpada, May 2002)

It is this attitude and ambition that makes the displacement experience a very specific one among the landed in Amalpada. It is also an attitude that demarcates them from the non-landed households in their village, most of which are located on the other side of a hillock well away from the main village without any facilities of shops, or roads or electricity poles to be able to tap electricity supplies from. Most of these marginal households belong to sugarcane cutters and their experiences of displacement are similar to those of sugarcane cutters in other villages, an aspect which I will take up in chapter 5.

The ambitions of the landed households in Amalpada and the continuation of their pre-displacement networks is one of the reasons for their rivalry with the other two villages. In Seltipada, the displacement has resulted not in the total loss of land as in the case of Amalpada, but in the threatened alienation of some of their pre-displacement land. Their earlier site and cultivable lands of the village were located very near to the present site. Some of the households then saw only the partial submergence of their lands. However, they did experience a loss of ownership of those fields that were not submerged by the reservoir or partially submerged and emerged in spring when the water levels of the reservoir drop. Legally, this land then belongs to the forest department. By a clause in the rehabilitation scheme, the department then rents this land out on an annual basis

to whosoever can manage to pay the rent from the fourteen villages including households in Amalpada (Resettlement Booklet, 1971: 4). Some years ago, the villagers filed a case in the high court for a recovery of these lands, but to prove the case they were asked to submit their original ownership documents to the office of the Ukai dam corporation. They were later told these papers had been lost, and in this sense, the villagers have no legal proof of pre-displacement ownership of these lands (*Patel, Seltipada, October 2001*). They, however, continue to cultivate this land as and when possible, but are under continued threat of eviction or extortion by the forest department. There have also been incidences of confrontation with the forest department on this issue, when the department decided to rent out this land to villagers from another of the *chaudkheda* villages, thus giving rise to another potential conflict between the different *chaudkheda* villages. Their vulnerability due to the loss of their ownership documents make the Seltipadans suspicious of other villagers, especially the more prosperous Amalpadan families that are explicitly looking to expand their village's influence. For the landed households in Seltipada, displacement came as a completely unexpected event that is remembered as much for the move itself, as for the state of uncertainty and vulnerability that they feel exposed to in the post-displacement period. It is among the landed in Seltipada that one comes across statements such as,

'look at the land they have given us [...] we have to take a boat to go to our old fields to be able to get any food...'(*Patel, Seltipada, September 2001*)



'how do we live on this land? It is just enough for a small *jhoopdu*<sup>8</sup>...' (Oliyabhai, Seltipada, October 2001)

Like Seltipada, displacement affected Vajhpur in no uncertain terms. The landed in the households in Vajhpur too have lands that are partially submerged and their cultivating rights on these lands could be described as tenuous at best and illegal otherwise. However, unlike the Seltipadans the landed households in Vajhpur still retain their ownership papers and over the years built up strategic alliances with the landed in Amalpada that ensure their interests in the partially submerged lands are safeguarded. In Vajhpur the memories of displacement concern both the move itself as well as the adaptation to the resettled villages after displacement. To this effect, the stories of the landed households on displacement focus on land and the quality of land they were awarded in the post-displacement period at the household level. The nature of the complaint is not unlike those in Seltipada. However, in Vajhpur the narratives of displacement include elements of inadequacies of resettlement measures at the village level---an aspect that was not as noticeable in the interviews in Seltipada.

'You have seen the quality of our lands [...] how can anyone hope to eat from fields where people go to shit?...' (Gimbhabhai, Vajhpur, September 2001)

'Land compensation is a problem [...] but what is also a problem is water. They built wells around here [...] well, within a few months they cracked and we had to dig around for our own water...' (Patel, Vajhpur, September 2001)

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<sup>8</sup> '*jhoopdu*' is a qualitatively different term of reference from '*ghar*' or '*ko*'. The latter are vasava words for a permanent structure of a house, whereas a *jhoopdu* is a temporary shack.

‘The land compensation was so inadequate [...] and what about our cattle? We have no common grazing grounds. We have to fight for grounds for our cattle in the forest with other villages--- Bordha, for instance...’ (Shaileshbhai, Amalpada, February 2002)

‘The Amalpadans have their own grazing grounds and *havadas* (cattle troughs). What about ours? Don’t compensation measures include that? Or is it just about being thrown into the forests?...’ (Sameerbhai, Seltipada, May 2002)

In other words, among the landed in the three villages, displacement was a trope that was specifically employed within specific concerns of rebuilding livelihoods in the post-displacement period. For the current landed generation in each of these three villages, displacement is a trope employed as part of the narration of personal and collective histories that is mediated by understandings of pre-dam villages as it is by the vulnerabilities and aspirations in the post-displacement scenarios after 30 years of the specific event.

The impact of the dam induced displacement has been more debilitating for some of the landed men. Underneath the story of state violence, betrayal, neglect, resettlement and rebuilding are the tragedies that lie buried in the lives of those such as Ukadiyabhai, landed and wealthy at one time, who could not bear the shock of the poverty and isolation in the resettled villages and suffered debilitating ailments such as the loss of speech or ‘turning weak’, a local mode of description for those who suffered severe mental traumas. There are others like him in the villages of Vajhpur and Seltipada who were afflicted by a new disease on moving to these sites that are identified by the villagers as ‘*lakvo*’, a

vernacular term for partial or total paralysis.

While the above section has focused on the manner in which specific pre-dam village histories and experiences with the state and with each other has shaped the perception of the injustice of displacement; the experiences of displacement were also mediated within each village based on the land ownership patterns.

In Amalpada, most of the landless live on the margins of the village; outside the eyesight of the landed households. Their neighbourhood has a specific name--- Dogri Fali, unlike other neighbourhoods in the village that are clustered together. The facilities are basic in Dogri fail---two handpumps. For the landless here, Amalpada is called Mota Amalpada, and has never been part of their village. According to one of the elders in this Fali,

‘...its all a mistake by the go’orment. In the old villages, we were a different village. We used to go for agricultural labour work at Mota Amalpada. We should be a different village...’  
(Radtityabhai, Dogri, April 2002).

While the landed in Amalpada have ambitions to extend the economic and socio-political influence of the village in the region, the landless in Dogri Fali recollect the event of displacement as resulting in an effacing of the identity of *their* village---a loss of a collective identity of being a distinct village of agricultural labourers.

Why should the go’orment tell us anything? We are poor, ignorant people. That is for them, the people in Mota Amalpada---those who can be heard. But we did not expect to be living with them. We were a different village. (Radtityabhai, Dogri, April 2002)

What happened on the day of moving here? What will happen? The usual---trucks came and told is its time to move and the village is to be shifted. So we took what we had, and they brought us here. That's all. (Paylabhai, Dogri, May 2002)

In this *fali*, displacement is remembered in a manner different from the landed in Amalpada. Hence, while the landed households in Amalpada recollect stories of displacement as an event which correspond to the generalised narrative's format of the arrival of outsiders, the chaos of the time of moving to the different sites and the confusion and difficulties of adjusting to a life with drastic reduction in quality of life and possibilities of livelihoods; for the landless in Dogri Fali the event of moving itself occupies a small part of their recollections. The difficulties and the confusion is part of the framework of interactions between the state and the resourceless groups, a situation that they were not unfamiliar with even in the pre-displacement villages.

This emphasis on powerlessness and the loss of a collective identity has had material consequences for the landless in this village, reducing their ability to demand resources from the state. In being lumped together with an obviously socially, politically and economically influential group in Amalpada has meant a tightening of their reliance on the landed in Amalpada for their livelihood and thrust them in competition with the landed for common resources such as water pumps, development funds allocated to the village---a struggle in which they have few resources to fight with. The event of displacement while having little

place in their personal histories is strongly present in a collective history of the loss of their village, leaving them powerless and dependent more than before on the landed in Amalpada.

While in Amalpada, displacement resulted in a loss of collective identity for the landless, in the other two villages of Seltipada and Vajhpur, displacement for the landless today is mediated through both the loss of land and migration. Large-scale deforestation for the reservoir encouraged many landless *adivasi* households in villages upstream to move into already existing settlements to cultivate vacant deforested plots, especially around the villages of Seltipada and Vajhpur about 10 years before displacement. Their status in the compensation policies was dubious since most of the land they had cultivated was unregistered--most having to make do with paltry housing plots in the new sites and limited cash compensation. While displacement emerges to a more or less greater extent as a unique event among both the landed and the landless in the village of Amalpada, the notion of displacement and 'home' was differentiated in the population of the other two villages. In these villages, the notion of a village community is mediated through the notions of original inhabitants and migrants/settlers, rendering the idea of displacement and a singular displaced community much more difficult.

This demarcation of the experience of displacement between the original inhabitants and the migrants is much sharper in the village of Vajhpur. Vajhpur's landless settlers have experienced a much more difficult time accessing resources

after displacement. Murabai described Vajhpur in the following manner:

But so many people came on hearing about the land. And then there were fights with the *khatidars*. The *khatidars* wanted more land. And they fed all the *sipadas*. So again my father was a *binkhatidar*. We managed to cultivate 4 acres or something. Very little. We did *majoori* on the *khatidar's* lands. We had to walk, from here to Bordha to get to the *khatidar's faliyu*. Our *faliyu* was called Navagam. Oh yes, Vajhpur was not one village. What you see as Vajhpur here are three villages---Vajhpur, Navagam and Pipal. Navagam had all of us---from outside.

[...] The *faliyas* have different names, but we don't use them here --- its too small to have *faliyas* here. But you can see in the village---all the *khatidars* are living below the *tekri*---near the stream. The Navagam and the Pipal *faliyas* are all up here---all labourers. We could be living down there. But Diwali's father never bothered---drank it all away.'

( Murabai Gimhabhai, Vajhpur, May 2002)

In Vajhpur, displacement due to the Ukai dam had the effect of sharpening already existing intra-village divisions. Vajhpur is a larger village than Seltipada but much smaller than Amalpada. It has definite residential clusters, based on landholding patterns of households. The landowning households are located in the areas nearer to the sources of water supply and transportable roads within the village, whereas those of the migrants are located on the hillock nearby, but with fewer drinking water sources, and tucked away from the roads in the village. These residential clusters also seem to follow the same pattern as the socio-economic status of the households in the pre-displacement period, as indicated within Murabai's narrative, so that the residents of Navagam and Pipal are mainly clustered around the hillock while those of the Vajhpur village are based in the areas closer to the water supply sources.

The demarcations do not exist as clearly between the migrant/settlers and the original households in Seltipada. The experience of displacement in Seltipada is characterised by multiple movements, so that the event of displacement is not the only movement that many of the original inhabitants and the settlers had to face.

In responding to the question---‘when were you displaced?’, Jahgumaharaj’s story was particularly striking in the multiple movements that the village and his family experienced before moving to the present village site. According to him, [...] the dam was built and we moved to this site in 1970. Two years before this there was a *rel* (flood). The Tapi *rel*. We heard the Tapi coming down. The waters had reached the boundary of our village. The village was not affected. It was on a high ground so we did not suffer any losses. But we saw houses and people going past with the waters. I saw a woman going past----who knows what she had lost. All the fields, everything was gone. After that we moved further up. Then we came here.

We came here because the Ukai dam came up. So we were given this place. As compensation, we received land to build this house and Rs. 1000/-. We did not receive any land to cultivate. We are *binkhatidars* (legally landless). In Seltipada, there were only 7 *khatidars*---the *pateliyo*, Bharat, Raju’s grandfather [...] so we did not get any land.

In the old villages we were agricultural labourers. We did not have any cattle.

My brothers and sisters are in the old village. This village is in Maharashtra. Near Jambli. When the dam was going to be built, we heard there was land to cultivate. That is how my father came to Selti a few years before the dam started. None of this land, about 25-30 acres, was on the *khata* (revenue records). It was land in the forest. So we could not put it on the *khata*. And so when we

came here we did not get any land. When the dam came up, my brothers went back to our old village to cultivate the land we had there. But someone had to be here to look after this land, and to claim the money. It was a lot in those days. I also had a family by that time. So I chose to stay here, and not go back with my brothers.

(Jahgumaharaj, Seltipada, May 2002)

The history of Jahgumaharaj's household that emerges through this narrative is representative of many of the settler households in the imagery of multiple movements. The decision to 'settle' in the resettled villages is presented as a strategic decision and an alternate possibility for subsistence. In this landless *adivasis*' narrative, the resettled village comes to represent a destination—'I chose to stay here'---an entirely different conceptualisation of the resettled village from the landed for whom the resettled villages are '*navi vasahat*' (new settlements) and the pre-dam villages are '*juna gaam*' or '*gaam*' (old villages/villages). With this logic for the settler migrants, it is also striking that the dam is mentioned as a reason for moving 'to' the area rather than away from it in Jahgumaharaj's individual narrative and the personal story of his household. It is starkly different for the generalised narrative of the second generation landed households, so that at one point he states that 'the dam is the reason why we came here'. Unlike the landed farmers where the 'here' refers to the present resettled villages and is set in a context of decline in their quality of life; for Jahgumaharaj and his extended family their arrival to the resettled villages represents a journey of possibility where they received compensation and legal entitlement to the land for a house. There is no expectation of any other; having no other past resources that would be legally recognised as worthy of



compensation. Unlike the landed farmers, compensation represents a possibility for betterment rather than a reduction in their quality of life.

However, Jahgumaharaj's household not unlike the landed households in Seltipada had experienced a shrinking of their landed resources from the pre-dam villages. On paper, although many of the settlers' households did not seem to have lost much and for many of the settlers' this was a point of observation; at an experiential level they along with the landed farmers experienced a drastic reduction in their quality of life. This experience was different from those between the settlers and the 'original' inhabitants in the other two villages. On the one hand, in Seltipada similar to Vajhpur, the residential plots of the 'original inhabitants' were demarcated from those who migrated to the village just before the dam was being built. The latter's houses were located in areas further away from the fields or water towards the hillocks on the outskirts of the village. On the other, over the years the trajectories of destitution among the landed households in Seltipada have blurred the boundaries between the landed 'original' inhabitants of the villages and a large majority of the marginal and landless villages. Some landed households have had to sell their plots and move into the hillocks as their agricultural plots become unviable or unsustainable for the household, and are sold to other landed households in the nearby villages. The different personal household level narratives among the landed are characterised by a series of movements that refuses to locate a village level reduction in the quality of life in just the event of the dam, and displacement. For the landed in Seltipada and the landless, post-displacement has not been as

sharply demarcated in terms of efforts towards consolidation or survival as it is between the landed and the landless in Amalpada. In Seltipada, both the landless and the landed are equally vulnerable to living on the edge of survival and extremely aware of this threat for each of the socio-economic groups. No doubt, this experience resonated with many other households of agricultural labourers and settler migrants whose narratives will be discussed further in the next chapter.

In Seltipada, specific narratives of landed and landless villagers indicate less of the sense of betrayal or loss than was evident in the narratives of Amalpada or tension between settlers and 'original' inhabitants evident in the narrative from Vajhpur. Not unlike Jahgumaharaj's narrative, the response to the question, 'what happened to your family after being displaced?' evoked different images to the idea of displacement as well as different points of entry to the narrative in Seltipada. Displacement is not overwhelmingly overshadowed by the image of Ukai dam as in Amalpada, and to a certain extent in Vajhpur. To some households in the village, the present site is not even an unfamiliar one. One household in Seltipada claimed the status of a highly ranked Vasava sub-group called the 'valvis'; its claim based on the fact that they moved to the present site of the village before the other households were brought here when the Ukai dam was built. To others, the point of entry into the change of location of Seltipada village begins with the outbreak of an epidemic early in the history of the existence of the settlement. Many people died then, and the village elders decided to change the name of the village from 'Ekalkham' as it was known then, to

'Seltipada' in an effort to control the misfortune that the village seemed to be afflicted with. Indeed, for many in the older generation, one of the points of contention with the administration is the fact that the village continues to be identified by its earlier name in village and revenue records. In this narrative, 'Ekalkham' represents the older village, while Seltipada is the new village. The resettlement, in as much as it has created a crisis of resource-availability, also represents an effort to evade the misfortune that had struck the inhabitants of the older village.

Such different responses and adjustments in the post-displacement period have thrown open the idea of a 'displaced community'. Studies on displacement have acknowledged that development induced displacement can lead to a scattering of populations in the absence of an adequate resettlement policy, which also makes any study of a displaced 'community' difficult. Among the ethnographic studies that exist, there is a bias towards a settled village study (Baviskar, 1995; TISS, 1995; Hakim, 1996; Nayak, 1999). In other words, in these studies that are rich in exploring the processes of adaptation and change to unfamiliar environments by the displacees, what one finds unaddressed is the question of the fluidity of the entity of 'village'. Sociological literature has exploded the Orientalist and nationalist myth of the village as a cohesive, inter-dependent, self-governing and democratic unit (Breman, 1988; Parasher, 1992: 24-25). And while in the policy-based and anthropological literature on displacement different power struggles based on class and gender form the basis of understanding of resettlement (Baviskar, 1995; Dwivedi, 1998), the migration histories of different labour

groups is absent. This argument puts forward a case, not so much for an interrogation of the sense of 'belonging'; but for the manner in which the idea of a displaced person is constructed by different groups within the resettled villages, making possible an understanding of the individual and household level claims on resettlement terms laid out within the generalised narrative. The generalised narrative creates a story of suffering and betrayal by incorporating the experiences of agricultural labourers and migrant settlers in the pre-dam villages. However, in this the elements that are emphasised focus on the heavy-handedness of the state towards the villagers. Moreover, in highlighting the inadequate compensation programme through an emphasis on the resettlement booklet published by the local bureaucracy, the authors of the generalised narrative forefront the demands of the landed in the villages. This can be illustrated through examining the terms of the resettlement booklet (see Appendix 1) that mainly address questions of land and cash compensation at an individual level and those of village level common resources. The resource needs of subsistence of the landless that include the cattle herders, agricultural labourers and various artisans do not find a place in this lore of betrayal and loss. Moreover, as will be argued in the next chapter, sugarcane cutters and their households are constructed by the landed villagers as having brought on situations of debt bondage upon themselves through their personal excesses. Explaining the continuing poverty of the sugarcane cutters and the landless villagers in this manner reduces their entitlement to redressal measures and development initiatives within the resettled villages.

It is then not surprising that migrant groups and agricultural labourers remember the displacement in entirely different ways both at the level of household histories as well as village level collective histories that sets up their entitlements to participate in the trope of displacement in the generalised narrative. In their memories, they either opt out of a claim of the generalised narrative by asserting the existence of their own villages in the pre-dam period and their disempowerment in being resettled with the landed; or emphasise their movement to the resettled villages as a necessary 'option' in circumstances of poverty. As in Jahgumaharaj's story in Seltipada, many settlers found the pitiable compensation offered to them a temporary reprieve in rebuilding livelihoods rather than returning to the resourceless situations they had emigrated from their ancestral villages in Maharashtra. In most resettled villages, the settlers faced a further marginalisation as Murabai's narrative from Vajhpur illustrates. Their narratives in this manner challenge those of the landed. In positing a very different set of experiences and concerns from those of the landed households in the villages, these stories of the landed not only problematise the construct of a 'displaced community' but also throw open the category of 'village' and 'social networks' that inhabits research work on dam displacement.

### Women and narratives of displacement

Among women, displacement evokes an emotion not so much of betrayal as of anger. It is an aspect that does not need a 'bounded situation' of an interview. Anger at the dam is openly expressed in everyday conversation---when women

take rest in the afternoons after returning from the fields and before the chores for the rest of the day begin, or late at night after the day's work is finished and women of the neighbourhood sit together---to gossip and to organise work groups for the next day's fodder or fuel wood gathering trips.

In an insightful paper, Mehta and Srinivasan argue, '[...] gender has been one of the missing links in the impact assessments of large dams. Women and men are not homogenous but differentiated according to their varied social locations. The imperative to examine the gendered dimensions of the costs and benefits of large dams derives from the fact that large dams affect men and women in different ways [...] (there are) many ways in which genderless categorisation of the community, the state and its institutions, have tended to conceal the complexities unfolding in everyday exchanges between men and women...' (Mehta and Srinivasan, 1999: 1). This section examines the women's perception and expression of what they have lost, and the extent to which their narratives inhabit the margins of the dominant generalised narrative in the villages.

While the generalised narrative focuses on the disparity between an expectation of compensation and its actual implementation, in the women's talk the dam emerges as a cause of continued suffering. This has been noted by Dwivedi (1998: 13) in his study among the Narmada dam displacees, where the 'risks' of displacement are perceived by the women in terms of social disarticulation rather than landlessness. Dwivedi cites a male bias in resettlement policies that encourage such anxieties among displaced women. Resettlement policies hand

over cash- or land compensation to men who are recognised as heads of the households rather than women disabling the latter through a loss of capability of decision making powers. Among the Ukai dam displacees, women speak of breaking down the dam, of blowing up the dam so that their fields and a means of finding work, water and food become more accessible. In their talk, the dam emerges as an insurmountable obstruction to which the only solution would be its destruction. As one of the women in Seltipada remarked,

‘[...] we would be happy if the dam were blown up. Our villages would be released. We would not be forced to be stuck here (in these villages) ...’ (Jehmaben, Seltipada, August 2001)

Another woman in Vajhpur linked the crisis around the Narmada dam with that of the Ukai dam,

‘[...] I have heard about the Narmada dam. I have heard that if the dam comes up it will block the waters coming to the Ukai dam, and the reservoir will go dry. That is why there is all this crisis around it. I hope it does happen. Then they wont need the Ukai dam anymore, and will have to pull it down. We won’t have to stay here anymore.’ (Rupiben, Vajhpur, May 2002)

The two womens’ statements speak not so much about the dam, as constructions of the village. In the interviews, the memories of the specific move tended either to be glossed over, or expressed as a chaotic time. For most women from the landed families in the three villages displacement was,

‘[...] displacement? My husband brought us here. And then he died in a year’s time. No *bhagat*’s medicine helped. If we were in our old village, we could have gone to other *bhagats*—here there was only the forest [...] no roads, nothing. (Ebulaben, Amalpada, May 2002)

[...] what does it matter how we came here? In trucks. They dumped our things into the trucks, so that my *thapu* broke. And we had to live outside that monsoon, until the men could rebuild our houses.... (Fulabai, Seltipada, May 2002)

Unlike the men's interviews, it is the arrival and resettling that is the most anxious period for the women. The move happened and husbands and fathers were responsible for this. It was the resettlement that was characterised by a sense of loss (through deaths in the household) or rebuilding with damaged materials. The experiences of displacement for the women focus on spaces close to home—the loss of a husband, the difficulties in rebuilding households and adapting to the changed circumstances of non-accessibility to various community---level resources such as medicines. This is in marked contrast to the landed men's generalised narrative that focuses on the dam displacement through themes of compensation, and violence of the state. In the women's narratives, they accompanied their menfolk in the move, about which they were not consulted.

Although married into landed households, women's depictions of life after displacement also need to be located within the context of the economic, social and political status of their households within the larger village community. An example would be the contrasting narratives of Sariben and Murabai. Sariben is the wife of the erstwhile Patel of Seltipada, and the aunt of the present Patel. She was one of my most erudite informants, and the oldest with her stories stretching back to the establishment of the present village community of Seltipada. In her position as the *Patel's* wife, she is also more aware of the interactions between



the village and 'outsiders'. Though the position of her household may be important in symbolic terms, it is a poor household and she has to supplement the income of her son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren by making and selling baked *chulhas*---hearth for cooking to neighbouring villages. In contrast, Murabai is the wife of one of the *bhagats* in Vajhpur. In the village though, she is a religious figure in her own right, performing ceremonies for women at engagements, on occasions of births and naming ceremonies. Since the last two years, she has been accompanying her husband as a sugarcane labourer to south Gujarat, much to her dismay and disgruntlement, since it means a downgrading of the status of her household to one of a sugarcane cutter in the larger village community.

Sariben's reminiscences about life after displacement were ambiguous.

According to her,

'Life is much better now, here. Earlier things were not so good. There have been many troubled times, before. We have always had a problem of food, so we learn to make things from many different kinds of plants---in the forests. We use a lot of *chimbh*---a root. We have always used that a lot. It is good when the rains fail. Like the two years after we moved here. The rains failed for two years---we call that time *chimbh*. People survived from that in the forest. But, no, times had been bad before that also [...] I had just married and come to the village, then, from Bhangra, in Maharashtra. That year was not good, and then the year that the dam was being built, the rains failed then also.

Life here is definitely better. See then, there was a lot of *kheti*, lot of land. But there was no work. *Majoori na mile*. There were a few families, *khatidars* in the village, but the others were *majoors*---just like now. There was no occupation. Sometimes, some *majoori* was needed to pick cotton in

the *khatidars* fields, otherwise there was nothing.'

(Sariben Jalamsinghbhai, Seltipada, October 15, 2001)

In contrast, Murabai's narration of life after displacement presents a different image. This is not a story of coping under difficult conditions; it is a tale of a gradual decline of a wealthy household, affected as much by external factors as by internal weaknesses. It begins with the migration of her father as a poor migrant into the village.

'My father came from Jambli, in Maharashtra when the dam was being built. He heard there was a lot of forest being cut down, and a lot of land was just lying there. At that time, the *sipadas* didn't stop anyone from ploughing as much land as you wanted. They needed all that wood for the dam. They were paying people to cut the forest. My father thought he could get some land. In Jambli, he had nothing. His brothers had taken all his father's land. My father had nothing to go back to in the village....So we were in Navagam at that time. I was a young girl, and was sent for agricultural work. That is where Divli's father saw me. He talked to my brother. Gave him a whole chicken and Rs. 80. He was from one of the *khatidar* families, so he could afford it. And my father and brother were happy that they would be the kin of *khatidars*. I didn't want to go. He had already been married and he was older. But my brother beat me [...] so much. So I had to go. If I hadn't been married I could have been closer to my brother and parents. But they couldn't even see me happy [...] Divli's father drank everything away' (Murabai Gimhabhai, Vajhpur, May 2002)

In both Sariben's and Murabai's narratives, life after marriage changed irrevocably. Murabai's anger is a personal one, caused as much by her parent's poverty as by the patriarchal institutions she is bound within. In her story, the loss definitely does not follow the trajectory of loss in the generalised narrative. She is

part of the migrant group that arrived in the pre-dam villages seeking a better livelihood. Her marriage to a landed household of 'original' settlers and move to the displacement villages represented a definite improvement within the life cycle of her household. Her narrative is not an unproblematic complaint about the loss of ties with her natal family, who did not resettle in her marital village. It is more complex in the playing out of various class and status struggles within the village, where her household came off worse in terms of the loss of land and a livelihood, exacerbated by the drinking of her husband. As a representative instance, Murabai's story illustrates a central aspect of the women's responses to displacement due to the Ukai dam----that in the women's experience in these three villages there is not a direct link with land, but is mediated through kinship, class and the status of migrants in the villages.

Her story also illustrates the debate of the status of women in *adivasi* households. Although the status of women in *adivasi* societies in India has been considered more egalitarian than their counterparts in caste societies, studies have recently contested this claim (Omvedt, 1978; Teerink, 1990; Kelkar and Nathan, 1991; Unnithan, 1991). Claims on the egalitarian status of *adivasi* women are based on their greater 'visibility' in public spaces, which has often been interpreted as evidence of greater 'freedom' and autonomy. Studies on *adivasi* women---both in landed groups and migrant labour---have cautioned against drawing such conclusions. According to Teerink (1990: 25-26), migrant *adivasi* women are still subject to roles in terms of social and sexual division of labour within structures of male authority within their communities and it is the social and

ideological location of the observer that has not recognised gendered oppressive structures in *adivasi* societies. Unnithan (1991) in an extensive analysis indicates to the existence of sexual division of labour and gendered patterns of the means of production in Bhil societies. She states that, '[...] it is not so much the women who work that are valued, as the man who gains the right to appropriate the products of that work' (1991: WS36). Baviskar also arrives at the same observation when she notes that the politics of honour in Bhilala societies is based on a 'simultaneous acknowledgement of the value of a woman and the denial of her agency' (1995:134). Marriage discussions and resolution of marital disputes are primarily negotiations between men of the respective communities.

In the displacement narratives, the women expressed their simultaneous awareness and anger at these structures of male authority. In both the narratives of Sariben and Murabai the anger seems to have been directed at the pattern of decision-making and male authority that not only denied the desires of the women involved but also their failure leading to the woman having to bear the burden of responsibility for the household. Many of the women do seek continually in the post-displacement period to undermine these systems of decision-making. The years after displacement are remembered by many women for,

[...] the years after we came here, I wanted to run away so many times [...] but where would I go in this forest?... (Jaynibai, Seltipada, April 2002)

[...] there was so much drinking then [...] the men had no work so they drank [...] and it was

almost impossible for women, married or not, to live here safely. For many years, women and parents lived in so much *abdha*' (Nooriben, Amalpada, May 2002)

[...] R complains that his wife kept running away. Why shouldn't they? He is crazy looking for a wife from the non-displaced villages. She wont stay here [...] if I had the chance and no children, I wouldn't stay here... (Annaben, Amalpada, September 2001)

Post-displacement then was traumatic for the women not simply in the sense of a distantiation from kinship networks and natal villages; it tied them even more firmly to the patriarchal structures within their households and villages making a traditional way out almost impossible for many of the poorer women in the village.

However, displacement and the post-displacement periods also occupy more ambiguous places in the older women's memories. Sariben's story is filled with this ambiguity. Her household did suffer from a loss of quality of life in the post-displacement period. However, in her experience this was a mixed blessing. In a later part of the interview with her, she narrated the mixed benefits of less land on the demands for her labour, whether in terms of providing food for the agricultural labourers employed to work in the fields or on the requirement for her own labour during certain aspects of agricultural work such as winnowing, harvesting and weeding.

'[...] People had to walk everywhere [...] going to fetch water was difficult. I used to hate it. The water was so far, and you walk alone. [...] and we had to grind all the grain. My daughters were good, they used to do this without complaining. Then there was work in the fields---double *kheti*, *inhi ne* [...] all the harvesting and the weeding [...] and you had to walk everywhere...' (Sariben

Jalamsinghbhai, Seltipada, October 15, 2001).

Agarwal (1994: 91) observes in relation to a subculture of resistance among women that although women are critical of the gender inequities in their perceptions that may not translate to overt actions. In Sariben's, as in the cases of other women from landed households, the labour burden that women carried is expressed without an overt criticism against institutions and practices within the society that demanded this labour. The criticism is displaced on to the 'givens'--- large fields, distant rivers and no electricity. In comparison, the present villages offer the possibility of a better quality of life---there is electricity and opportunities for agricultural labour, even if that means migrating out of the village for temporary periods. Sariben's narrative speaks here much more to the gendered practices of her better class status that limited her opportunities and access outside her network of village based relationships in the pre-dam villages.

What does emerge from these recollections is that in contrast to the generalised narrative, the locus of needs affected due to the dam is perceived in entirely different ways by women. Here, there is a need to examine this locus of needs within a larger analytical space than many other gender and displacement studies have attempted. It has been pointed out in these studies that the impact of development projects on displaced populations have often used modes of enquiry that are premised on already existing dominant relations that legitimise unequal distribution of resources (Thukral, 1996; Srinivasan and Mehta, 1999). By this one means that there is a market bias in these studies that emphasise calculable or

legally recognised activities and issues such as economic activities of men or irrigable land to those that are non-monetised or have not entered the market place----a realm within which women's activities often tend to belong. This has led critics to observe that the trauma that displacement causes may be as severe among women as men; but they rarely have the means to vent it as men do (Srinivasan and Mehta, 1999: 10). What fieldwork in the Ukai dam instance indicates is that women not only suffered due to by displacement, they also articulated their fears, frustrations and hardship, whenever possible. Women remember their neighbours or other women in the village as being the first to convert to Christianity, 'not because I did not believe in our Gods, but to stop drinking. So many women gave an ultimatum to their husbands or dragged them to the *deval* (church) so that they could have food in their houses' (Ramaben, Amalpada, May 2002). However, the main locuses of their pain and complaints expressed entirely different needs and life-worlds than that of the interests in compensation and land expressed by the men in the displaced villages. Women's memories of the period after displacement compared it to earlier famine like periods as in the case of Sariben whose narrative has been discussed; or in terms of the difficulty in accessing resources such as water, fodder, firewood and food more generally. On the other hand, the post-displacement period is also depicted as making work lives easier due to the availability of electricity and transport instead of having to walk through forests to reach their destination. Many of these needs also relate to the disruption in kinship networks especially with their natal families as displacement relocates women to sites that are not within easy access of their natal villages. This impacts not just emotional support structures,

but also social and economic support systems that linked the woman's marital household and village to her natal kin members (Thukral, 1996; Baviskar, 1995; Srinivasan and Mehta, 1999).

One of the most common documented impacts that displaced women have experienced has been of the loss of kin networks, especially those of their natal families (Thukral, 1996; Hakim, 1997; Dreze *et al*, 1998). Its importance has also been noted by Baviskar (1995: 119-121) where kin networks function not only as support structures for women, but also for the marital households into which the woman is married by providing material and symbolic support in disputes and adverse economic circumstances. In this regard, the women in the Ukai displaced villages speak of being separated from their natal families. Some of these studies have also noted the increasing work burden on women in terms of accessing household requirements such as firewood and fodder. What these studies have not focused on is the change in relationships mediated by the labour requirements provided by women from the pre-displacement to the resettled villages. Simultaneously, the issue here is not so much of a work burden, as of the returns from the work. After displacement, the only source of employment now shifted from within the community that had earlier employed much of its women's labour and could not afford to do so after the large scale loss of land, to that of external agencies such as the forest department, public work programmes and agricultural labour in the more prosperous regions downstream of the dam. In the post-displacement period, then, the primary employers emerged as the state and the beneficiaries of the dam. For the women, the returns of the work/



employment to feed their households now shifted from within the community to outside it, with the dam emerging as the fulcrum that changed this relationship. This could explain the extreme anger of women against the dam among households that had known plenty of land and work, to those that are reduced to less than four acres. It would also account for the ambivalent responses of women, not to the dam per se, but in the comparison of life before and after the dam, wherein many felt relieved about the less amount of work they were burdened with in the displaced villages.

Significantly, among women of households in the resettled villages that have an adequate income inflow today, and do not face food insecurities, the displacement and the dam are missing in the imagery of their concerns. Agarwal (1994: 91) has noted that in the analysis of 'struggle over resources and meanings', there are notable differences among women from different class groups of peasant women, and that on certain issues the hegemony of male interests might even prevail alongside criticisms of several other issues among the same group of women. Here I refer to the narrative of a local schoolteacher's mother, whose memories in the pre- and post-displacement villages were mainly around the spread of Christianity, and the conversion of her household to the religion in the post-displacement period. Her household could be classified as one of the rich landed peasantry---each of her sons is a landed farmer or engaged in government employment that offers them a regular income and a social status within and outside the village. Her husband and two of her sons are also well-regarded Christian leaders in the displaced and non-displaced villages in the

region. In response to specific questions on how her household was displaced, all she had to say was that as she remembered, earlier Amalpada was at the foot of the dam; trucks had arrived to pile in the entire luggage and then they arrived at the present site.

‘What do I remember of coming here? There is not much. We took all the things we needed outside the house, the trucks came and they helped us put everything into the trucks. And then they drove us here, and put our things on the land that was given to us. So we built our houses here.’ (Honiben, Amalpada, May 2002).

It was a memory characterised by an amazing sense of order, quite different from other women and men’s stories of ignorance and fear of the trucks. It was a matter-of-fact answer; there was none of the anger experienced by the landed households in other villages that had experienced a significant reduction in their household food insecurity situation. In a further elaboration at a later point in the fieldwork, her daughter-in-law depicted a very happy and contented time in the immediate aftermath of displacement.

‘We had much land then, when we came here. All these houses, you see, were full of fields of corn. It was a very pretty sight. It is only in the last ten years with the sons and grandsons growing up that all the problems have started. Even if they don’t need fields, they need more houses, and more hearths to cook in...’ (Bibiben, Amalpada, May, 2002).

Bina Agarwal (1994: 84) argues that factors that obstruct the transformations of gender relations are simultaneously material and ideological, interacting with and reinforcing each other. Change necessitates a ‘struggle over resources and over meanings’, conducted in several arenas---the family, the community and the state. Is the gender trajectory of coping with the impact of displacement one of a

struggle over meanings of how displacement needed to be confronted with, as well as of resources at the household, community and state level? What, then, does it mean to say that women's responses to displacement are different? In addressing this question, what women say about displacement not only allows an understanding of the impact of displacement, it allows a glimpse into the women's understandings of their economic and social situations within and outside the family. It allows us to address the question of the extent to which women depart from and reinforce the male generalised narrative that forefronts questions of land and employment. Studies on displacement (Colson, 1971; Thukral, 1996; Srinivasan and Mehta, 1999) have mainly noted that women feel the impact of displacement in terms of the disruption in networks with their natal kin. I have attempted to explain the anger of the women displaced by the Ukai dam in terms of the changes they experience in their relationships within and outside their households and villages. To this effect, the question of who would they hold responsible---the decision makers within the community, the state, the heads of their households?---becomes central. This is an ambitious framework, which needs much detailed and careful analysis. The attempt in this section has been to indicate possibilities and questions for such an exploration.

### Conclusion

As each of the stories of the villages indicates, displacement in the experience of the villagers has been more than a single event or a monocausal one. Displacement in these stories has been as much affected by the development

project as by class and gender imperatives within the villages. However, 30 years on, memories of displacement are indicative of different modes of authority and expropriation in the different villages. At the heart of claiming authority for the voice of the displacee is the issue of land and compensation. Generational conflicts revolve around this issue. However, the concern with land ownership and the narrative on displacement is framed around mainly the second and third generation men's concerns on sustenance and livelihood strategies. These concerns in focusing on issues of individual land ownership and legalisation of land plots also exclude concerns and issues of non-landed groups in the village---women, cattle herders and agricultural labourers. The generalised narrative, in focusing on particular aspects of compensation, might be characterised as representing concerns of particular hierarchical groups in the displaced villages. In other words, displacement did affect the overall quality of life of the people in the 14 villages; however, at the level of the individual villages it seemed to have consolidated the pre-existing power structures rather than a situation of a similar disappearance of a way of life. While the attempt has been in this chapter to examine gender and generational differences in the experience and memory of displacement; the next chapter looks closely at the meaning of displacement for non-landed and destitute groups within these villages---those of the sugarcane migrants.

**MISSING**

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## CHAPTER 5

### Sugarcane cutters in the displaced villages

The previous chapter discusses the extent to which the loss associated with displacement due to the Ukai dam pervades a re-constitution of a particular sense of community in Amalpada, Vajhpur and Seltipada. This loss is mainly associated with the needs of landed families and the impact of the loss of land on these households. In contrast, this chapter is about those households, which have been migrating as sugarcane cutters up to the present, and usually for a period of more than five years. Some of these are households, which have been migrating as sugarcane cutters for nearly three generations after displacement due to the Ukai dam, for up to eight to nine months every year. The sugarcane migrants are marginal to the social and political life of the villages. Present for only 3-4 months of the year in the villages, they are able to take part in only the marriage and funeral ceremonies held during the summer months in the villages. Their seasonal migration trip out of the villages begins once the agricultural season gets underway in the region; but their labour for most part in this activity is available only to the non-displacee farmers downstream of the dam. This chapter focuses on the narratives of displacement and resettlement among the sugarcane cutters in Amalpada, Vajhpur and Seltipada.

The reasons to explore what displacement means to this specific group in the three villages arose from variances that I observed during my fieldwork in the displaced villages. While the stories on displacement among persons with some

land in the villages had the generalised narrative as its reference point as discussed in Chapter 4; the stories told by men migrating as sugarcane cutters varied greatly. In as far as an overview of the interviews with these men reveal, there was just one interview out of 16 that was in the recognisable mode of the generalised narrative. The other narratives varied from very personal stories of 'wanderings', to histories and geographies of their pre-displacement villages, to refusals to talk about the time of displacement due to the Ukai dam. In the narratives of the cutters the loss of land very rarely appears as the overarching loss. Where it is a significant emotion, the moment in time of its loss shifts quite substantially into the post-displacement villages, rather than at the time of displacement. In other words, this section looks not so much at answering the question of why sugarcane migrants do not speak of displacement, but examines closely the question what it is that different groups of sugarcane cutters do talk about? And the relation of this story to the generalised and dominant narrative?

The focus on marginalisation rather than the narratives of dam-induced displacement among the sugarcane cutters in this chapter arises from two contradictory experiences during fieldwork. Research studies as well as activists working in the area reported the widespread anger in the area about the absence and mismanagement of the pitiful resettlement measures in the displaced villages (Chaudhari and Choksi, 1971; Mankodi, 1992). The lot of the sugarcane cutters was an often-used example of the destitution of the villages, mentioned by landed *adivasis*, teachers, sympathisers and leaders working in these villages. Along with this, my own experience of the expressions of anger regarding this that seemed prevalent in the village meant that my expectation was that the

sugarcane cutters being the most destitute in the three villages would have detailed stories of their lives pre-displacement and the construction of the dam would figure centrally, or at least occupy a substantial place in their narratives. Fieldwork did not bear this out, and discussions regarding displacement revealed a variety of movements, in the pre-dam and post-dam period, associated with a multitude of reasons for being 'displaced', from floods in the Tapi in 1962 to a search for a better livelihood from their ancestral villages that were located in Maharashtra or further north of the present villages around 1965, and then again with the emergence of seasonal migration since 1975. In other words, loss of a way of life due to the construction of the dam was a trope more frequently encountered among the narratives of the landed families in the villages than among the sugarcane cutters. In this sense, some of the initial fieldwork data seemed to reflect Gilson's work (1996) on narratives of men in Lebanon, in villages marked by strong hierarchies of the lords or the '*beys*', the *aghas* who were the village level leaders and the rest of the village population, the *fellahin* who were mainly agricultural labourers. The same narratives on the loss of land by the *aghas* and other village level leaders are remembered by the *fellahin* in completely different ways. An act that is an ironical commentary on the aspirations to 'honourable acts' by the *aghas* in order to demonstrate the appropriate behaviour associated with their status is interpreted by the *fellahin* in the village as a critique of 'their supposed superior's illusions and ignorance of the realities of power' (1996: 140). Apart from a critique of their social superiors, the loss of land also acquired a sense in the *fellahins'* narratives, in which it represented not just an event and a moment in history, but 'a concentrated image of poverty and want, of vulnerability and subordination that had characterised



their everyday lives, its significance was still not entirely of a distant 'then' (1996: 141). For the landless displacees in the resettled villages the meanings of displacement acquire very different connotations from those of the landed. As discussed in the earlier chapter, displacement for the landed has a definite cause and associated emotions of betrayal leading from the construction of the Ukai dam. Like the *fellahin* in Gilsenan's work, displacement has very different meanings for the landless in the resettled villages, and extends over a much longer time frame than for the landed in the villages. It refers to a continuity of conditions that began before the dam was constructed and continues long after it has become a routine part of the landscape of the region. The hegemony of dominant narratives in the displaced villages shades the alternate accounts of the displacement in the villages that may be born from a variety of different class conditions and histories.

In this chapter, I seek to examine those 'other' felt experiences of displacement and the place of their tellers within the hierarchy of my three fieldwork villages. This examination, however, is wary of collapsing either the sense of loss or marginalisation, both in the pre-displacement and present villages, into a unitary sense. The experience of creating and sustaining livelihoods, of moving to the present location and of the politics of re-settlement among those who are sugarcane cutters today, has varied even among those people who have an experience of migrating as sugarcane cutters. These differences of displacement and subsequent migration among sugarcane cutters has depended on their status as 'original' residents, landed or landless in the region, or having migrated from other parts just before the dam was constructed and on their social and political

status in the resettled villages. This differentiation affects the possibilities of an eventual settling in their 'home' villages. In exploring the sense of marginalisation and loss among the cutters, this chapter hopes to look at the ability or otherwise to lay a claim to village identity by the sugarcane cutters. To what extent do the forms of the narratives as told by the cutters reflect and create a context for a claim to belonging to the villages they reside in for the four months of summer every year? To what extent does their recounting of the times before moving to the present sites indicate their place in the older villages? In examining the question of belonging to the resettled villages, then, I will be looking at what position dam induced displacement has on the identification of the cutters and how this relates to their place in the post-displacement period.

The felt experiences referred to in this chapter primarily refer to the narratives of the male sugarcane labourers from the villages of fieldwork. This is not to deny that questions of both displacement and marginalisation do not fall within the experiential world of the women sugarcane migrants. However, the contours of this experience as well as its modes of expression require a more detailed and distinct analytical treatment, and will be discussed in Chapter 6.

#### Social, economic and political marginalisation of the sugarcane cutters

So far, a large number of studies on *adivasis* in India have been divided into two groups: a. those that have written about *adivasi* villages that do not have a large group of out-migrants, other than those migrating through marriage (Baviskar, 1995; Hakim, 1997; Nayak, 1999), b. those that have studied the conditions that

cause labour migration among the *adivasis* and the conditions in their places of work that encourage and/ or discourage such migration (Breman, 1985, 1996; Teerink, 1990; Rani and Shylendra, 2001). The aim in categorising existing literature into these two groups is to indicate to an empirical hiatus in this literature---that of the study of seasonal migrants within their villages and their positions and negotiations *vis-à-vis* the village hierarchy. This section then attempts a two-fold task: a. to identify the different streams of migration from the displaced villages, b. to identify their positions within the home village hierarchy and the conditions that lead to their political and social marginalisation within the village structures and village level processes.

An examination of the felt experiences of displacement and the social life and status of the migrant workers within their home villages requires a discussion of the concept of a 'village community' and that of the different streams of migration from the villages, given that due to the hostile environments, sustenance and livelihood have required all but a few landed families to migrate at some point or another to various rural and urban worksites at some point since displacement. As mentioned above, a large number of studies have examined and interrogated the concept of a 'community' among *adivasi* societies. This position has been a response to earlier anthropological studies where a critical discussion on fragmentation and hierarchies within *adivasi* groups was largely absent and tended to homogenise them. In contrast, the positions adopted by Baviskar (1995) and Hardiman (1987) define a community as organised around 'a set of relations that define it and give it a corporate form' (Baviskar, 1995: 106). In other words, according to Baviskar resource use is enabled by co-operation and

reciprocity structured around the politics of honour of the patriarchal clan. Hardiman's study of the historical records and studies from the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century depicts similar pictures of a clan-based structure framed around an ethic of reciprocity despite inequalities of wealth within a community (1987: 80-84). In both studies, the clan based itself around tracing lineage to a common ancestor.

Development projects such as dams marked a huge change in such community based ties. Histories of *adivasi* peasantry have noted that there have been migrations throughout histories of *adivasi* societies (Hardiman, 1987:13). With the deforestation of the forests around the Ukai dam site came a number of poor *adivasi* households from surrounding regions looking for a livelihood. Some interviews in the villages indicate to this:

'My father had no land in our original village. We heard there was much land available here---to settle and cultivate. That is how we came to this area. This was before the dam was built. But so many people came then. There was not enough land for us to make a livelihood. My father managed to cultivate 3-4 acres. And we worked in the fields of the landed families from Vajhpur when they called us. My family lived in Pipal---it had all of us, migrants. It was quite close to Vajhpur---about half an hour walk---as far as Bordha is now. The families from there would send out a word to our village when they needed labour---for planting and harvesting.' (Murabai Gimhabhai, Vajhpur, May 2003)

'The government was giving away *pattas* of land before the dam was built. They needed people to cut down the forests and help build the dam. Many people came here looking for land with their families. My father had enough land to cultivate here. But we could not register it in time. So many wanted to register their lands. So we got no compensation for the land when the dam was built.' (Jalamsinghbhai, Seltipada, April 2003).

These two recollections attest to the fact that in the decade before the dam was built, large scale migrations from Maharashtra in the immediate east of the present village sites occurred to the Ukai region, often comprising of landless *adivasi* households looking to start afresh. These households had been attracted to the area by rumours that there had been large scale state-sponsored deforestation in the region, and there was plenty of land available for cultivation. Such large scale deforestation had indeed occurred in this region, with the forest department hoping to garner substantial revenue from the sale of the teak and timber wood available in the forests that were to be submerged through the reservoir (pc, Fort Songadh, January 2002). To this end, as well as that of the construction of the dam, labour was solicited from the *adivasi* regions. The agriculturists in the villages closer to the dam site could not spare labour during the agricultural seasons (*Patel*, Vajhpur; October 2001; *Sarpanch*, Amalpada; October 2001; *Karsanbhai*, Amalpada; November 2001). However, plenty of landless *adivasis* were attracted to the area and to the prospect of settling down with land and a regular income from the work available on the dam site. These migrations took place primarily in the decade preceding the operationalisation of the dam. Not many were aware of the procedures for registering their land, nor could have them registered in time for the resettlement due to the confusion in the administrative offices regarding the policy for the legalisation of forest lands; and the non-communication of this fact to many of the landless settler households.

Within the already existing villages, the influx of the large number of poor migrants seemed to have led to distinctions based on those that were regarded as 'original' inhabitants and those that were regarded as migrants/settlers into the area. While the dam was under construction, there were villages that seemed to be inhabited by the migrant settlers only, having come up when the migrations were underway. From the descriptions within narratives as the one stated above, they seemed to be economically dependent on the already existing villagers and the 'original' landed inhabitants for employment and sustenance. In this sense, these migrations led to hierarchies based on the ownership of land as well as an ancestry to the villages of habitation in the socio-political hierarchy in the region.

The construction of the dam resulted in another movement---this time for both the settled 'original' households and the newly-arrived migrant settlers, both of whom were resettled in single rehabilitated village sites. For smaller single-clan 'original' villages like Seltipada and Vajhpur this resettlement posed a dilemma when villages of the settler migrants were resettled within their village boundaries and socio-political structures. This split the village structure into more heterogeneous groups, with distinct neighbourhoods emerging that continue to this day---those of the 'original' inhabitants and those that lived in the '*navi vasahats*' or those comprising of settler migrants to pre-dam villages within the post-displacement resettled villages. Many of these settler migrants remained landless, being unable to register their pre-dam plots with the revenue departments in time for the displacement. As a result of which, the socio-economic structures in the newer land-scarce resettled villages is based very

much on the accessibility of the households to a plot of land given in compensation by the state.

During the fieldwork conducted for this study, there were four socio-economic groups of households that could be identified based on the loss or the consolidation of landholdings from the pre-displacement through the three generations in the post-displacement years. These groups were:

- a. those who had landholdings in the pre-displacement period and were compensated with a maximum of 4 acres of land as part of the resettlement measures by the state. Over the years, they have been able to consolidate these landholdings through cultivation of additional land garnered through various arrangements like renting, sharecropping, purchase or illegal cultivation of land in the forest, belonging to the forest department.
- b. those who had land in the pre-displacement period, but lost this land subsequently either due to the politics of resettlement as discussed in the earlier chapter or those that are still awaiting compensation by the state or have lost land in the years following resettlement due to mortgaging their lands, usurpation of their land by various agencies within the villages or because the land might be too unviable to cultivate. Many of the households who have borne the alienation of their lands in this manner have become seasonal migrants to the sugarcane fields downstream of the dam.
- c. those who were agricultural labourers in the pre-displacement period and received no compensation apart from plots of land to build their houses in the resettlement sites. The reduction in the acreage as well as the extent of cultivation in the new sites meant a loss of their earlier source of

employment. Most of these erstwhile agricultural labourers are also sugarcane cutters today

#### Household profile of land ownership in resettled villages

Categories of landholdings	Amalpada	Vajhpur	Seltipada
Less than one acre, or landless	68	45	39
1-3 acres	67	59	33
3-4 acres	24	15	10
4 acres and more	7	6	9
No land, but other salaried occupations	13	6	2
No information	1	2	2

**Source:** Fieldwork survey, August-November 2001, Songadh, Surat district

1. These categories exclude the land sharecropped or illegally cultivated in the forest especially for those with less than 3 acres of land, since this offers a tenuous security, the households being at the whims of the forest guards.
2. The landed include those who cultivate land today, based on legal ownership of a plot of land or renting out a plot for a certain period of time. For eg., if a portion of land has been mortgaged by a household, the remaining amount is considered in the survey.

d. those who had no landholdings in the pre-displacement villages, but through seasonal migration for a number of years were able to garner enough economic resources to re-situate themselves within the village. These households are however, few and far between and generally the exceptions among the general migration profile of sugarcane cutters.

#### Histories of displacements among sugarcane cutters

This section examines the histories and perceptions of those sugarcane cutters who were migrant/settlers to the Ukai region or were agricultural labourers to the



landed households of the *adivasi* farmers in the villages of Amalpada, Vajhpur and Seltipada. Their narratives differ substantially from the dominant generalised narrative described and analysed in the earlier chapter. This section attempts to trace the differences in the histories and rememberings of the sugarcane cutters and their significance in the construction of a singular narrative of displacement in the resettled villages.

For many of the sugarcane cutters, at an individual level, the displacement due to the dam was not the first uprooting they faced. Nor was it an uprooting that occurred after a long period of time. Many of their fathers had been part of at least two uprootings within their lifetimes, in an attempt to escape a state of poverty and want. Like Jahgumaharaj in Seltipada (refer to chpt. 4: 214), there were many other families in the three villages who had arrived at the older villages just prior to the building of the Ukai dam and chosen to accept the meagre compensation and stay on.

Bhimakaka, one of the sugarcane cutters, looked an old man when I first met him at the sugarcane cutters camp in Gujarat. He had migrated as a cutter with his wife and daughter, leaving his 10-year-old son in a boarding school in the neighbouring district to the village. In the months spent for my fieldwork, I saw him changing and re-building his 'residence' at least twice---both in the camp and in the villages. It would be more accurate to say that he had been a migrant for a major part of his life, rather than a sugarcane cutter. When I first met him, he described himself as a resident of Vajhpur. He related his story over a period of time and over many locations, in a sense, concretising this image of a migrant.

It was not a story told in a chronological order, but in response to my questions and discussions on many issues ranging from the building of the Ukai dam to the disharmony among the sugarcane cutters, education for his children, the sugarcane cutters political rights, and the system of payment of wages in the sugarcane factories. What was characteristic of these discussions was his positionality that was overtly evident in the narratives.

Bhimakaka was born in a village in Narmada district. Like others, his father too had heard of the land available for cultivation in this area. He had moved here with his family. He had been able to get a small piece of land registered in his name with the forest department. This was very small---about 4-5 acres. After a few years, when the houses were moved to this present spot, they got about 2 acres of land as compensation. For a few years after the move, Bhimakaka and his family had worked as agricultural labourers and cultivated their small patch of land. He was the only son. Since their means of livelihood were not enough, his father decided to move back to the old village with their relatives. By this time, Bhimakaka had married and his wife was from around this area. They also had a daughter.

At this point, his story became fragmentary. When their daughter was a few years old, there was an epidemic in the village and both his wife and daughter died. Struck with grief, Bhimakaka sold his land and wandered as he said 'for many years, to different places'. He worked as a construction labourer for sometime, as also in the fields transplanting and harvesting rice in and around Surat city and Valsad district. He was away from his villages for nine years.

During this time, he met a Parsi landlord who employed him as a domestic servant at his house in Bombay. Bhimakaka lived there for 'a few years'. His employer treated him well. This was a part of the story that Bhimabhai dwelled on---the contrast in his present life and the life in Bombay were quite striking to him. There was enough to eat, he cooked for his employer and had a steady income. However, one day, he 'simply left'. 'That was not my village, and I was still the servant of a Parsi'. He had not been able to save any money, since he was drinking quite heavily by that time. He returned to Vajhpur, and rebuilt his house. He also re-married, since 'he needed a wife to mind his house'. The marriage was arranged through a friend, and his wife was from the neighbouring state of Maharashtra. He tried different avenues of work---fishing, cultivation of land in the forests, agricultural labour work at paddy fields in south Gujarat. However, he eventually decided to borrow money from the *mukaddam*. He had been going for sugarcane cutting for about five years.

Displacement due to the Ukai dam held a distant place in Bhimakaka's narrative of his life, travels and concerns. Unlike other villagers' narratives discussed so far, displacement was not even narrated as a personalised element of his story, when it was specifically discussed twice during the course of the fieldwork---initially in the sugarcane cutters' camps and later, in his village. When asked about his memories of displacement due to the dam, Bhimabhai began with, '[....] this is what we have heard about Ukai dam....'; unlike other narratives wherein stories about the time of displacement were based around the personal experiences of the narrator or a member of his family. The narrative then has a

strong third person element, with the narrator absenting himself into a collective and anonymous 'we'.

'[...] this is what we have heard about the Ukai dam. Since most of us were illiterate, and no one told us anything. We know that Morarji and the Congress wanted the dam. So did Indira [...] because she came here to inaugurate the dam. She came in a helicopter. Many of us were taken in trucks there. It was a big moment. So many people, and she came up and spoke to some of them. And she said this would improve conditions. Yes, we don't know much but people read in the papers and while I was travelling to Surat and Bombay, I talked to people I met and they said this is what the Congress was trying to do. They were going to help the poor in India. We have many songs about them. You should ask Gimhabhai to sing you some of the *rudalis* from that time. He used to be with the *sangadiyas* and sing them...' (Bhimabhai, Seltipada, February 2002)

As discussed earlier, Bhimakaka changed his residence twice during the course of this fieldwork----shifting the location of his hut while in the sugarcane cutter's camp and shifting his house from Vajhpur to Seltipada village on his return from sugarcane cutting for the year. While the former was part of the movement of the entire camp on the advice of the *bhagat* to avoid the increased incidences of misfortune in the camp for the *mukaddam*, and by implication, the cutters; the latter was a decision forced by adverse circumstances in the neighbourhood. Bhimakaka's neighbour in Vajhpur had increased his economic and political circumstances in Vajhpur enough to rebuild and expand his house, and Bhimakaka's adverse economic circumstances had allowed his neighbour to buy the sugarcane cutter out. With the scarcity of land near sources of water in Vajhpur, the cutter had to move to the nearby hillside slopes of Seltipada inhabited by other cutters' households.

Bhimakaka's various displacements are representative of the experience of the landless, and in most circumstances, sugarcane cutters' households in these villages. With the exceptions of few cutters like Nandadiyabhai and Gimhabhai (see in thesis section 'Stories of Shame': 275-283), most of the households are caught up in a flux of displacements. With the older generation, the stories within the life histories indicate a series of migrations, forced by a web of forces that at the micro level are indicated by tragic events within households, of debt, scarcity of food, land grabbing within larger environments of debt bondage, search for employment and food, social and political pressures on land, hunger and marginalisation. Gilsenan observes of the narratives of the fellahin that 'the arbitrariness of power is represented as dictating life chances and the very conditions of existence' (Gilsenan, 1996: 147). In other words, the narratives are marked by an arbitrariness of origin that dictates their lives. In the literature on forced migration, that writes about displacements due to specific projects such as dams or industrial projects, the ethnography of the lives and the impact of displacement on the more marginalised groups among the displaced is sketchy. Although as Dwivedi points out, the risks of losing a livelihood among this groups are perceived differently and at times obverse to those of the landed groups (1999: 28). What this implies for the event of displacement in their life histories could lead to an ethnographically richer understanding of their lives in the social and political hierarchy of the region. Migration of the displacees and landless as sugarcane migrants within a debt bondage system concretises the perception 'from below' of the arbitrariness of power and its impact on their lives. In Bhimakaka's story, the various movements in the pre-displacement

period, during displacement and in the post-displacement period are marked by a lack of emphasis on this during the narrative. It is almost a taken-for-granted aspect of his life. The normalisation of the various movements in circumstances outside the control of Bhimakaka, attests to the observation that it is not just the risks of displacement that are perceived differently by different socio-economic groups in the *chaudkheda* villages, but raises the question of whether the significance of forced migration through dam-displacement can be collapsed into a unitary category of the trauma of displacement. This is not to deny the shock and hardship associated with unforeseen displacement among the landless households in these villages. However, for many of the landless households and sugarcane migrants, the injustice associated with displacement is not located only at the point of the construction of the Ukai dam. It is enmeshed within their life-histories of migrating to the pre-dam villages, in being unable to record their new lands with the revenue department and their gradual marginalisation into debt bondage in the post-displacement conditions. That this felt injustice has very diffuse points of actualisation discourages it from being turned into a coherent narrative even within a single life history. In Bhimakaka's life history, for instance, the various migrations are his responses to stave off hunger and destitution, and his desire and search to belong to a village. In each instance, there is an implicit or explicit threat of coercion that accompanies it---such as the threat of hunger in moving to the Ukai region in search of land in the pre-dam period and the move accompanied by trucks bringing them to this particular resettlement site. In not having registered this piece of land renders him invisible in the government records, and being a migrant does not allow him to voice his grievance of the lack of compensation through similar such voices of the

'original' landed households in the villages. In other words, although I agree with Cernea that marginalisation and food insecurity are some of the risks entailed in any displacement (2000: 14-15), from the point of view of the displaced themselves it is the subjective perception of the risk associated with the socio-cultural and political hierarchies, such as that of a settler status or one of an original landowner and that of being landless or landed, in the villages that push them further into a pauperised condition or create a space for the recognition of their conditions within the villages themselves. In the case of the sugarcane cutters, this creates all the difference between the possibility of returning and claiming an identity of belonging to the village, or of continuing with a stigmatised mode of subsistence within the villages over generations. In other words, rather than the cutters' narratives being marked by the absence of displacement due to the Ukai dam, it becomes one of the many instances of forced migration or movement within the lived experiences of this group of Vasavas in Vajhpur, Seltipada and Amalpada.

The absence of the experiences of settlers and landless sugarcane cutters within the generalised narrative does not mean the absence of a perception of felt grievances among the cutters. This is one aspect then emerges quite strongly in the conversations with erstwhile cane cutters and those who have been migrating for sugarcane cutting in the present period. The erstwhile cane cutter is more willing to talk about what difficulties have arisen in their life histories, before and after displacement. But this is not expressed through the medium of the loss of land and its impact on village life. Nor did any of my conversations regarding the past have a sense of 'community' of cutters in the manner that the generalised

narrative did regarding the landed displacees in the villages (see interviews in this chapter, Bhimakaka: 251 and Bhilkiyabhai: 272-273). The felt injustices of the cutters were articulated as lacks within the individual households in the language of the availability or lack of food substantiated with details of the mode of the grain and staple food that were available and the cost at which they could be accessed in the pre-dam villages. According to one such informant, '[...] *bhaat* could be sold for Rs. 500/- to Rs. 1000/- per bigha [...] *tuver* was much more inexpensive if you went to Navapur. Now we have to go to Selamba and it's difficult to buy it in the market....' (Bhilkiyabhai Mahudiabhai, Dogri Fali, May 2002). Along with this, there is talk of the demographic and socio-economic composition of villages that they belonged to in the pre-dam period and their mergers with the larger villages of landed farmers in the resettlement sites. Cane cutters themselves, the older and the younger generation of cane cutters spoke little of their present day villages of origin and their lives in those villages. The pre-dam and post-dam situation in their stories rarely contained a discussion of what was lost in the generalised narrative and the stories of the landed farmers--- land, compensation, houses etc. When speaking about the present day villages of origin, the issues for the cutters centred around concerns of participating or problems in participating in village-level events, and its consequences in terms of further marginalisation. Although seemingly descriptive rather than political, the cutters' descriptions of their lives and the memories of their lives voiced an on-going lived experience of hunger, marginalisation and a loss of village level identities. In the lives of the cutters, this existential state has a history stretching over generations and continues until this present day. It is not a state of famine or acute malnourishment that one refers to in terms of hunger here. Their lives are



representative of a state of 'chronic' or 'endemic hunger' (Dreze and Sen, 1989) —a hunger where one does eat everyday and yet it is of an insufficient quantity and impoverished variety that leaves them feeling dissatisfied and hungry. In stretching this condition to also understand the textures of marginalisation in the lives of the settlers and the cutters, lived experience has three dimensions that have been discussed theoretically by Scheper-Hughes (1992) as being individually experienced, socially represented in symbolic idioms and subject to the larger socio-economic and political forces at play in the region (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987). Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987; 1992) analyse acute conditions of distress by the individual and collective body in times of famine and violence and call the various manifestations of social distress through individual bodies as the lived experiences of 'mindful bodies' (1987: 10). The conversations and narrative themes of the cutters revealed the lived experiences of everyday states of discrimination and destitution not as a consciously articulated critique of the various acts and hierarchies of power experienced in their lives and histories, but as an everyday perception and awareness of these structures of disarticulation and their powerlessness to do anything about it. Indeed, it is the very articulation of their everyday lives that poses a critique and serves to undercut the dominant collective narrative of displacement in the villages that seeks to appropriate the condition of the sugarcane cutter as representative of an archetypical story of the loss of quality of life for all the displacees. In as much as critiquing the system of debt bondage within the sugarcane cutting contracts as being responsible for their pauperisation, the sugarcane cutters' focus on themes of access to food, gradual exclusion from village level social festivities and political processes due to their continuing and

enforced migration critiques and questions the 'one-off' nature of displacement evident in the dominant generalised story of Ukai dam displacement in the villages. To expand this discussion, I further argue that through explicitly expressing their inability to remember specific details of the Ukai dam displacement, the sugarcane cutters' memories also pose a critique of the normalisation of the meaning that 'displacement' has acquired in the resettled villages among the non-migrant and landed displacees.

In the first place, the observation that this chapter began with, that of the marginality of the narrative of displacement due to the Ukai dam among migrants travelling for the varied kinds of seasonal labour work mentioned above, it is among the sugarcane cutters and the *kola* workers that its absence is most noticeable. The stories among these sugarcane cutters are not only marked by the absence of the trope of displacement, but also dominated and interspersed by themes such as poverty and marginalisation from village life. What then are these histories whose themes and tellings are distinct so that they do not collapse into the flow of a collective history of a 700-odd other people from the three villages?

These life stories that serve as a critique of the dominant generalised narrative are evident through not only in what the cutters articulate about their lives, ie, questions of food and their places within village structures, but also within the absence of an explicit talk of any kind of migration in their life stories, although surveys and the conversations are rife with indications to multiple migrations within lifetimes and over generations. Their lives are characterised by a constant sense of moving that is so evident in any research among them. This is not only

true of the sugarcane camps, where Breman's ethnography (1985; 1994: 377-378, 382-383) indicates how transitory their lives in the camps are, and how fragmented research among the camp dwellers can be, since the camps move every ten days. The contingent sense in this movement is very much part of the cane-cutters lives in their villages, and described in an annual cycle of my fieldwork; it was an aspect that struck me in my fieldwork planning as well as research before, during and on the cane-cutters' return to their villages after the seasonal migration. In this sense then, the fieldwork was not so much among seasonal cyclical migrants; it could be more accurately be termed as fieldwork among contingent lives. Gilson's description of the narratives of landless in villages in Lebanon are relevant here. He says that in their narratives one finds, '[...] there is a pattern to its operations, but it is a pattern constituted by irregularity, intermittancy and unpredictability arising from the asymmetries of social relations [...]' between the landowners and the landless (Gilson, 1996: 147). One could perhaps say that the constancy of migration trips in the life of the cutters makes it a 'given'; and the absence of the articulation of migration in their life-histories needs to be recognised as the normalisation of such movements among the cutters.

Bhilkiyabhai, or Raju's father as I was introduced to him, is representative of most sugarcane cutters. Eliciting his accounts of his life as a sugarcane cutter was representative of my interviews with other male sugarcane cutters, not just in the substance of his story, but also in the manner of his telling or rather, of gleaning bits of autobiographical accounts of his life. He did not migrate with just his wife and children. His household had been migrating as sugarcane cutters for about 8

years, along with the households of his two brothers and a sister. His aged mother stayed in the village caring after one buffalo and his eldest son Raju, who was 10 years old and a patient of polio. It was too difficult to travel around with him to the sugarcane fields, so the boy was sent to school in the village.

I interviewed Raju's father very late into my stay in the cutters camps. This was as much because he was not given to speaking as also to his invisibility in public spaces. Being a short stocky person, this was not too difficult. Moreover, he would leave the camp before anyone else and return after dark. On most days, he was away on night loading trips, being allocated a specific task by the *mukaddam* of arranging sugarcane bundles as they were being loaded on to the trucks. His wife was as quiet as him and mostly stayed in her hut, an unusual woman among the sugarcane cutters. Before leaving for the camps, I had surveyed his house in the home village with his mother giving me the required household information. In the villages too, he and his wife were away for most part of the day, working as hired labourers for the forest department on most days or gathering produce from the forest for later consumption.

At the camp, it was possible to talk to him after constant interaction with his sister and his sister-in-law. It was then, after about a months' stay, that I was invited to their hut for a meal. As I tried to engage him, and later his wife, in conversation, I realised the meal was more an occasion for them to show their hospitality to a guest of the camp rather than a private space to engage in conversation. The very idea that I would be interested in their household's history of travelling for 8 years to the camp disconcerted him. I had talked to

others about sugarcane cutters; their story was 'just like the others'. 'There was no land; this was the only occupation available'. Aware of the sensitivity regarding questions about the *mukaddam*, I tried asking questions about the pre-dam village. In most instances in the village this was the best way to open a conversation. Raju's father, however, ignored the question completely and asked me about the food, and said a bit about how little food they had to live on. Then, instructing his wife to show me the required hospitality, he left the hut.

This strange meal and the reluctance on answering questions repeated themselves quite often during the next two months of fieldwork. There was a group of households in the camp that guided my stay in camp life. Most of these persons had a close working or kin relationship with the *mukaddam*. The rest of the camp--- another 20 huts invited me to meals, guided me to the fields, put their children in my charge, sang songs for me, spoke volubly about their problems in the camps but rarely spoke to me for a length of time on their histories in village. This was especially true of the men, and Bhimakaka's response on the dam, written about in the earlier section that dealt with a general political history of the dam in his perception was the closest and longest narrative I had on the impact of the dam on the lives of the present-day sugarcane cutters in the camps. As every time, one of the camp women came to my rescue in trying to answer the question of why nobody wanted to talk about the dam. 'That was a long time ago. You want to know about it, but here we forget about the village. We work, and then we are so tired, where is the strength to remember?' she said.

It could be argued that her phrase, '[...] *where is the strength to remember?*' and Raju's father's disconcertment at queries on his family's history speak at two levels. On the one hand, the statement speaks to the sheer weight of everyday work and life in the camps that requires the cutter to turn oneself into a machine that leaves little time or space for him/her to re-constitute themselves at the end of a day, so that the only thing possible for the exhausted bodies is to sleep into oblivion. In a Marxian sense, one would characterise this in terms of alienation of labour. E. P. Thompson (1991) in his essay *Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism* portrays the processes of disciplining rhythms of work to meet the demands of regulated time of the clock (1991: 380). As harnessing maximum productivity of labour became the driving force of the organisation of industrial production, the more 'task-oriented' rhythms of work, body and time were regimented to meet the demands of the machine in industrial capitalism in early 18<sup>th</sup> century England (Thompson, 1991). In Thompson's research, workers in 18<sup>th</sup> century England responded to the changes in the organisation of work, body and time with a simultaneous organisation of labour that transformed the new rhythms of work into a terrain of contestations and negotiations about the rewards of labour between the labourers' unions and the owners of the factories. This opportunity for organisation is not privy to the sugarcane cutters as evinced in detailed studies (Breman, 1978; 1985; 1996). This negates the possibility of a consolidation of collective interests leaving the determination of time and organisation of work out of the grasp of sugarcane cutters. The point with the individual cutter's work discipline involves not so much an organisation of his/her labour, although in the regimentation of sugarcane cutting at the level of the factory, this is a major component. For the individual cutter, it is not so much

the regimentation of work rhythms that is central to the cutters routine, but a fragmentation of any sense of rhythm or routine that the individual cane cutter experiences. This fragmentation of rhythm or routine shatters all boundaries between 'work' and 'non-work' time; albeit in different ways for the men and women in the cutters' camps.

The cutters' days extend from dawn to dusk for cutting of the cane. However, on most days the cutters are also required to load the sugarcane on to trucks at night. Most women in the camp rise by 5.00 am to clean the hut and cook. The men wake about half an hour later, and barely have enough time to rinse their mouths and have a cup of black tea before leaving for the fields. In the event that the fields are closer to the camps, the men leave by 6.15am or 6.30am. In all events cutting starts by 7.00am. In case there is a new field where cutting must begin, the cutters get a little more leeway in time, for the *mukaddam* has to direct them to the field and notify the farmer. The cutters usually have a ceremony to ward off spirits and possibilities of unfortunate accidents before cutting begins in the field. It is the farmer who has to provide for a little oil, coconut, matchsticks, incense sticks and vermilion for the ceremony that is carried out by a *bhagat* or *karigar* in the group.

Women leave the camps for the fields after preparing the mid-day meal and waking the children. This usually is done by the time the men leave the camps, and women get to the fields and begin work about a quarter of an hour or half an hour later. Work goes on through the day, children under-10 are looked after by the eldest child in the group and play on the fringes of the fields. They are called

in to help if needed during the day. Infants are put in temporary hammocks built close to where the mother is cutting the cane, so that she can attend to the child, when needed.

There are no breaks taken during the day, except for the mid-day meal around noon, but its duration varies according to the amount of cane that has yet to be cut. Sometimes, one member of the team can continue cutting the cane while the other has their meal. The meal usually consists of rice and some dried fish or *tuver dal* or aubergines---the cheapest vegetables available and also the quickest to cook.

Cutting usually finishes by 5.00pm. Men finish a little earlier, being then able to negotiate the selling of the green stalks of the sugarcane to traders and farmers from nearby areas. Women continue, cutting cane and/or tying the cane into bundles. If a truck needs to be loaded, the men usually organise the loading, by which I mean, handing out the bundles to the women who then carry them to the truck, arranging the bundles at the back of the truck and cutting them into manageable sizes to fit the maximum tonnage possible.

As they make their way back to the camp, the women use the pumps in the field to bathe, wash their clothes, bathe their children and collect water for the evening. The use of the pump depends on each individual farmer's discretion; however, Ramabhai's *tukdi* usually got the farmers' permission through the intervention of the *mukaddam*, who had built up networks with the farmers in the area through the many years he had been travelling here as a *mukaddam*. As they



return, the household tasks include drying clothes, cleaning the hut again, setting the fire, begin cooking. The latter has to be ready as soon as possible, for members of the household including themselves might be required to leave again to load the trucks. This is known by its English name 'night-loading'. Night loading is exactly what it says. One member from each of the huts is required to go every evening or late at night to load sugarcane into the trucks, so as not to miss the schedule set out by the factory. Cut cane left for too long also tends to lose its sucrose content, and therefore it has to be sent to the factory as soon as possible. The factories ensure that the labourers get to the fields without delays or accidents by sending a truck each evening to the camp to pick up the labourers. However, after the work is done, the labourers have to make their way back to the camp on foot, however far the field might have been. This might mean the night loaders can return to the camp anytime between midnight to four in the morning, taking upto an hour or hour and a half to walk back in the dark. They must, however, be ready to begin cutting the cane the next day at 7.00 am. Instances of men and women barely snatching 3 hours sleep for 2-3 days is not uncommon. As one of the men said, 'The only thing that keeps you going is *daru, bidi* and *tambaku* [...]where is the time to eat, when all you want to do is sleep?'

These irregular and long working hours are also made uncertain further by the demands and pressures of pressing cane as soon as it is cut at the factory. This can mean that there are days when the workload is impossibly high requiring upto two night loading sessions. At other times, too much stock of sugarcane at the factory gates can result in a temporary stoppage of cutting. These

unscheduled breaks are not unwelcome for the labourers, however they are sudden and the labourers are many times without an idea about their duration. It serves as more time to catch up on sleep or more likely for the women, cleaning and plastering the hut with cow dung and mud (*lipvanu*) in an effort to repair it. There is, however, the constant awareness that any sort of personal tasks might be shattered by the sudden arrival of 'the truck' as the demand for sugarcane picks up again by the factory, and though cutting hours are not as arbitrary, loading is a task that might be required at anytime of the day or night.

The condition of night-loading of sugarcane, especially, turns work into a continuous exercise subordinating simple biological needs of eating and rest. In this sense, the old woman's phrase '[...] *where is the strength to remember?*' is more than a complaint about not getting enough time to rest. It is a description of the erasure of aspects of identity and the subordination of memory to the demands of capitalist agriculture. Working from dawn to dusk is not unknown in the villages of Amalpada, Seltipada and Vajhpur. In the resettled villages tasks such as getting to the fields, or to areas demarcated by the forest department to gather firewood and fodder can take upto six to eight hours for a return trip. However, these are planned ventures, with an amount of certainty about the time to be invested in carrying out these tasks, which are not subject to the kind of impersonality of the forces of the factory. I would also then see Raju's father's response that his story was 'just like the others' as part of the homogenising and de-signifying impetus of the work-discipline demanded of the cane cutter. The only time in this venture that the presence of the cane cutter is noted is in his absence. Every cutter who misses a night-loading trip is fined half a kilo of grain

that he/she is entitled to at the end of the month. Every day of work missed at the fields is fined Rs. 50 per labourer. The fragmentation of any sense of routine for the individual labourer, other than the one that serves to retain the productivity of the sugarcane serves to disorient the individual. Here, it is not so much a transition from one rhythm, involving a harsh routine to another different rhythm; but a change from a familiar place with uncertain and underemployed days to a strange and hostile place with an unrelenting work discipline. It is also significant in this regard that most of the songs sung by women on their night-loading trips are sung as laments, urging the cutter not to forget those she leaves behind.

The phrase, '*[...] where is the strength to remember?*' also speaks to the power of the loss of multiple displacements. With most of the cane cutters, most conversations in the camp were regarding the abysmal conditions of life in the camps, rather than the Ukai dam displacement. Contrary to my methodological assumptions that the camp might be too sensitive a place to talk about camp life due to the surveillance that the labourers are under when talking to strangers, this was one piece of conversation that needed no prodding. Given that the destitution of the labourers in the camps is visually so undeniable, especially in contrast to the farmers' villas, one of my strangest moments of fieldwork was having an extended discussion with the *mukaddam*, one of the landed farmers in the displaced villages, about the conditions of the camp life. In a conversation initiated by him, I was given an agenda of the demands that should be put forward to the government (not the management of the factories) regarding

improving basic conditions of living, such as water supply and medicines for the sugarcane cutters!

The image of the Ukai dam, that is so vivid in the narratives of many of the landed families in the 'home' villages, and in a representative narrative of the generalised narrative is quite absent in the narrative histories of most cane cutters in the three villages. This occurs in two ways in narratives about the pre-dam and the resettled villages. One is in the way the narrative moves from life in the pre-dam village to that in the resettled village. The image of the dam and its construction is absent. Illustrative of this is the story of Bhilkiyabhai, told on our return to the village after the cutting season, and was told in a purely question and answer format rather than a conversation. When conversing with the other cutters regarding the transition from the pre-dam to the resettled villages, in most cases the conversation would turn into a question and answer format, as though they weren't quite sure what I wanted to know and how far back. In many of these conversations, I often had to go back another time to take the narrative further back from just the pre-dam villages to know if there had been a migration before that and how far back. In other words, in the discussions about the impact of resettlement on their lives, there was no narrative plot. This was unlike the generalised narrative on the dam among the landed in the village. In most cases, the cutters came with the deforestation of the hills while the dam was under construction, and had accepted compensation and stayed on in the resettled villages.

I: so this house that you are living in here (in the village), is the wood from the old villages?

B: yes it is the same house.

I: and where did you live in the old village?

B: in Jambli

I: where is that?

B: in Maharashtra

I: how did you come to Selti?

B: the jungle *khata* gave us 40 *bighas* of land in Selti, so we came.

I: in the old village?

B: yes

I: and when did you come here?

B: 3 days after

I: 3 days after what?

B: 3 days after we were told to move.

I: and the *kheti*?

B: we worked----my 3 brothers and sister. We used to get  $\frac{1}{2}$  *champo dadar* and 1 *champo dangar* per person as *majoori* here.

I: Didn't you get any land or money?

B: we got land in the village (to build a house) ---2 *gala*. We sold that, and came here. Stayed there for 7 years. It's better there, in the village. But we did this on the *khata*.

I: why did you sell the house?

B: (pause)

I: who did you sell it to?

B: M's relatives (the *ex-patel*'s family)

(Interview in Seltipada village, April 2002)

Unlike the interviews with the landed households in the three villages, displacement here is not one major event. The interview moves back and forth between many places. Every time a move occurs, the role of the household as a decision-making unit is absent. Both times that the household moved, they did so on the behest of a third party---the first time when the jungle *khata*, the forest

department, offered them land for cultivation. The second time, 'they were asked to move'. However, these different migrations are not ascribed to the event of displacement due to the Ukai dam, in the manner of the dominant narrative in the villages. Here, the manner in which the events unfold has to do with more powerful agencies----such as the forest department that gives land, anonymous third parties that demand the households move to another area and similar agencies through which they receive a land to build their house. It is also more powerful groups in the village that then have the ability to marginalise the households further by buying up their assets in the village. In the cutters interviews, the external and arbitrary power dictating life chances on individual lives and households and the very condition of existence is palpable.

In the other narratives, the dam is not absent, but one of the many events in the life histories of the cane cutters. The impact of the building of the dam that occupies such a central aspect of the non-cane cutter households is at odds with the manner in which the dam is back-grounded in the narratives of the cane cutters. Bhilkiyabhai Mahudiabhai's narrative is illustrative of this. An erstwhile sugarcane cutter, he is now 'too old to cut cane'. He had begun leaving for sugarcane cutting 4 years after the dam came up, and the villagers were re-settled to this area.

BM: I had my own jungle *kheti* then, so I did not go to build the dam. So I don't know any stories about the dam.

I: if you had your own *kheti*, did you get any compensation?

BM: yes

I: then, how did you have to go to Gujarat?

BM: (to his neighbours) now what do I tell her?

I: did I say something wrong?

A young woman: its like this. They had some 20 acres in the old village. But the land they gave, 4 acres, went to his elder brother. He doesn't want to share it. So this old man has to wander around for work.

BM: its not just this. The problem is also that Dogri was a separate *faliyu* in the old village. They should have made it into a separate village, instead of lumping it with Mota Amalpada. See, all the *agewans* are there---so all the benefits go there. Whereas in Dogri there are mainly landless labourers. In this *faliya* in the old village, most were also landless labourers. This happened when the jungle *mandalis* started clearing the forest, a lot of land opened up. People started cultivating this land but it was not noted in the *khata*. Earlier people from Dogri could work in any jungle *mandali*---there was so much work. Now if we want to work with the *jungle mandali*, it is Bavli *mandali*; and it is impossible to find work, it goes to the *agewans* and their relatives. Mota Amalpada gets many benefits---it has some electricity. We don't even have light poles here, but we are in the same village [...] with all this, we have to look for *majoori* where we find it. So I started going to Gujarat...

(Interview in Dogri Fali, Amalpada, May 2002)

The old woman's question, '[...] *where is the strength to remember?*' in this context, can be examined in terms of the articulation of these different stories, in contrast to that of the dominant generalised narrative of displacement and resettlement. In the sugarcane cutters stories, the dam does not have the causal power that is evident in the generalised narrative and the claiming of the title of a 'displacee' by the non-cutter households. In the disparate stories of the cutters, it is much more village level hierarchies, government policies, and personal ties that are implicated in the inadequacy of the resettlement measures. Memories of displacement then implicates personal relationships as between the division of 4 acres of land that creates friction between brothers, or indicates to processes of

power hierarchies within the village and the consolidation of land by some households post-displacement at the cost of the others. In most of these then, the cutters narratives have the power to reveal the underbelly of the politics in resettled groups and taking on dominant groups in the village and their histories of the village.

On the other hand, the narratives of the cutters also displaces the very centrality of the dam and displacement in the history of the villages in this region. In the narratives of the cutters, migration forced due to poverty, unemployment or famine starts much before Ukai dam. Where displacement due to the dam is much more violent in the suddenness of the event for the displacees, and its impact in terms of the drastic reduction in the quality of life; the situation of endemic hunger that it brought on was not unknown to the histories of many of the landless families, who are sugarcane cutters today. Nor is it a situation that is any less violent in the implications of powerlessness and hunger that these connote, and that probably prompted many of the landless migrants to the old villages of Amalpada, Seltipada and Vajhpur to take up the meagre compensation offered and move to the new unknown sites than return to where they had originally emigrated from. More important, endemic hunger and powerlessness continue to define the condition of the sugarcane migrant today, and has a history that continues upto the present day. An ethnography of the everyday lives of the cutters that are defined by endemic hunger and marginalisation in their places of work, where they spend a better part of every year, will be taken up and discussed in the next chapter.



### Stories of shame

This section examines two case stories<sup>1</sup> that I would term as 'stories of shame'. They are stories of, and narrated about two sugarcane cutters who were members of landed households in the pre-dam and resettled villages, and lost land due to various circumstances. The two case studies indicate to two processes of 'shaming'---while in Gimhabhai's case, it is the ascription of shame by the village community; shame in Nandadiyabhai's instance is much more a 'felt' personal experience in the face of attempts by the 'village community' to reclaim the story of 'Nandadiyadada'<sup>2</sup> into the generalised narrative of displacement and the injustice of resettlement.

Gimhabahaka's narrative stands at the intersection of the narratives of displacement told in the villages and those generally heard among the sugarcane cutters. His narrative is also interesting not just in terms of what is told, but also in terms of Gimhabahaka's place in the everyday life of his village, both in the pre-displacement and post-displacement periods.

Gimhabhai was the son of one of the richest landowners in Vajhpur village. However, unlike his brother, he was known not to be interested in matters of the house and agriculture, preferring to spend his time with the wandering musicians called '*sangadiyas*'. He is also known to be given to drink. As a young boy, he

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<sup>1</sup> In the context of the issues taken up in the chapter, these two case studies are exceptions---they go against the dominant narration of displacement, explained in the earlier chapter, and reflect a very different experience of displacement.

also claims to have visions of one of the village deities and the water spirits, and to be instructed by them in medicine. In Vajhpur and the neighbouring villages he is a well-known *bhagat*. He is also an important figure in conducting death ceremonies in the village. Despite being an important figure in the religious and social life of the village, Gimhabhai has been migrating as a sugarcane cutter with his family for about two years. He blamed his present state of destitution on displacement due to the Ukai dam,

'[...] This is why people leave for Gujarat [...] I was given 3 acres of land 2 years after we were moved here-it has split into two, between me and my brother. It is a hilly plot----every year I have to put in more fertiliser to make basic crop grow. In the old village it was black soil. There was no fertiliser needed. Every year I spend Rs.200-250 buying the fertiliser from the merchant in Selamba (the closest market town, about 50kms away) to produce *dadar* and rice that fetches me about Rs. 800-1000. And for the last two years, the rains failed. My crops died. Then my buffalo died, and then my chickens. So now I go to Gujarat...' (Gimhabhai, Vajhpur, September 2001)

Gimhabhai was the only sugarcane cutter who spoke about such a direct link between being a cutter and displacement. In his village, he told this story in the presence of many other villagers---both sugarcane cutters as well as other villagers. That this was a story narrated in the public domain was reinforced by the fact that the meeting and the themes to be discussed were pre-arranged several days ahead. On the day of the interview, Gimhabhai brought two of his friends along. During the time that he told his story, several aspects of it were reinforced or substantiated by his friends. His wife and daughter were present at

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<sup>2</sup> 'dada' means grandfather, 'doha' is a generic term referring to an old man.

the interview, which was conducted in the courtyard of his house, but said little. The public nature of this interview was later sharpened by the cross-stories of the manner in which Gimhabhai became a sugarcane cutter. In contrast to Gimhabhai's narrative of the cause of decline of his household due to the insufficient compensation at the time of displacement and the subsequent fragmentation of the 3 acres of land between him and his brother; the cross-stories ascribed the reasons for the decline in the household's fortunes to Gimhabhai's disinterest in agriculture and his fondness for drinking.

Gimhabhai's story of decline into landlessness is not unique among the sugarcane cutters. They were similar to stories of at least two other households among the cutters among whom the fieldwork was conducted. In all the three instances, each principal story is overlaid by definitely contradictory cross-stories. What then ostensibly appeared as an outcome of displacement, and indeed, was articulated as a case of the injustice of resettlement measures seemed a much more complex issue of the effect of loss of a livelihood that involved multiple reasons, processes and emotions. In the instance of Nandadiyadada, this observation is borne out most clearly. Nandadiyadada's story of loss of livelihood, home and status from a landed, educated and employed young man to that of an old man forced to eke out a living through sugarcane cutting was held up as a case for the injustice of the building of the Ukai dam by most villagers, sugarcane cutters and even the *mukkadam* who hired the sugarcane cutters in the village.

While Gimhabhai told his story evocatively to build up a case that allied him to the loss of significant members of his village, Nandadiyadada's narrative on displacement was marked by a detailed description regarding the physical location of the pre-displacement villages, their socio-economic constitution, the various neighbourhoods, and demographic profiles. His narrative was, however, marked by an absence of a personal element to the narrative. The 'I' or the 'we' that is characteristic of a lot of displacement stories in these villages is noticeably absent in this particular set of conversations with Nandadiyadada.

N: What do you want to know from me? ...oh you want to know about the dam? ...what can I tell you?...how were we displaced? Ok...do you have a paper and pencil? Then I will draw the old villages for you.' (at this point he drew a detailed sketch of his older villages, indicating where each household was, where the neighbourhoods/ *faliyas* of the villages were, their location in relation to the river, and indicated the houses of the significant elders). I know how to draw this because I worked as a clerk in the office of the *taluka* commissioner then, for about 6 years. I am metric pass.

I: couldn't you get similar work after displacement?

N: no, it was not possible.

(pause)

I: why not, *dada*?

N: what do you want to know about displacement?

I: what happened to you and your family when you were uprooted, did you get compensation, where were you relocated, everything you can remember?

N: there's not much to remember. All the people were moved in trucks and brought to Amalpada. The *sahibs* went to the villages to let people know, and measure all the land. I was in the revenue office, so I learnt how to measure and draw maps then. And everyone was brought in trucks. There's nothing much else.

I: Did you start going for sugar very soon after that?

N: Maybe. Who knows? Look I'll send my wife this evening. Then you can ask her to sing the *duban* songs for you. She remembers those. Haanh, she will tell you....

(Interview at migrant labour camp, December, 2001)

This was a conversation marked by a paucity of information about his or his household's life history. In the conversation leading upto the building of the dam, Nandadiyadada talked in his role of an assistant in the *taluka* commissioner's office. On the questions regarding the impact of the dam on his household and life after displacement, he talked about sending his wife to sing songs that were sung by women regarding the difficulties of living in the resettled villages. Questions on the need that led him to become a sugarcane cutter were met by an uncomfortable silence. It was through stories and gossip, on returning to the villages from the camps that one got an inkling into the life of this man after displacement, the usurpation of his land by his adult children and the old couple's subsequent abandonment. This was a narrative of betrayal---not only by the state but also within his own household that had led to the state of things today. According to this story, gleaned from various persons who were friends and neighbours and significant elders, including the *mukaddam*, Nandadiyabhai was a wealthy and literate man in the pre-dam village. He was the only person who had held a government job in the village along side some 30 acres of land. At a young age, he was already regarded as being a village elder. After resettlement, he could not continue in his job due to the lack of access and transport to the *taluka* headquarters. A few years ago, before the fieldwork was conducted, his son who had now reached adulthood, transferred the land deeds for the compensated land of about 4 cares to his own name, and threw the old man and his wife out to make their own living. Nandadiyabhai was caught in an

emotional dilemma—according to the villagers, this was the worst dilemma that fathers were caught up in after displacement, and of all Nandadiyabhai's lot was the worst. According to Vasava custom, sons have a right to expect a share in the land when they come of age. With displacement, the little amounts of land that fathers were given led to delays or refusals to fragment lands by the first generation, leading to bitter conflicts between fathers and sons over the years. While everyone condemned the son for throwing the old parents out of the house and leaving them to the elements, most could not entirely disagree with what Scheper-Hughes terms 'lifeboat ethics'<sup>3</sup> (1998: 405). For many of the second generation, Nandadiyabhai's plight represented the inevitable, but worst possible scenario, of household politics evinced in the post-displacement period and was an outcome of the resettlement programme.

The narratives of both men mentioned above are discussed not so much for the shifting of the causes or responsibility of their decline away from the construction of the dam and their subsequent displacement, but for the perceptions of belonging and loss illustrated through their articulation or non-articulation of aspects of an event that affected their lives. I would argue that Gimbhabhai and Nandadiyadada's modes of discussion about displacement belongs to extreme points on a spectrum of narratives of the cutters regarding their displacement. Both narratives, in a sense, reveal not so much about pre-displacement or post-displacement times as about coping with loss, betrayals and guilt. In Nandadiyadada's instance, there is a second major displacement and loss

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<sup>3</sup> Scheper-Hughes (1998) defines this term as a dilemma facing those caught up in emergency situations. With scarce resources, she says, the pragmatics of saving the salvageable often takes over more aesthetic or egalitarian ethics within the communities.

of emotional ties (through the betrayal of his children) after moving to the resettled sites. This second displacement acquires as much of a tragic importance in the silence in his narrative as the first displacement. Through the objective narration of his story, Nandadiyadada speaks more about his loss, and the dilemmas this has led created. Gimhabhai's story, through the detailed account of his loss, and the similarity to the loss expressed through the generalised narrative, lays a claim to membership in the village rather than being a sugarcane cutter. Indeed, in other discussions Gimhabhai was given to stressing his links with other village elders in Vajhpur, and on the temporary nature of his status as a sugarcane migrant. In his narratives, migration to sugarcane fields was a trip that his family would not undertake for more than two years given the need for his religious and medical expertise in the village. Even during the cutting season, Gimhabhai used to return to his village at least once a month. Unlike Nandadiyadada, whose status as a sugarcane cutter became representative for something else----the betrayal and subsequent destitution shared by others in the village, Gimhabhai's narrative of becoming a sugarcane cutter and the cross stories that contradict this narrative become representative of another kind of emotion and process within the village---the shame of becoming a sugarcane cutter, and the marginalisation of the cutter within the village hierarchy.

The story of Gimhabhai and Nandadiyabhai, on the contrary, is not representative of the lives of most sugarcane cutters. In specifically associating shameful aspects of the stories of the two above men, the villages acknowledge a familiarity with aspects of their stories that lead to and result in shame in their stories, both personally and in the history of the villages. The basis of this shame

is different in both the stories. While in Gimbhabhai's story, the gradual slide into destitution depicts the shame of the gradual decline of the household due to the personal excesses of the head of the household; Nandadiyabhai's story is presented as evidence by the villagers as the outcome of the resettlement that downgraded the quality of life for most landed households in the resettled villages. It is notable that both these men also belonged to landowning households in the pre-displacement periods. For the other sugarcane migrants, however, there is quite a different emotion evident. This is not so much shame, as pity. Gimbhabhai and Nandadiyabhai's cases are unique in the very fact not only of the shame associated with them, but by the very nature of that emotion, they are sugarcane cutters who, for the village, have a history. Hakim (1995) observes in her ethnographic study of resettled Vasavas in the Narmada region that one of the values that the Vasavas pride and whose loss they fear with resettlement is the loss of an ethic of self-sufficiency. To be reliant on the state or the host villages for their employment and sustenance is a dreaded state of affairs in their world view. For the displacees of the Ukai dam, the sugarcane cutters plight generally, but more specifically Nandadiyabhai's story is poignantly representative of a loss of self-sufficiency and pride of an able, landed and respectable householder to forces beyond his control---that of the displacement that took away his quality of life, and the struggle for resources within his household that reduced his plight to that of a pauperised labourer. This also is depicted in the fact that they are not simply the '*sugaru majoor*'---or the sugarcane labourers, they are known by their names and appellations---they are Gimbhobhagat and Nandadiyodohlo. Most other sugarcane migrants are



collectively identified as merely *sugaru majoor* or *garib lok*---sugarcane cutters or poor people, for the other villagers.

Social, economic and political marginalisation of sugarcane cutters in the home villages

The non-inclusion of the cutters' histories of multiple migrations are only one aspect of their marginalisation from the collective histories of the resettled villages. In the post-displacement period, many of the settler/migrant households faced further landlessness and immiseration in the resettled villages with little or no compensation granted to them and an intensifying struggle in the villages to garner available resources for the sustenance of households. Seasonal migration to the sugarcane fields in Bardoli then was the only strategy for sustenance left for these households. However, this migration could not be a permanent shift away from the resettled villages. The sugarcane cutters also face a marginalisation from the social life and economic processes in their place of work. In his work on migration into south Gujarat, Breman writes about the processes of marginalisation and exclusion of migrant and locally landless labour in their places of work by the adoption of practices of capitalist agriculture (Breman, 1985; 1993; 1994). In other words, the migrant labourers constitute an invisible and unfamiliar mass for the farmers, physically demarcated into camps that are located on the edges of the farmers' villages or sugarcane fields. Their social interactions are confined mainly to the camps with other labourers, since for the local landless they are rivals who have usurped local jobs. In other words, the conditions of living and hierarchisation in the places of work ensure that their

seasonal migration remains so, rather than opening up opportunities to migrate permanently out of the resource-starved resettled villages.

While much of Breman's work is set in the plains of Surat district, at the interface of interactions between the dominant landed Patidar caste, the local agricultural Halpati labourers and the migrants from the largely tribal hinterland of the eastern part of the Surat district as well as the neighbouring state of Maharashtra, in *Migrants, Peasants and Paupers* (1985) he also examines the conditions that create and sustain seasonal migration from the hinterland. Among these conditions are the processes of modernisation that have allowed for a large increase in the marginal and landless among the tribal groups themselves. In the 'home' villages, ie. the resettled villages, the sugarcane cutters find themselves at the bottom of the social, economic and political hierarchies in these villages. The system of debt-bondage, wherein they have to repay their loans at *doubli* rates, ie. a 100% rate of interest on the loan taken from the labour contractors who provide them work in the sugarcane fields, ensures that there is very little opportunity for reinvestment or remittances in the home villages (Breman, 1999: 30-31; Rani and Shylendra, 2001). More notably, modernisation has exacerbated differences between and within tribal groups on class-based hierarchies. As Breman writes, 'The unequal distribution of land among members of the tribal castes is not only an indication of the rapidly growing economic contradictions but it is at the same time the main cause of this process of differentiation' (Breman, 1985: 175). What is astonishing is that after 15 years since this work was published, I found an amazing resonance with the description of labour migration, both in the villages of origin and in the labourers' places of work.

Marginalisation, however, has acquired a multilayered-ness in terms of the 'felt experiences' of migrant labourers, an aspect that I would like to explore in more depth in this chapter. Though much of this sense of a layered-ness may be an indication of the gradual institutionalisation of the differences based on class within the tribal groups, processes that in the early 1980s may be in nascent stages; this is not to deny marginalisation for most members of the villages in the fieldwork area. In a broader sense, all the Vasavas living in the resettled villages are marginal to the caste-Hindu affluent modes of life demonstrated in the life of those living in the Ukai township as well as the farmers in the sugarcane belt of Bardoli.

Sugarcane cutters constitute one of the oldest and largest groups of migrants in the three villages under study---constituting nearly 65% of the village of Seltipada, 25-30% of the village of Vajhpur and 15-20% of the village of Amalpada. Casual agricultural labourers, called in the villages, as *chutak majoors* are the most wide-spread of the migrant groups in the three villages---not in overall demographic terms as in terms of the frequency of this form of migration among households from the three villages---almost one member of most of the marginal and landless households has travelled for a period ranging from 10 days to a month for rice cutting or vegetable harvesting to south Gujarat. In 1985, Breman found a younger generation of the landless labourers opting for the uncertainty but also freedom that such casual contracts allowed. Many of them had begun to opt for this form of relationship with the landed farmers rather than a more permanent but binding one as farm labourers (1985: 282-283). This logic translates itself into demarcating social status in the displaced villages,

where a majority of households rely on one or the other form of migrant labour for its sustenance for shorter or longer periods of time. *Chutak majoors* within the category of migrants in the 3 villages under study are economically, socially and politically the least marginalised among the rural landless migrant labourers from these villages. Few marginal farmers with social networks in the villages would opt for sugarcane labour work once they accumulate some amount of social capital. The ability to call off a contract under unfavourable terms with the landowners and return to the villages, as well as the limited choice available on deciding when to migrate and for how long, and the freedom from crippling interest rates of the *mukaddam*, lends them a marginal step up the social status ladder from amongst the other migrants from the villages. From among the three villages then, Amalpada has the highest number of *chutak majoors*---nearly 55-60% of the households are characterised by this form of livelihood.

The newest form of rural-to-rural migration that has emerged concerns what is known as *kola majoori* or *kola*. This is agricultural labour involving the same kind of work as sugarcane cutters are required to do, i.e. cutting cane, however the terms and duration of migration are different. The eventual boss of the cutters are individual *kathiawari* landowners in the Valod district of south Gujarat, who have diversified from intensive cultivation of sugarcane to the production of jaggery at small units close to their fields. The *mukaddams* are mainly kin members of their team members and do not charge interest on the advances paid to the labourers to seal the contract. The amount earned cutting the cane is divided equally among the team members at the end of the season, which lasts for about three months. Apart from this, the most important difference for the

labourers from 'sugar work' (sugarcane cutting for the sugar co-operatives) is that there is no work at nights. They are also not paid in grain at the end of each month; and the overall wages earned at the end of the season are considerably higher than those earned in 'sugar'<sup>4</sup>. It is *kola* work rather than sugarcane cutting in the present scenario that serves then to consolidate holdings for those households in the villages in danger of losing their plots of land for marginal cultivation or house-building to fellow-villagers.

However, *chutak majoori* is still the favoured mode of migration in the three villages. As one of the labourers from Amalpada going for *chutak majoori* expressed, 'People go to *kola* because we can earn more money than sugar. It will help pay back the mukaddam. *Chutak majoori* is good; but it is not possible to repay the *mukaddam* with the earnings. I go for *chutak majoori* because I need to organise my relative's *kiriya*<sup>5</sup> after *holi*. And I don't want to be away from the village for long---3 months of cutting cane is too long.' Among those leaving for the *kola* units in Vajhpur and Selti, *chutak majoori* was not an option. 'That is for those who have fields or buffaloes. We neither have *ran*, nor *mahudis*. We have the *mukaddam*.' 'Maybe going for *kola* we could save enough to pay the *mukaddam*, and next year think of getting goats. Then we could think about *chutak majoori*.'

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<sup>4</sup> This, however, does not mean that the conditions of work in the *kola* contracts will not change in the future. From the initial set of interviews conducted with the *kola* entrepreneurs in Valod, competition to recruit labourers away from the co-operatives and cost of production considerations among them are leading to moves to co-operativise this industry on the basis of the sugarcane factory model, which would allow for recruitment of outside labour at considerably cheaper rates.

<sup>5</sup> The *kiriya* ceremony is a long three day ceremony with ritual presentations to the spirit of the dead relative. Vasava custom regards it obligatory to be performed within a year of the death; however, in the resource-stricken villages this obligation has been modified by village level

As Breman (1996) has observed, the status of the migrant is still based on his/her ability to retain a certain degree of independence to be able to return to the home villages. While among the villagers, going to the jaggery units was an indication of restraint and an aspiration to break the cycle of debt to the *mukaddam*; for the *kola* migrants, it meant a hope of breaking out of a cycle of destitution.

For both groups, however, sugarcane cutting represented a hopeless situation, marked by total powerlessness on the part of the cutter over his/ her life-conditions. Of all the group of migrants to the plain, the sugarcane cutter is the one who most often is pushed to the margins of the social and political life of the village, apart from his visible economic destitution. Of the three modes of migration, sugarcane cutting is the most stigmatised in the home villages and the least favoured among the migrants themselves. Among the non-sugarcane cutters in the villages, this group of people either represent the greed of the *mukaddam*; or demonstrate a weakness within the individual or the household that allows them to remain in the same economic situation year after year. From either of these perspectives, the destitution of the sugarcane cutters is divorced from the structural processes of poverty and power struggles within the villages themselves. Among the more politically articulate in the village, it demonstrates the greed and moral depravity of the *mukaddam* at one level. On the question of the sugarcane cutters, the exposition of two political opponents in the village of Amalpada followed similar narrative lines. While Rameshbhai was a

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consent so that it can be performed at any time during the lifetime of the next surviving kin, when resources become available to them.

schoolteacher in the village and regarded the question of the pauperisation of the sugarcane cutters needed to be addressed through the question of education and reform of social vices such as drinking and gambling, Atmaram located the cause their immiseration within the debt-bondage system and the manner in which it rationalised and validated the presence of the *mukaddam*:

Rameshbhai: The question of the sugarcane cutters is too complex. Why do they go year after year? Primarily it comes down to the *mukaddam*. Those *doubli* rates (of interest) are killing. What kind of a man would do this to his own villagers? He even recruits his own brother as a cutter. He earns *lakhs* every year. And he still had to borrow money from me two years ago. Hasn't repaid it...he is a good man, but likes the wrong things. This is what life in *sherdi* is all about. That is what is going to kill him...about the cutters I get depressed every time I think of them. (Amalpada, October 2001)

Atmaram: [...] you want to write about those who go for *sherdi*. First, write about that *mukaddam*. Have you seen his house? A satellite TV, tractor, motorcycle. Where does he get that from? People like him should be dealt with first. They are bloodsuckers. You write about their lives... (Amalpada, October 2001)

For the politically articulate, the lives and histories of the sugarcane cutters are either subsumed within the narrative of destitution of the region due to the inadequacy of resettlement as stated in the previous chapter, or the personal excesses of the mediating figure of the *mukaddam*. While neither can be denied in understanding the destitution of the cutter; neither is enough to explain the sharpening class hierarchies between the cutters and the other households resorting to agricultural labour migration and informal industrial labour to the plains.

For others in the villages, cutters continue to be caught up in the same cycle either due to their inability to restrain their expenditure on drink, gambling, too 'weak' with 'their women', or have been struck by a series of misfortunes such as bad harvests, health problems or death of cattle compounded by illiteracy and ignorance that led them to borrow from the *mukaddam*. While a *chutak majoor* or industrial worker could be literate but unemployed due to extraneous 'political' circumstances affecting most efforts to garner development resources for the villages; the sugarcane cutter is a shadowy figure marked by his/her extreme poverty, illiteracy, the dust of being on the road as well as periodic excesses that either border on the shocking or completely non-strategic, ensuring their further slippage into debt.

Few persons in the villages blamed the sugarcane cutters' plight on inadequate or no compensation at the time of resettlement in 1971 when the dam was built. As one *agewan* explained,

'For a few, they are still waiting for compensation. But many of them just spend all the compensation on other things---buying radios, spending it on drink. They were also illiterate, and signed on papers given by the *ujaliyats* or the *sahukars* and lost everything. But all of us were like that in the beginning when we moved here. Many went to sugar, and have built houses with the money earned there. If you want to, it is possible to earn money in sugar. But many here, earn the money and then spend it drinking in the camps, and so come back with nothing....'

(Jermiyabhai, Amalpada, October 2001)

In the post-displacement narrative of re-building, the present day sugarcane cutter is a figure of his own making who removes himself from the village for



most of the year. In the re-writing of the history of the villages, they seem to have excluded themselves through their inability to exert any seeming influence over their circumstances in the village lore. The marginalisation of the sugarcane cutter in the displaced villages works at two levels. While on the one hand, the sugarcane cutters are pushed to the peripheries of village life, there is a simultaneous increase at the level of village life in the improvement of infrastructure facilities such as roads in the area leading the marginal and landed households in the area to begin to diversify their sources of income. Travel to towns is not as inhibiting any more for supplies, ideas and governmental resources resulting in a mushrooming of occupations such as those of private jeeps/ taxi drivers, electronics and transport repair and small shops with cheap consumption goods. For many of the sugarcane cutters, this remains beyond their reach since it presupposes an initial investment and physical stability that their debt bondage to the *mukaddam* makes impossible. However, their suffering and poverty has been appropriated within the villager's narrative of exclusion from the processes of modernisation after displacement. In this sense, the village society needs the sugarcane cutter as a representative of the general sense of powerlessness in the region. What I would be trying to suggest here is that at the village level, there is an identity of being victims of displacement that underlines other identities in the villages. While these other identities might be straining to assert themselves, the 'us' of the displaced Vasavas still obliges empathetic responses to the more marginal to village life.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, the perception of sugarcane cutters as marginal to village life varies from village to village. For the sugarcane cutters

too, the sense of loss and marginalisation is different in its dimensions and the possibilities of addressing these questions in each of the three villages. The sharpest stereotypes and class-based differences are evident in the village of Amalpada. Most sugarcane cutters in this village do not have their residences within the main boundaries of the village, but are situated in a neighbourhood called the '*dogri fali*'. This is a settlement that is divided from the main village by a hillock that literally hides the houses of the cutters from the village. Those households whose main source of sustenance is through sugarcane migration do not belong to the Vasava tribe in this village. They are the Kathodias, a tribe regarded to be one of the lowest in the tribal hierarchy in this part of Gujarat. Marginalisation, in this village, follows class as well as tribal hierarchies.

In the village of Seltipada too, Kathodia households are predominantly sugarcane cutters. However, in proportion to the total population of the village, the largest numbers of sugarcane cutters' households are from Vasava households in the village. In Seltipada, there is a marked division between the households of the 7 'founding' families in the pre-displacement village, which are the landed families in the present-day Seltipada, and the rest of the village, of which a major proportion constitute the sugarcane cutters' households. All the Kathodia households in the village, some 15%, are sugarcane cutters. The term 'founding families'<sup>6</sup> has very specific economic, legal and social meanings in Seltipada village. It is a term associated with the narrated history of re-making of the village during a critical time of the smallpox epidemic. One family relocated to

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<sup>6</sup> This was not a specific term used in the interviews. I have translated the vasava descriptions of the first settlers and elders who named the Seltipada village and resolved village level disputes to a more condensed term 'founding families'.

the pre-displacement site calling their settlement Ekalkham. Over generations this family expanded through marriages and in-migration of kin members---5 other related families. These were also households that had their lands registered with the state agencies and paid revenue. This narrative history of the village records another critical period associated with floods and another epidemic. The heads of the six families consulted *bhagats* and religious practitioners for a cure, and it was suggested that further calamities could be warded off through the change in the name of the village. These heads then decided to rename the village as 'Seltipada' marking the central place of the Selti tree under which village *panchayats* were held in the pre-displacement village. The non-founding members in Seltipada are not recent migrants as in the case of the neighbouring village of Vajhpur. Some of them did arrive in search of cultivable land with the clearing of forestland for dam building. However, many of the families in present day Seltipada trace their histories back to the village itself as households that worked as agricultural labourers from the six main families or in specialist and supporting occupations of cattle herding and fishing. They occasionally cultivated plots of land on a rented and sharecropping basis, or had pieces of unregistered land around the fringes of the forest adjoining the village allocated to the by the 'founding families'---the main landlords of Seltipada. With resettlement, those households with unregistered plots of land and engaged in non-cultivating occupations were either awarded a cash compensation and/or given plots of land in the resettled villages to build their houses. For the villagers of Seltipada, the difference between the ownership of land and landlessness is one of the availability of bargaining power in their interactions with the outside

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world. Landlessness has not resulted in a certain slide into sugarcane cutting. There are households like that of Jahgumaharaj, discussed in chapter 4 who have achieved a tenuous stability by garnering extra-village resources to create a livelihood through dairy farming or fishing. On the other hand, except for two, the other five landed families too have a tenuous security of land---without adequate irrigation facilities or viable land plots. Members from these households also work on a casual basis at the forest department or travel to Gujarat at various times of the year to supplement their household income as *chutak majoors*, a situation rarely encountered among the landed families in Amalpada. While the heads of the households still have more access to decision-making structures in the village, it still leaves them vulnerable in their interactions with the members of other villages as well as non-*adivasis*. In terms of a village level hierarchy, the distinctions between leaders of the village and sugarcane cutters are much more blurred than in Amalpada. The elders of the village know the fortunes of the sugarcane cutters in Gujarat, albeit they may be powerless to do anything about it. While in Amalpada, the sugarcane cutter is an unfamiliar figure and represents a state of utter powerlessness, in Seltipada the fortunes of each sugarcane cutter is a story that is discussed in the village by the landed families especially at the end of the cutting season and is a reminder of the condition of destitution that anyone in the village may be in danger of slipping into.

In Vajhpur, the cutters' houses are located on the margins of the village in a cluster that in the pre-displacement village was inhabited by the immigrants to Vajhpur during the construction of the dam. In the pre-displacement village this

was the neighbourhood known as Navagam---a name that is rarely used in the present settlement, given that there are no identifiable physical demarcation of clusters apart from the obvious destitution of some of the streets and house clusters. Vajhpur also has the smallest population of Kathodia households from among the three villages mentioned so far. Until 2002, all the Kathodia households used to migrate seasonally for sugarcane cutting. However, since the emergence of the jaggery units two-three households from the 8 Kathodia households have turned to this form of seasonal migration. Present day Vajhpur is also a village rife with many factions. Unlike the other two villages, there is no bilateral division between the landed and the seasonal migrants. There are many landless households in Vajhpur that have been able to garner assets through their ties with milk and fisheries co-operatives, and have later diversified into rented agriculture. Those going for sugarcane cutting in Vajhpur have been those that have no social resources in the village to rely upon, or have been immigrants to the village just before the resettlement to the village and/or have lost their assets in the post-displacement period through fragmentation of land, diseases that killed the cattle compounded by gambling and drinking---two activities that are rife in the village, sponsored and supported by some of the village leadership. Like Amalpada, then, the households of the sugarcane cutters are nearly invisible to the rest of the village and village life for most part of the year. There is very little allusion to the life of the cutters in any sense of the word, and their lot is rarely regarded as a social issue in village life.

This gradual erosion of participation in the life of the village is often echoed by sugarcane cutters who express dissatisfaction with their life as cutters. One of the

younger cutters hesitantly mentioned, 'What I worry about most is that with sugarcane cutting I am away from the village most of the year. I never get to attend Navaratri, Holi, and my village members' engagement ceremonies. I try to make up for it when the season finishes for summer. Then I try to do as much as I can for the weddings in the village. You know that if I don't work at other peoples' weddings and *kiriyas* in the village, no one will come to my wedding. This is what I worry about the most.'(Guna, Vajhpur, December 2001) For the young bridegroom, the number of guests at a wedding is more than just an indication of prestige and a source of pleasure. It is a vital labour resource that reduces the cost of setting up *mandvas* (tents), food and negotiators for the bride-price. There have been many young men in the village who have been pushed into a few years work for the *mukaddam* or a lifetime's debt in having to borrow and spend exorbitant amounts at their weddings due to the lack of advice and organisational help. This concern was voiced by one of the elder migrants through lending it a historical context. According to him,

'[...] this work is getting worse. Earlier we did not leave till after Diwali. Until two years ago, we could at least be in the village for Navratri. After all the dancing and singing, we would go to Gujarat. And we would return by Holi. Who works after Holi? All the agricultural work needs to be done, and then people would have enough time to make arrangements for weddings, pay respects to the dead. Now they don't even tell us when we have to go. We are like cattle---the trucks come, and we have to leave within the afternoon. We leave before Navratri and come back after Holi, with money that finishes before we get back. We might as well die cutting cane in the fields. We cannot attend *kiriyas* or weddings because there is no money for the *chandla*<sup>7</sup>. We hide our faces in our huts through the summer and starve, or run away to our relatives when there is a

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<sup>7</sup> *Chandla* refers to a token gift given by each household in the village and the guests at the wedding to the bride and the groom. It is duly noted in another register and must be reciprocated by the hosts to the guests at their wedding.

wedding in the village to avoid the shame. I sometimes wonder if this is my village anymore.'

(Kiliyabhai, Seltipada, May 2002)

This social differentiation is mirrored by a simultaneous political marginalisation, characterised by the inability of the cutters to participate in the political life of the village. In 1989, a civil liberties case was filed against one of the larger sugarcane factories under the Minimum Wages Act. The investigating commission in its report on the living conditions of the cutters observed the long hours that the cutters worked remarking on the denial of the basic political rights of the cutters. There were no holidays for the cutters except on the day the factories cleaned their equipment. One of the concerns raised here was the inability of the cutters to return to their villages on election days to participate in the local, regional or national elections. The denial of their status as employees by the factories and the transitory nature of their work ensured that they could not be registered on the electoral rolls in their places of work either. In their recommendations, the commission recommended that voting days should be demarcated as official holidays, legally enforceable. However, lack of political will to take on the economic and political weight of the sugarcane co-operatives renders any such positive intention redundant. (pc, Fr. Stany, Free Legal Aid Centre, January 2002)

Among the cutters themselves, election dates are regarded with a great deal of uncertainty or indifference regarding whether they would be allowed to return for the day to their villages to vote. At the time that the fieldwork was carried out, village level elections, called *panchayat* elections, were around the corner. In the

days preceding the voting dates, there was an increase in the number of visitors to the camps from the villages of Vajhpur and Seltipada. These villagers brought news of the local campaigns, the candidates and the dates of the elections. They had also been sent on behalf of some of the local candidates to negotiate with the *mukaddam* for a holiday for the labourers on that day, so that arrangements could be made for the cutters to be transported to the villages and back on voting day. The *mukaddam* and the villagers referred to the men in the camp. There was no question about the voting rights of the women. Moreover, according to the *mukaddam*, the question of allowing the men to return to the villages for a day involved a balancing act on his part. The factory bosses had relegated their responsibility *vis-à-vis* the labourers by regarding this as a village-level issue and leaving the decision to the *mukaddam* under the condition that the allocated quota of cane cutting should not be stopped for the day. This not only reinforced the centrality of the *mukaddam* over the life of the cutters in the camp; it also allowed him the possibility of acting as a power-broker in formal political institutions in the home villages. The local candidates and their campaigners had to negotiate with him to be able to access or block a potentially large group of voters, especially in the Seltipada and Vajhpur where more than half the village are seasonal migrants. In this particular instance, the *mukaddam* postponed his decision until the evening before the Election Day. That night he let it be known, that it was only those cutters who could fund a return trip to the villages who would be excused from the next day's work. Implicit in this permission was another condition----that any cutter returning to the villages the next day would be fined a sum of Rs.50 for losing out on the next day's work. The threat of this loss means that even when local candidates fund return trips, or send trucks to



fetch the sugarcane cutters from the camps for the day; there is much hesitation before some of the cutters decide to make the trip. In this instance the ones who did were either within the influential circle of the *mukaddam* and were not fined the above-stated amount, or belonged to a large kin group of brothers, sisters and their households, so that the loss of one member could be afforded by the group for a day. Of the four who made the trip back to the village on that day, 3 were related to the *mukaddam* by marriage or essential to the daily life of the camp, i.e., the *bhagat*; and one belonged to a large family of three brothers and one sister and their families who had all migrated for the season with this particular *mukaddam*.

For the *bhagat*, voting at the local elections meant 'choosing a candidate who would bring some work to Vajhpur'. It was the voice of a person who saw himself as very much rooted in village life; and in on participating in the institutions of village life being able to derive some benefits from any improvement to the quality of life in the village. It was the voice of a person who had temporarily lost ownership of his land, having to mortgage it under unfortunate circumstances, but did not regard that as changing his identity as a 'villager from Vajhpur'.

'I have to return to my village on Diwali, Navratri, Holi [...] I play the 'tur' and 'dholak' for my village, and do the 'adva lakda ni puja', so even the mukadam cannot refuse. He has to answer to the village otherwise'. (Gimhabhai, Migrant labour camp, December 2001)

Though his centrality to these events in the village are not supported by many in the village, it is this additional space for participation in the common life of the

village that lent him that assurance. The different nature to his marginalisation is discussed earlier in this chapter in a section called 'stories of shame'.

In contrast to the meaning of his participation in the *panchayat* election was the reason given by the brother who was elected by his extended family in the camp to return to the village on Election Day. 'One of us has to go [...] we've agreed who to vote for. It might not make any difference to us. Elections come and go, and each time the candidates make many promises but nothing happens [...] but we are from Selti, so one of us must go back.' 'But your mother is in the village, she will go to vote from your family? Wouldn't that do?' 'Yes, but she is a woman. She has to be told who to vote for'. For this landless family of sugarcane cutter, participation in the formal political institutions is not merely a question of participating; it is to be seen to be doing so that is important. The village here, and the future representative of the village is a distant entity. Years of felt experience of neglect during the political dynamics in the village have made the cutter quite aware of the powerlessness of their group, and their vote. This is an aspect that is expressed repeatedly among the young and the older cutters in the camps. Voting at elections, whether local, district, state or national level elections did not make a difference to their lives. Among the younger unmarried cane cutters, the lack of funds and the burden of penalties often made it impossible to go; the hope was to contribute through their presence and work at the time of social events in summer like weddings and funeral ceremonies. Among the older cutters, participating in local level elections was a matter of presence, and a performance that had to be correctly carried out according to the accepted conventions of village life. Especially in formal political processes like

elections and village-level meetings, it was the presence of independent householders that was crucial and carried weight. Women would be instructed in fulfilling the letter of the law, and this was the responsibility of the male head of the household. Apart from the gender dimensions to this practice, at the level of the various class groups in the villages, participation in public political events and processes enabled the largely absent groups like the sugarcane cutters to lay a fragile claim to belonging to the village as mentioned above in the paragraph.

The contours of belonging changed over generations in the cutters' camp. Among the single, unmarried young men it was participation in the social events that was more important. This did not indicate unimportance attached to voting or attending village-level meetings. However, it does indicate a diffidence borne out of one's absence for most part of the year, a diffidence attached with illiteracy as also an uncertainty brought on by their poverty. By the latter, I would mean not negative connotations of diffidence among the unmarried cutters but a strategic choice of not committing publicly to a course of action in village meetings or public debates, that might obstruct possibilities of moving to another *mukaddam*, or the possibility of an occupational and residential change, thus opting out of the particular village where they were born. Participation in village level political events was however seen by young householders and the older sugarcane cutters as a way of staving off of a gradual marginalisation that many fear. This fear was most starkly expressed by the outburst of one of the older men mentioned earlier regarding absenting themselves by running away or hiding in the absence of the required economic resources for participation at social events. Voting is one of the more visible and certain ways of claiming an interest in

village life. This practice becomes especially important in the villages of Seltipada where the sugarcane cutters constitute a little over half the village. In a factionalised village like Vajhpur, the votes of the cutters also turn crucial. Since cutters are rarely invited to or expected to participate in *panchayat* meetings which are held once every three months, voting is seen as a way to stave off the impossibility of social reproduction of their issues and concerns in the village and ensuring a continuity to their histories in their villages. While for the *bhagat*, it was a moment of asserting an identity with the village, for the other sugarcane cutters voting ensured at one level that they could claim some of the development amenities allocated by the state for their neighbourhoods during village meetings, where their elected representatives could be held to account. In villages like Seltipada and Vajhpur where sugarcane cutters constituted a large proportion of the population it lent their issues a presence through their elected representatives at the level of allocation of resources.

More than this, however, the ability to stake a claim to belonging is associated with a single hope among every household of sugarcane cutters, or indeed, most migrants from these villages---that one day they will stop migrating to Gujarat. While the political arena is marked by a tenuousness and uncertainty, most migrants ensure their claim remains viable through their social activities in the village through participation in local festivities and work groups, such as efforts during the summer of building new houses where kin members and neighbourhood members are expected to participate to ensure a similar reciprocity in the future.

## Conclusion

This chapter examines the position of the sugarcane cutters in the post-displacement villages. As discussed, sugarcane cutters are marginal to the socio-economic and political life of the resettled villages, and this is reflected in the narratives of the cutters regarding their displacement. However, the narratives themselves are heterogenous in reflecting the sense of marginalisation from village life for a majority of the cutters. For a few elders, for whom resettlement has been an experience of a slide into pauperisation, the remembering and telling of their stories of displacement still bears traces of their inclusion within the social life of the landed and non-migrant village population, and a possibility of laying a claim to a sense of 'belonging'. On the other hand, in the villages of origin, the image of the ordinary cutter is caught up within other dominant narratives that construct the identities of the villagers as 'displacees' in an attempt to foreground the long-awaited claims of compensation and material benefits of the hydro-electric development project. The absence and back grounding of the significance of the dam and displacement in the narratives of these cutters counters the appropriation and normalisation of this trope in the dominant history of the villages, revealing its class bias to a large extent. It also opens up and heterogenises the history of the people in the displaced villages.

The non-inclusion of the cutters' voices within the history of displacement is one aspect of their marginalisation from village level socio-political and economic institutions. Living on the margins of survival through seasonal migration absents them from everyday participation in village level institutions and

processes. A routinisation of this absence through regular long-term migration trips leads to an inability to accumulate social or cultural capital in the home villages; in addition to the inability to accumulate economic capital in their places of work due to conditions under a debt-bondage work system. While the cutters' silences of displacement fragments the dominant homogenous historical narrative of the 'displacee'; the only path to counter this increasing socio-economic marginalisation for the cutter is to move out of what is a 'home' and an unsustainable situation. Very often this is a solution initiated by the woman of the household, an issue that is discussed more extensively in the next chapter. Further migration again follows kin ties in moving to the wife's natal village for a fresh start and as a way of staving off the forces that worsen conditions of hunger by staying in the home villages.

## CHAPTER 6

### Displacement and Hunger in the sugarcane labourers' camps

The chapters so far have examined the various processes that have created conditions for a gradual marginalisation of sugarcane cutters in displaced villages. I have tried to understand this through the memories of a historically significant event of dam displacement in this region, the building of the Ukai dam among different groups, including the sugarcane migrants in the villages. Displacement has not only been remembered but also mediated in different ways based on land ownership, generation and gender. In the three villages under study for this thesis, displacement has impacted groups within these villages in disparate ways based on generation, gender and land ownership, but also the social status of groups based on their pre-displacement hierarchies. The migrants to the pre-displacement villages, in particular, faced a difficult choice of either a return to their earlier villages or resettling in the present villages with minimal or no compensation, and reduced livelihood possibilities. The earlier chapter (chapter 5) has noted the economic, social and political marginalisation faced by the groups in the villages who had to resort to seasonal migration as the only available livelihood strategy in the resettled villages. It has also shown that a large number of the seasonal migrants were not 'original' inhabitants of the villages in the pre-dam period. The argument in the chapters so far has focused on differences in the perception of displacement based on socio-economic groups, gender and status in the displaced villages. Of these in the seasonal migrants' eyes displacement acquires entirely different meanings and

resonances. For the migrants, the displacement due to the Ukai dam is just one of the series of movements in the individual and household histories in search of a better life. Alternatively, it has been argued in chapter 5 that the migrants have faced and continue to face displacements at many levels, each an attempt at a flight from pauperizing conditions. It also looked at the manner in which the Ukai dam displacement and seasonal migrations have marginalized the migrants in their home villages and from village histories.

This chapter attempts to understand the various dimensions of this marginalisation from the viewpoint of the sugarcane cutters. Literature on displacement has alluded to the pauperisation of displaced groups and communities, both at the level of planning (Scudder and Colson, 1982; Cernea, 1993; 1997; Parasuraman, 1999; Fernandes, 2000) and empirical and anthropological works (Baviskar, 1995; Dwivedi, 1999; Nagraj, 1999; McDowell and Cernea, 2000). In an influential model, Cernea has set out the risks a displaced person stands to face through the loss of assets, resources, livelihoods, institutions, networks, rights and entitlements. Development literature has long acknowledged that non-consideration of the displacement risks stated above leads to the marginalisation of displaced groups. Fernandes (2000) argues a logic whereby in his words 'economic, social and psychological marginalisation' leads inexorably to impoverishment understood specifically as a process that affects people already powerless before displacement. As a consequence of displacement, they are thrown further and without preparation into an interaction with dominant social groups and their social and cultural systems,



throwing the displaced into 'a crisis of social and cultural identity and a greater position of powerlessness' (2000: 207).

Breman (1985; 1993) identifies and expands on the tenor of these processes of impoverishment, linking them not just to conditions arising out of the impacts of development projects specifically, but out of the very nature of modernisation that the ideology of development encourages, of which hydro-electric projects are a specific component with large-scale and long-term impacts. Characterising impoverishment among tribal migrant workers in south Gujarat as 'pauperisation' rather than 'proletarianisation', he marks it specifically as a socio-economic and cultural process. He writes about pauperised lives as a situation of powerlessness marked by a weak bargaining position in terms of access to food, health, housing, education and employment. Of the pauperised peasant in tribal areas, he observes, '[...] modernisation is not a levelling or even a neutralising process of innovation, but is accomplished at the expense of this lower segment which has already been created by the interaction between internal dynamic and external change in the preceding decades. This agrarian underclass [...] lags behind economically, socially and politically. They can only react defensively to the transformation of the rural order and a significant proportion of them are gradually becoming uprooted from the regional economy, since in their home areas there are simply not enough ways of making a living for this lower stratum, which is rapidly growing in numbers [...] In short, continued residence in the home area is impossible, but permanent out-migration even more so...' (Breman, 1985: 187). Caught between forces that favour

the aspirations of the landed and middle classes within their own society and the regional level political, social and economic forces that pursue a capitalist agrarian economic model, the landless and marginal farmers are pushed into a limbo---a perpetually unstable existence marked by the temporary availability of employment that demands their manual labour and offers no structures of protection and support in terms of income, education, health care and a possibility of consolidation. It is at this juncture that displacement and landlessness intertwine so that most displacees have no possibility of land or security consolidation and the landless are pushed into a further process of continued displacement. Based on this understanding of pauperisation, Breman argues that the condition of the landless proletariat as paupers is marked by a quality of landless existence and a large-scale displacement of labour leading to the existence of the landless household as 'wage hunters and gatherers' (Breman, 1994)---at the mercy of the labour market for their subsistence on a daily basis. In this chapter, I try to follow this process of pauperisation into the sugarcane labourers' camps. While the overwhelming, brutal and starkly inhuman conditions in their lives, especially in the cutter's camps, makes any attempt at 'examination' and 'understanding' too rational; this chapter is an attempt to sketch the interiority of their lives in the camps to be able to understand how indifference and neglect of the 'soft social impacts' in development projects, to use a bureaucratic term, compounded within a culture that emphasises economic growth and productivity, can wreak havoc in the lives of the most vulnerable.

Furthermore, in emphasizing the interiority of the lives of the migrants I forefront the

perceptions and modes of expression of the sugarcane cutters from the displaced villages on their lives. Literature on south Gujarat is rich in micro-studies based among the sugarcane labour migrants, which have examined specific aspects of working and living in the migrant labour camps and focusing on issues of work in the camps within a gender-based framework (Breman, 1985; 1990, 1996; Teerink, 1990); of implications of this migration on rural livelihoods and resource bases in the villages of origin (Rani and Shylendra, 2001). In his work *Wage Hunters and Gatherers* (1985), Breman discussed the necessity of ethnographic work that traced the lives of the casual migrant labourers from their villages of origin to places of work. Subsequent studies such as Teerink's (1990) have attempted to do this within specific gendered frameworks. Furthermore, in discussing the pauperisation of the cutters, the above-mentioned studies emphasise one of the defining conditions of pauperisation through a lack of adequate food for the cutters and the migrant labourers. This does not mean a state of absolute lack of food, as much as the paucity of nutrition that is adequate for renewal and sustenance for the individuals and communities. In Teerink's work the lack of foodgrains within the household due to drought or under-employment emerges again and again as the reason for labourers to undertake seasonal sugarcane migration from Maharashtra (1990: 16-17). This is an aspect in her work that remains to be explored further within the context of the subjectivities of the sugarcane cutters. In a similar vein, Breman has expressed the need for academic work to undertake an exploration of the lives of the sugarcane labourers 'from within' (1985: 34). While these works on displacement and pauperisation acknowledge that marginal existences are permeated and defined by

endemic hunger, there is little further literature on the tenor and meaning of this as a core defining experience in the lives of the migrant labourers. This chapter, then, is an attempt at exploring the place of food and specific foodgrains in the marginalised world of the displaced sugarcane cutters.

Moreover, during my fieldwork, in focusing on the views of the sugarcane cutters themselves, talk about impoverishment returned again and again to the theme of food, half eaten meals, and the tough bodies of the cutters and the abundance of food among farmers. This talk alluded to an awareness of their exploitation as well as awareness that it was this particular form of labour that lent them their only means for a livelihood after the displacement. It is on this that I focus on in the first part of this chapter. Self-sufficiency is an important part of Vasava self-identity and has not gone unremarked in other studies on Vasava society (Hakim, 1995, 1996). Lack of this sufficiency is most acutely felt in the lack of availability of food, and its absolute scarcity among the cutters leaves them vulnerable to stigmatization from the non-cutters in their villages. The second part of the chapter examines the place of food within the lives of women in the migrant labour camps and the manner in which the paucity of food stands in for an awareness and implicit criticism of the various structures of decision-making that bring the women to the camps on a regular basis every year. The focus on women is based on gendered contingencies during fieldwork that allowed me greater access to women and the spaces---both physical and of discussion that involved women. This is not to deny that the recognition and critique of their conditions is not exchanged by men. However, it is more stifling

among women.

In this chapter then, I draw on this work to describe the worlds of hunger among the sugarcane labourers from the villages of the '*chaudkheda*'—the fourteen displaced villages located in Songadh *taluka*. Specifically, most of the labourers, whom this chapter is about, are from 3 of the 14 villages-Seltipada (55%), Vajhpur (25%) and Amalpada (2%). The other labourers are from the *chaudkheda* villages of jungle Amalpada, Kuilivel, Gundi-Bavli. The chapter follows the sugarcane labourers from the dry, hilly soils of the *chaudkheda* to the heavily irrigated sugarcane fields near Bardoli, south of the Ukai dam through a period of 9 months trying to answer the question, 'what changes, and what remains the same in combating the paucity of food faced by this group of migrant labourers?' How do the stories of hunger, whose beginnings start in the *chaudkheda*, follow them (if indeed at all) to 'Gujarat'? It is in trying to understand this question, among a group of migrants from 3 villages with a dominant historical narrative of development-induced displacement that this research differs from earlier works on sugarcane labourers in south Gujarat.

### 'Going to sugar'

This section begins with the question 'why do sugarcane cutters travel every year to the sugarcane fields in conditions resembling bondage labour, at times over generations?' Cutters' perspectives and discussion in other studies point to the lack of food in the home villages being the primary reason for many cutters and their

households to undertake these journeys. In trying to understand the centrality that food and the lack of food occupies in the lived experience of the cutters, hunger acquires a social, material and psychic dimensions in their existence. In this conceptualization, hunger not only refers to a lack of food, it stands in for understandings of social status, happiness and one's standing in life (de Waal, 1989: 12). In terms of this thesis, hunger has also acquired political dimensions playing into the cultural constructions of the displaced community. As illustrated in chapter 3, the displacement and the trope of hunger as represented in the figure of the sugarcane cutter serves to assert notions of felt injustice among the landed in the home villages. 'Hunger' in this context then, is located centrally within the demands for entitlements centered around land by different articulate landed groups in the home villages.

In the lives of the sugarcane cutters, hunger has few possibilities of representation, being identified starkly as an absolute lack of food. However, this is a condition stretched over several generations among the sugarcane cutters to be identified as a condition of 'chronic' and 'endemic hunger' as defined by Dreze and Sen (1989). Dreze and Sen have argued in these circumstances that food insecurities are not questions of the availability of food as of the access to this food. This access is mediated through the entitlement bundles of individuals that allow them to exchange their entitlements in terms of the ability to buy or exchange material and non-material commodities and capacities for food and other commodities necessary for

renewal and sustenance, rather than just subsistence. Entitlements, as defined by them, refer to '[...] the prevailing legal, political and economic arrangements. A person can establish command over these bundles [...] these bundles could be extensive, or very limited, and what a person can consume will directly depend on what these bundles are...' (Dreze and Sen, 1989: 9). In other words, the lack of access to food and the cutters reasons for migrating seasonally due to the lack of food in the home villages has to be understood in the context of their marginal existence as characterised by a severe lack of entitlements, a process that has been addressed in the last chapter.

Dreze and Sen's work is notable also for the manner in which they have mapped the ways in which 'entitlement bundles' are acquired (Sen, 1981; Dreze and Sen, 1989). With the displacement many of the households lost the right to cultivate or work on any land owned by landowners in the villages. This resulted in a massive loss of direct entitlements, that are identified by Sen (1981) as commodities owned by an individual and which can be exchanged in a market economy through trading, production or a combination of the two. For many of the households, loss of land left them with no other substantial means of subsistence or inheritance that they could fall back on. The loss of pasture lands and the non-recognition of common lands as eligible for compensation left many households without a viable environment within which to continue with earlier livelihood strategies such as cattle rearing. For these households, resettlement left them with no alternative other than to look for alternate

livelihood strategies, and a loss of already existing endowments. On the other hand, households that chose not to move to the resettlement areas faced the task of rebuilding their extended entitlement bundles and entering new sets of extra-legal entitlement relations in the new environments. Thus for households, that moved to the government offered resettlement sites the initial efforts were focused on rebuilding entitlement bundles from little or no resources available in their newer environments. Under the circumstances, seasonal labour migration became an avenue for subsistence that provided a certain amount of relief from immediate and acute lack of food. However, this observation does not draw on an analogy between famine relief as conceptualized in Sen's work and the recruiting of labourers from this area by sugarcane factories for seasonal cane cutting work. Indeed, neither the mukaddam, who hires labourers nor the sugarcane factory management would look upon their employment of migrant labourers as famine relief. Moreover, given the conditions of work in the camps, it would be an anathema to suggest that sugarcane cutting represents any form of relief assistance.

However, Dreze and Sen do conceptualise famine relief in terms of an entitlement approach, so that the nature of famine relief is not so much to build up entitlements but to protect existing entitlements to food for the food insecure (1989). This section argues that from the point of the sugarcane cutters, resettlement to the newer sites has furthered a continuing process of the loss of food entitlements. This lack of entitlements is evident from the home villages itself. To be a migrant cane cutter in



the villages is to have no land, no employment and no access to food; and a cane cutter leaving repeatedly to cut sugarcane gradually fall out of the network of formal and extra-legal networks of entitlements at the village level to become a person of shame and disrepute. Under conditions of inability for either social investment or social reproduction, food or the lack of the means to access food becomes an important aspect of stigmatization of the cutter, believed to be a self-inflicted cause of their destitution among the non-migrants in the *chaudkheda* villages. This stigmatization in the villages is often argued in terms of the sugarcane cutter, especially the male sugarcane cutter's profligacy, in wastefully spending the hard-earned wages towards drink and consumption goods such as fancy clothes, radios or tape recorders rather than productive investments such as land.

For the sugarcane cutters', however, seasonal migration represents a possibility for protecting their food entitlements and ensuring a sufficient access to food for the near future. This is illustrated through the cutters' reasons for undertaking the annual trip to the sugarcane fields for generations. An ex-cane cutter, recounting his reason to migrate for sugarcane cutting work in preference to other forms of migration, mentioned,

'why did I go to Maroli? Because in sugar, they give you grain, not money. There was nothing to eat here. We did not care about the advance- the money. At least if we went, there would be something to do and something to eat everyday. If we go to 'kola' (jaggery making units) we don't get grain, only money; and in *chutak majoori* (daily wage labour) too we get money depending on the amount of work done. But no grain'. (Sureshbhai, Vajhpur, September 2001)

Punlibai, another labourer, explained her reason in terms of an intricate mathematics of access to foodgrains,

‘ I’ve been coming here for 8 years. Before that I was coming here with my parents. We have been to different camps, to *kola* and this year we decided to come here. Why? Because more money can be saved here. In *kola* (you) can make a lot of money. But they don’t give *jowar*. So a lot of money goes in buying food.’ (migrant laborers’ camps, December 2002)

Food and access to foodgrains is a central aspect of the sugarcane cutters’ lives. While this may sound a banal truism, foodgrains serve as the fulcrum around which the cutter’s motivations to migrate, their everyday work life, their perception of their lives and their attempts to assert their identities in unfamiliar and often hostile environs are based. The lack of access to foodgrains and the irregularity and sparseness of meals was one aspect of the camp life that was visually and starkly undeniable. However, among the sugarcane labourers in the mukaddam, Ramabhai’s, *tukdi*, ‘going to sugar’ in Vajhpur, Seltipada and Amalpada meant working in conditions where partially filled stomachs are the norm, because the only other option is that of barren granaries at home. Moreover, for both these sugarcane cutters, the primary attraction of the rewards of their work was the foodgrains rather than the monetary earnings. But among the explanations of the cutters given above, foodgrains did not only serve a direct purpose of staving off starvation. Punlibai also indicates to the dual role that earnings in foodgrains serve for the cutters. Earning in foodgrains also is seen by the sugarcane cutters as protecting their existing entitlements, by enabling them to use their monetary payments to pay off

existing debts and build up entitlements to buy or rent land in their home villages. For most of the villagers, seasonal migration trips are undertaken under conditions of desperation; however, for the cutters, they are not shorn of the aspiration that such trip might eventually help build up entitlements and savings in the home villages. In this sense, from the perspective of the cane cutters, the seasonal cane cutting journeys play a role not unlike those of famine relief measures described by Sen and Dreze (1989) in terms of protecting their already existing food entitlements. Although in the building up of their entitlements, sugarcane cutting work finds an equivalence to famine relief measures in the perception of the cutters; there still exists a critical disjuncture between the two. Famine relief measures are public measures provided by the government (Dreze and Sen, 1989) that carry a developmental intent. In contrast, farmers and factories that hire labourers for sugarcane cutting foreground the capitalist nature of their industry rather than any developmental intent to it.

The exploitative nature of sugarcane cutting and the disparities in perceptions between the farmers and the cutters is further highlighted through the different understanding that cutters have as regards 'entitlements' that the '*sugar* work' enables them to access. For the farmers and owners of the sugarcane fields, food is just another allowance that enables the *majoor* to work effectively. For the sugarcane cutters, in contrast, these entitlements require a direct access to food, and not money through which to buy grain and food. It is this direct access to foodgrains that

enables them to build up or aspire to build up other entitlements in their home villages. However, in the home villages, the attitude of sugarcane cutters to access grain directly has different connotations and the contrast between the views of the villagers towards the seasonal migration of the cutters, and the cutters own motivations to migrating annually also illustrates the position of the cutters among the entitlement relations within the resettled villages. The initial position of landlessness and unemployment renders the cutter without a viable exchange entitlement relation base within the villages. Added to this, as discussed in the earlier chapter, many of those landless households migrating for sugarcane cutting were themselves migrant labourers to the villages in the pre-dam period. This renders them vulnerable and on the margins of a moral economy of the village wherein entitlements emanate from traditional rights and extra-legal relationships such as kin ties. For such labourers, seasonal migration trips ensure that the individuals and households keep their food entitlements secure without being reduced to dependence and/or a state of beggary within their resourceless villages, wherein agricultural labour work is scarce. For the villagers, however, the regularity of seasonal migration trips that households undertake over generations illustrates their inability to accumulate commodity bundles over time and remain dependent and bonded to the labour contractors through the debt bondage contracts in such a system<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Debt bondage here refers to the practice of the labour contractors who hire labour by extending loans to them at 100% interest rates (Breman, 1985; Teerink, 1990). Additional loans accumulate during the migration trips, so that it becomes impossible for the labourers to repay loans over just one migration trip.

These perceptions of the sugarcane cutters and their work need to be placed within the larger moral economy of the Vasavas in the resettled villages and their emphasis on the need for self-sufficiency. This has been discussed by Hakim in her study of the displaced Vasavas in the nearby villages of the Narmada basin. The aspect that was mourned the most among this group was their loss of 'self-sufficiency' (1997: 234) characterized through their reliance on technologies of agriculture such as fertilizer, seeds and water pumps on host farmers and state agencies. Moreover, the relocation also made them more reliant in their social interactions with the host communities in order to be able to participate in the marketing and selling of their agricultural produce in the resettled villages. While Hakim has not stretched this argument further to examine what this reliance might mean and the contours of its translation into the practices of everyday life for the resettlers in their home communities, it does indicate to the reluctance and unhappiness of the Vasavas on relations of dependency that they experience in their relations with non-tribals.

Among the villagers and the cane cutters in the Ukai dam basin, displacement and the massive loss of entitlements through loss of land and occupational skills made resettlement concerns focus largely on the questions of self-sufficiency both at the household and village levels. At the village level, this is expressed in terms of the desire of landed households of the villages to gain influence over the local government agencies and the other displaced villages. This has been discussed in the earlier Chapter 4. Within the villages, the desire for self-sufficiency is expressed

through the status acquired by households and the head of the households, in particular, through their ability to acquire entitlements to buy land for cultivation and houses in the post-displacement period. Among the generations immediately following displacement who were the first generations to systematically trek to the sugarcane fields every year, this was the dominant perception about the value and the reasons for 'going to sugar',

It is lucrative work [...] There are many people in these villages who have built their houses going to cut sugar. There is a system there. You cut the sugarcane, as a labourer; and you also cut the *bandi*<sup>2</sup>. That belongs to the cutter alone, even if the field is the farmer's...(Damubhai, Amalpada, May 2002)

While among the older generation sugarcane cutting was still perceived as a means of saving enough money through the wages paid at the end of the season and garnering commodity bundles that would serve as exchange entitlement bundles in their home villages, among the more recent generations returns from selling one's labour in the sugarcane fields has a much more direct value. This is reflected in the statements of the two cutters wherein the attraction of the seasonal migration was seen primarily in terms of the part-payment of wages through monthly grain disbursement in the camps. The concern and attraction associated with the giving of foodgrains at the sugarcane camps, then, is echoed mainly by the women and the young male householders in Ramabhai's *tukdi*. Most of these householders, except one, were landless labourers with debts incurred for marriage ceremonies and bride prices to

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<sup>2</sup> *Bandi* refers to the green leaves on top of the sugarcane stalk that serve as nutritious fodder for the milch cattle. They are in demand during the sugarcane cutting season from the farmers in the region.

pay up; or families with young children to support. Some also had older parents too old and weak to migrate with them to the camps. They were either sent grain once---- midway through the season, or were left with some grain when the families migrated. Many of these had no kin ties or networks within their villages which left them with no other recourse than to borrow money to tide through the difficult summer season when there is no little possibility of sustained work opportunities in the villages. With the sugarcane factory's handing out of foodgrains, their hope is to save as much money as possible for the next summer season without the necessity of further loans. This is rarely possible. In such a situation, calculations are based on living at the edge of endemic hunger rather than building up investments in the home villages. This system ensures a lack of any hope of building entitlements through legal means, where the state has no means to even document the migrants, let alone extend relief or employment programmes to them.

The lack of the ability of the sugarcane cutters to accumulate enough resources over generations to create a certain measure of food security for their households and cease seasonal migration trips on such a regular annual basis has led to a measure of stigmatization of this socio-economic group within their home villages. Much of the responsibility for the inability to provide food security falls on the male sugarcane cutter as 'failures' in the villages. Female migrants face relatively little such stereotyping, other than that of relatively loose sexual mores. However, rather than a

stigma attached to the particular woman, it is acknowledged as a condition arising out of the conditions of camp life and the practice of elopement as a form of finding a partner in Vasava cultural tradition. For the Vasava males, it is a matter of capability and responsibility for a newly-married man to build his own house within a few years of acquiring a wife, and a sustainable livelihood. In the aftermath of displacement, such a process also became a marker of *agewani* and a leadership capability. A migrant who has been doing '*majoori*' without being able to improve the condition of his household, indicates to a weakness, often attached to excessive drinking---'*pindak*' (a drunk) being a term often used to describe a person of no particular skill or use whatsoever. The fact that some of the older migrants took heavy loans to be repaid at 100% interest rates to support younger siblings, or children or were abandoned by their children as useless for not being able to negotiate better compensation is hardly taken into account.

The emphasis on stigma and labeling of the male migrant as a 'failure' for their inability to move beyond sugarcane cutting relates the disempowerment of the sugarcane cutter in the villages to the notion of capabilities as elucidated by Dreze and Sen (1989), and take the argument of the entitlement of the cutters to the concept of well-being and capabilities that villagers seek to establish in the post-displacement villages. In other words, in the home villages, regular and healthy meals are only one aspect of rebuilding their entitlements. Sugarcane cutting comes to be looked down upon not only for the debt bondage cycle that it entraps



individuals into, it is also a dead-end and discourages access to other aspects of well-being and capacity building for a self-sufficient livelihood. Among these aspects are access to health, education, clean drinking water and basic sanitation facilities. The sugarcane cutters are well aware of both this criticism and the limitations that sugarcane cutting imposes on their capabilities. One of the common observations that sugarcane cutters articulated about their lives and the perceptions of their fellow villagers were,

[...] you must have heard people talk about us as dirty [...] our children as filthy and sick. You have seen us and our lives. Do you think we are dirty? Do you think we want our children to be like this? We try our best [...] is it possible to do more? (Bhimabhai, migrant labourers' camp, December 2001; Kamuben, migrant labourers' camp, March 2002; Punglibai, migrant labourers' camp, December 2001)

In this sense, 'going to sugar' for the cutters is not only located within a context of garnering entitlements, it is also a comment on asserting their place within the resettled villages as much as it is about an assertion for entitlements to food within the migrant labourers' camps in the sugarcane fields. Sen accepts that extended entitlements within a society might stretch further to 'include the results of more informal types of rights sanctioned by an accepted notion of legitimacy' (quoted in Mukherjee, 2003: 11). In other words, individuals may acquire control over food in a number of different ways, which may be a result of the dominant mode of production and the position of the individuals in the social and production hierarchies within their societies. While the sugarcane cutters hope to build on their sets of food

entitlements through sugarcane cutting, Sen's observation seems to suggest that any further extension of their entitlements would be limited to the social hierarchies and the place of the sugarcane cutters within this in the villages. Sen's acceptance of the extension of entitlements outside the legal frameworks has its limitations. He accepts that these entitlements are 'weak'---they occupy a secondary place to the legally granted entitlements. From the perspective of the entitlement structures in the villages Sen's observation has its limitations in that it also does not explain the recognition of the entitlements and mobility of erstwhile sugarcane cutters from the first generation who now occupy significant positions within the village hierarchy. Another perspective on the possibility of extending or building up their entitlements through sugarcane cutting would be to examine the entitlements available to the cutters within the framework of the moral economy approach. Set out by Agarwal (1990), it examines the entitlements that emanate from traditional rights and social support systems typified by non-market exchanges within the society. Within this framework, the individual's bargaining position within the household and community is determined through his/her ownership entitlements, exchange entitlements and social and communal support systems like patronage, kinship, friendship and the right to communal resources (Agarwal, 1990). Inequalities among individuals and households regarding these place some members of the village at a weaker bargaining position than others. In other words, while sugarcane cutters hope to protect their existing food entitlements and build up on their exchange entitlements through the wages earned in the camps---'to save up' as Punglibai mentioned; as a group within the villages they are already marginal to the village

life. Their entitlements within the moral economy of the villages, as defined by Agarwal, are few given that since the pre-dam period many of them are regarded as migrants and settlers to the villages and hence, outside or marginal to the existing structure of traditional rights and customary entitlements. Moreover, dam displacement ensured that the landless and migrant households were alienated from the traditional and support network of entitlements with their kin in the villages from which they had migrated to the pre-dam villages. In the collective history of the villages, the sugarcane cutters were already marginal to the social, political and moral economy of the resettled villages. Repeated and regular sugarcane cutting has only exacerbated the alienation of the cutters from village life. Their absence and debt bondage makes it difficult to make a claim on the traditional rights and communal resources of the village, further weakening their bargaining position within the village. Landlessness ensures that their struggles of subsistence in the village have no fallback systems of ownership endowments or exchange entitlements.

#### Access to food and food as access within the migrant labour camps

“Sugar work is very ‘hard’ (*khoob katthan*)- you don’t even get time to eat a proper meal. I cut sugar, came back to the *jhoopdu*, washed, cooked; and was eating when the truck arrived for loading. You climb onto the truck holding a few morsels in your hand to eat on the way. There is no time to even put the plate in the hut.”

(Gimbhabhai, Vajhpur, October 2001)

This section focuses again on the statement at the beginning of the earlier section--- that food grains serve as the fulcrum around which the cutter's everyday work life, their perception of their lives and their attempts to assert their identities in unfamiliar and often hostile environs are based. It also attempts to examine the question of how their 'hunger' stories follow them, if at all, from the villages of origin to their places of work. In this section, I examine food not only from the point of view of access and entitlements, but as a core element that defines what it means to be an *adivasi* sugarcane cutter, rather than subsuming them under a socio-economic category of the landless agricultural labourer. In this the food eaten everyday in the migrant labour camps acquires economic, social and psychic dimensions.

In their villages, for most of the households of the landless cane-cutters jowar or rice are the staple of every meal. In this they are no different from the other Vasava households in their villages. In the villages there are distinctions between several varieties of jowar. There is '*dadar*'—a poorer grade of jowar with finer grains, and cultivable on dry hilly regions with poor rainfall. There is also the *ujli jowar*, with large white seeds, available at local markets at reasonable rates. *Lal jowar*, called because the *rotlas/ mando*, has a slightly reddish tinge to it, is mainly used for special occasions, considered to be sweeter in taste and also more difficult to digest. It is literally, 'for stronger stomachs'. At the other end of the scale from the *lal jowar*

is the *kali jowar*<sup>3</sup>---black jowar. This, the Vasavas of *chaudkheda* claim, does not grow in their region, and is found only when the crop fails or rots. '*Kali jowar*' is the name given to the *jowar* given at the sugarcane cutter camps. Once cooked, *jowariyo mando*, *bhadku* (gruel cooked from ground *jowar* or *dadar*) and '*helo mando*' (cold *mando* from overnight) are intimate aspects of what it means to be a Vasava. A visitor to Vasava villages would often be asked if they have had the *helo mando*, in the manner of being a uniquely Vasava tasty dish and appreciation of this cold *rotla* is an indication of having tasted vasavi cuisine. Besides, *jowar* is not only sweet, it requires strong stomachs. Which is why non-Vasavas cannot eat too much *bhadku* or too many *mandos*. More than creating strength, they represent strength---among the migrant labourers, they are used to connote a hardness of the body that can withstand the harsh conditions they face everyday, at the resettled villages and in the migrant labour camps. For many of the Vasavas then, in addition to the *jowariyo mando*, the meat and the fish represent aspects of their diet that mark them out as different and inferior to the large majority of their Hindu employers. The *jowariyo mando* represents the *katthan* food, and the thin delicate wheat *rotis*-a middle class gujarati staple never fills the stomach. 'It is too weak even for our children', Urmila's mother informed me.

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<sup>3</sup> In this, my findings differ from Hakim (2000), who finds among the resettled Vasavas in the Narmada basin white *jowar* is a food crop grown by the host Gujarati farmers, and on resettlement has gradually replaced corn as the resettler's main grain base for their meals (Hakim, 2000: 234-235). Unlike the Vasavas in the Narmada basin, the villages settled along the Tapi in the pre-displacement period cultivated along the banks of the river mainly rather than in the hills. This could account for the difference in the constitution of the crops grown.

Researchers who have lived and worked among sugarcane cutters in their camps have noted the scarcity of food and the double burdens of labour among the women cutters in the camps (Breman, 1985; Teerink, 1990). The descriptions of the meals are, however, sparse; as are discussions on the meanings and the place of meals, grains, spices and the taste of these for the sugarcane cutters. I emphasise this aspect, not out of a sense of pure ethnographic description of the everyday lives of cutters in their work camps. Teerink refers to the number of references to foods and the lack of grains during her field research indicating to the toughness of life that women allude to in the camps (1990: 22-23). In her study, the strongest indication of the differences between the cutters and the researchers that was pointed out by the cutters was through the references to food and sustenance: 'You can afford to roam around and ask questions, but we have to cook and eat' (Teerink, 1990: 24). In this remark, food becomes central to questions of class positions and social status, and that its scarcity restricts individual's and community's entitlement over rest and non-work associations. Mukta has discussed the centrality of food as the 'symbolic cipher of community, familial, personal [...] (and) psychic positioning' (Mukta, mimeo: 4). She has explored in a complex manner the intricate ways in which food serves not a symbolic function of demarcation between the 'self' and the 'other', but is central to webs of identification within class, community, familial and personal identifications. Food, in her complex analysis, is at the heart of understandings and associations of happiness, livelihood, status and home (Mukta, mimeo: 7).

In their villages, a cane cutter's household might be able to eat twice on a good day. This would include rice or *jowariyo mando* (*rotlas* made from *jowar*), fresh fish or a vegetable such as *brinjal* or tomatoes, or *tuver dal*. The morning snack consists of black tea (called '*kori cha*') and the previous day's *mando* (called '*helo mando*' in *vasavi*). On the rare days that a child has 50paise, they could buy 1-2 biscuits to have with their tea. Food grains in these households were mostly bought on a daily basis from the local shop, either with cash or through long standing credit arrangements. My research indicates no interest charged on these credits forwarded, however, the shopkeeper reserved the right to stop further purchases if unpaid bills grew longer. Generally, these arrangements are lenient. On a bad day, however, *jowar* or rice grains would be borrowed from neighbours or kin, and the meal would be a '*bhadku*'-gruel with salt added for taste. However, grains borrowed would be enough for two members in a household, and loan arrangements are invoked if the borrowing becomes too frequent or too large. It also risks creating frictions within kin households. As one of the elders invoked a saying while discussing the large number of household conflicts and splits between parents and married sons in *Seltipada*, 'Most fights start over half a *mando*.'

In other words, *jowar* and the various foods cooked with *jowar* grains---*mando* and *bhadku*---lie at the heart of the marginalized and resource-poor existence of the *Vasava* sugarcane cutter. The felt experience of pauperisation through both dam-displacement and the subsequent displacements of the sugarcane cutters are captured

within this one phrase of the conflict within households that are located not in conflicts over property, or resources, but over the scarcity of food and the dilemmas over the sharing of this basic material for sustenance and survival within a family. Mukta invokes the centrality of '*rotla*' in mapping particular social relationships within marginalized lives (mimeo: 6-7). '*Mando*' and the conflicts over this within the household refer again and again to the loss of resource bundles within the household that leave its members without any entitlement claims or 'fallback' positions. Agarwal (1990) among others has discussed and extended Sen's legalistic boundaries of entitlement<sup>4</sup> to include the network of entitlements that stem from individuals and households traditional rights to communal resources and support systems that are embodied in ties of kinship, friendship patronage and others which transcends the economic value within the interactions and transactions. These, according to Agarwal (1990), act as 'fallback mechanisms' for individuals and households that have very little bargaining positions or capabilities left. The sugarcane cutters' expressions of 'breakup of households over half a *mando*' hark to a situation wherein such fallback positions and traditional entitlement rights between generations within households are put in jeopardy. While Agarwal's work suggests that during food insecurity crisis, gendered social structures lead to a weakening of the bargaining position of women and of their 'fallback positions' within the household; my data suggests otherwise. A co-jointed situation of drastic reduction or

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<sup>4</sup> Senian conception of entitlement has been criticized by many scholars for limiting questions of ownership patters within the legally recognized boundaries of 'ownership entitlement'. Agarwal (1990), Gasper (1993) and Gore (1993) indicate to the importance of the realm of non-formal social relations such as kinship or friendships as locations of entitlement claims based on traditional, customary rights and serve as effective bargaining positions for individuals and households in times of



elimination of livelihood and sustenance structures such as land that were in the control of men, and the fact that this is a widespread phenomenon in the villages under study means that in many households wider support and kin networks that constitute a viable moral economy network are comprised mainly of the natal kin of the married women of the cutters' households, who might be living in regions outside of the displaced villages and the labour contractors spheres of influence. To this effect, not only are credit arrangements and relations invoked within the villages if possible, and of which the *mukaddam* is one of the only viable options; the wider networks that extend out of the cutters' home villages and relations within the moral economies of the Vasava way of life are called into play and are strong alternatives that stave off starvation within the households.

One of the strongest sources of support involve the wider kin networks for a household. Food grains might be 'gifted' during visits by wealthier relatives, the source most often in cutter's households being the wife's parents. If the household is struggling to cope with the feeding of the family, marital kin might temporarily keep one or more of the children for a time stretching over few days, or a season. Besides these, seasonal work arrangements within the villages also lend some sort of transitory 'fallback position' for cutters during the summer months, a particularly food insecure period for them. Labour work is required for re-building houses and preparations for social events such as marriages, engagements, *kriya* ceremonies

(wakes). In exchange for labour services offered, participating individuals are handed out generous food packets, and any surplus food is given to the poorest households. For individual arrangements of house construction, a daily wage is paid in cash in addition to a meal once day. Many of these arrangements are in the form of extended entitlements, decided upon and fixed at annual village level meetings, and failure to meet up to these arrangements could be risking disapproval and little labour availability. Though there can be considerable disgruntlement among the labourers over the quality of the meals offered, there were no transgressions of these arrangements that the research revealed. This brief sketch of direct access to food grains and meals is provided to draw a contrast with and find similarities in arrangements for securing food grains and meals and their entitlements for cutters at the labour camps.

The migrant labourers carry with them initial food supplies for a day or two when they leave for the seasonal labour worksites. This is often bought from the initial amount loaned by the *mukaddam*, and would include some rice or *jowar* and *tuver*. Those with additional resources might carry a hen or two. However, rather than food it is the hardware required for the preparation of meals that is carried, including pots to store water, cooking vessels, a plate or two, *thapu* (burnt terracota dish on which to roast the *rotlas*), and the pestle and mortar. The latter is carried by one or two households in the *tukdi*, being quite cumbersome, that need constant looking after to see it is not damaged or stolen. The pestle, however, is carried by most households.

Work in the sugarcane fields does not begin for about two weeks after they are transported to their camp sites. In the hiatus, the *tukdi* either relies on the *mukaddam* to find them work in the nearby fields harvesting vegetables or transplanting rice; providing their labour at significantly cheaper rates than the local labourers. At times, members of the *tukdi* could form a sub-group and offer services to neighbourhood farmers with whom a working relationship has been forged over the years. In this sense, they do offer a rival casual labour market, setting up hostilities with the local labourers. There is not much choice the Vasavas have in the schedule of arrival in Gujarat. They have to be ready to move when the trucks arrive from the sugar factories to fetch them. This may not always coincide with the start of the harvest season. And once having set up camp, making ends meet till the harvest work begins is left to the individual members of the *tukdi*. In other words, the entitlements of the labourers are constructed in different ways in their home villages and in the labourers' camps. While in the home villages, their entitlement sets allow for drawing on customary and traditional relations, during labour migration the sugarcane cutters' entitlement to food is based primarily on his/her labour. In this, while for the sugarcane factories the labourer epitomizes the idea of a productive unit<sup>5</sup>; the *adivasi* labourers are driven to undertake this trip in the hope that it renders to them an entitlement to food in exchange for their labour power. This perspective

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<sup>5</sup>Breman's work addresses and emphasises this approach to the sugarcane cutters in his large corpus of work over 15 years. From his earliest work on south Gujarat, he has focused on the breakdown of patronage relationships between the local landless and the farmers in south Gujarat. The rationale of capitalist agriculture demands the large influx of the spatially and contractually temporary migrant labourer, that allows the sugarcane industry on accumulation of profits. To this extent, Breman even calls the migrant labourers' existence in the cutting fields as typifying a transitory labour period of 'wage hunting and gathering' (1985).

of the *adivasi* labourer differs from existing work on the sugarcane cutters that asks questions of the possibility for investment in their home areas that the sugarcane cutters' seasonal migration would allow them (Breman 1985; 1994; Shylendra and Mehta, 2001). Over the eight months in the labourers' camps, the sugarcane cutters' anxieties and efforts focused on asserting their claims to the entitlement in form of food that the exchange of their labour power gives them a right to. It is this assertion that is stressed in various ways and stories about their lives in the camps.

The sugar factories begin to disburse the monthly grain quota from the first week that the harvest work begins. This is mostly in the form of *jowar*---regarded to be the staple of the labourers by the factory officials. The fact that this is a gain wrested from the factory officials rather than a beneficent allowance on the part of the *sahebudyas* is illustrated through the story related by an erstwhile *mukaddam* in the *chaudkheda* villages. No one could confirm the veracity of the story----having occurred during the earliest phase of sugarcane cutting migrations.

[...] I have a story for you. During the time that I was a mukaddam, I used to take the labourers to factory X. Small tukdis----about 30-40 *koytas*. Not like the one this mukaddam takes---150 *koytas*. Most of the labourers were from around here---Dogri *fali*, Mandvipani, Gundi, Bavli, some from Seltipada and Vajhpur, and Bordha. I used to be on good terms with the *sahebudyas*----they still ask me to bring *koytas*, but I have other things to keep me busy now. I was known to bring good workers, and so the *sahebs* trusted me. They believed what I said.

Now one day, on *killinderi* day<sup>6</sup>, I had taken some of the labourers and we had gone to the market. To

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<sup>6</sup> This is the labourer's word for cleaning day. It is a day when the factories close to clean the sugar

get out of the camp, more than anything else. We stayed there the whole day, and while returning, instead of the main road we took the road through one of the fields. It was wet and slushy, and I was wearing my khakhi pants on with big shoes. I had bought one of those *sipada* caps at the market. At the edge of the field we came across two people who were brewing a big pot of *latha*. It was a holiday, and we decided to ask them for some. But they must have seen the cap and thought I was a *sipada*. They just took to their heels<sup>7</sup>. We tried to call out to them, and my labourers even chased them. But they must have been terrified... they just ran and ran. Well, then there was this big pot of *latha*. So we carried it to the camp. It was a holiday, and everyone in the camp had a great night.

Well, it wasn't so good the next morning. Most of my labourers dead to the world, I was puking all over with a few others; and no one was in any shape to go to the fields. Of course the factory got to know about it. Govindbhai's labourers never shirk work, what happened? And by 8 in the morning, we had the *sahebudyas* with their jeep in the camp. I panicked. I didn't think they would go near the labourers---the *sahebudyas* would never come into our camps or near the labourers. And all the labourers were asleep or sick.

So I told the *saheb* the first thing that came into my mind. I said, 'we are jowar-eating people, *saheb*. The *bajro* you give us (they gave us *bajro* then) doesn't suit our stomachs. My labourers ate this last night, and see what's happened to them.' And the *sahebudyas* called for ambulances, and everyone was in hospital that day. And from the next time, we began to get jowar. The labourers were happy and the *sahebs* didn't know any better. So that's how there is jowar given in the camps.' (Govindbhai, Amalpada, April 2002)

In the context of the relationships between the sugarcane cutters and the factories, this story can be understood as more than an amusing story about the quick-

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making machines, about once or twice a season, which is a holiday for the *koytas*.

<sup>7</sup> Gujarat is a prohibition state; the distilling, selling and consumption of liquor being offences that are prosecuted.

wittedness of the labour contractor. Considering that Govindbhai was regarded as the best spin-yarn doctor in the village, there were a lot of smiles when I tried to check on the story. But nobody denied it. As Gimhabhai laconically said, 'If the *sahebs* don't know any better, it must be true. It is difficult to fool them. But write it in your report anyway---*jowar* is much healthier than *bajra* for our *adivasi* stomachs.' In the responses of other labourers and villagers to the story, the emphasis on *jowar* as a supply from the factory rather than any other foodgrain is important. This could not just be an expression of cultural preferences and food tastes. Gimhabhai, for instance, did not dismiss the story, but emphasized that the important part was the payment of foodgrains that were *jowar grains*, and not any other. *Jowar*, in this story, depicts its intricate involvement in relations of expropriation within the migrant labour camps. While for the factory officials, *jowar* ensured the health of the workers and ensured that working days would not be lost to ill-health, for the labourers *jowar* represented an entitlement to that particular grain that had been earned through their labour through sugarcane cutting. In the widespread acknowledgement of this story, *jowar* and its introduction in the camps stood not just for the sense of satisfaction of a meal; it stands at the point of the specific relationship of the labourers to their employers by demarcating their identities through the trope of the *jowar*-eating people as apart from just one of a labourer for the factory. For the labourers it is an assertion of a particular *adivasi* identity that is recognized through the payment of *jowar* rather than wheat or *bajra*, grains that are the staple of other sugarcane cutters and the farmers in the area, that is vital. Through the *jowariyo mando*, the displaced Vasava sugarcane cutters map their social

identities as distinct from the *ujaliyat* farmers and other sugarcane cutters from other parts of Gujarat.

However, before hastily positing this inversion as a moment of resistance, it does well to remember that the intimacy of the foodgrains (*jowar*) claimed by the Vasava sugarcane cutters is reclaimed by the commodification of relations in a capitalist agricultural economy within which the livelihoods of the sugarcane cutters is located. In the migrant labour camps, the grain given by the sugar factories is incorporated into a system of commodity exchange in different ways rather than a straightforward food-for-work model. The commodification of *jowar* begins at the stage of disbursement itself. The amount of *jowar* given in the migrant camps is believed to be 20 kilos, given at the beginning of each month by the sugar factories. In practice, the actual amount of *jowar* received by each individual working member is ambiguous. According to some labourers, each working member received 20 kilos of *jowar*, while others thought 20 kilos of *jowar* was given to each *koyta*-a team of 2 persons, one of whom cuts and the other binds bundles of the cut sugarcane stalks. On an average then, each working member in the camp gets 10 kilos of *jowar* every month. In actual terms, access to this monthly quota of grain is determined by the number of turns missed at work by each cane cutter, rather than the amount of work done. For each turn of loading sugarcane into trucks missed, either during the day or night, one and a half kilo of *jowar* is deducted. Through this system of deductions, one could argue that the amount of *jowar* disbursed or deducted puts a definite value

on the labour provided or withdrawn by the labourer. In terms of life in the camp, this amounts to a cruel and hideous public spectacle that demonstrates and denies to the labourers any entitlement over their own labour. The ritual of the distribution of grain at the end of each month reinforces this sense of destitution much more than any other aspect of the conditions of living and working in the migrant camps. My diary entry for the day records my impressions of the distribution of this monthly 'entitlement' of the labourers:

December 4, 2001

This evening, was sitting and talking to Urmila *yahaki* trying to understand the system of payments and fines levied on the labourers. The loading truck came into view, and I groaned, anticipating the distraction and the rush to get to the truck before it takes off in a few minutes. Urmila's mother, however, yells at Urmila to get the sack, and sits quietly by her hut. Does not resume her conversation. 'its the jowar. The mukaddam took Naru and my brother-in-law to pick up the grain from the factory. They give us 20 kilos of jowar on the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> day of every month.' Urmila *yahaki* informs me.

There is no rush in the camp. The jowar sacks are unloaded from the trucks by the younger men in the *tukdi*. They are kept next to the mukaddam's hut, which is right in the middle of the camp. The mukaddam is nowhere in sight.

Suddenly, there is a circle in the open space next to the hut, consisting mainly of young girls and women with the gunnysacks. One of the women shouts to Divli, whose hut is behind the mukaddam's that the jowar has arrived. The only men around are the Naru and Urmila *yahaki*'s brother-in-law, who went to fetch the grain; Vechiyabhai, another labourer who is literate, and manages accounting problems for the labourers, Bhimakaka and Dara Singh's father, sitting near the sacks of jowar by the



mukaddam's hut. Urmila *yahaki's* brother-in-law starts measuring the grain into the first sack. 'But doesn't the mukaddam come?' 'Sometimes he's here and sometimes not.' Divli off-handedly replies. 'It doesn't matter that he's not here. Everything is written down.'

Each sack is slowly filled with the jowar one after another. But no one leaves. As Divli's aunt's sack is filled, she snorts to herself. 'eh-he. It's all going to go anyway. Why do this?' 'Why? Where is it going to go?' I ask. Divli is quiet. Her sack is one of the last one's to be filled. By now, I am really puzzled, as everyone is still standing with their filled sacks in front of them, suddenly the silence is palpable. Even the kids are quietly holding on to their mothers, aunts or elder siblings. On the opposite side from us, the husband of a woman from jungle Amalpada comes and stands next to his wife. There seem to be many more men watching in from outside the circle—all the brothers of Urmila *yahaki's* husband and Nandadiyadada.

By now, and all of this takes no more than a few minutes, Urmilayahaki's brother-in-law followed by Naru are back at the beginning of the circle, and emptying some jowar from the sacks just filled. At each of the sacks, Vechiyabhai calls out the number of turns missed, and Naru spoons out the jowar from the particular sack an equal number of times. Most sacks have at least one turn of jowar emptied. The husband from jungle Amalpada has nearly half his grain gone, and questions the numbers called by Vechiyabhai. The latter asks him to talk to the mukaddam, since the figures have been given to him by the mukaddam. Then a few women break in - "well, the mukaddam is not here. And he is fat enough. He won't even know." "Tell him you are illiterate anyway." One of the women tells Naru. "Its bad jowar. No one is going to buy it." This refers to the practice whereby the deducted jowar is collected and given to the member of the *tukdi* who has not missed a single turn. No one remembers the origin of this rule, but most of the elders in the camp know it as instituted by and within the *tukdi*.

By the time, Naru gets to Divli's aunt's sack most people have started moving away. Her husband slept out the night on most of his night loading turns. She looks disgustedly at the bottom of the sack and only says, "well, its so bad this time, that it will be inedible tomorrow. Might as well finish it all tonight. We'll have to borrow from you for this month, Divli."

No one wants to find out who gets the deducted grain. It will be sold at the local shop for Rs. 3-4 per kilo. "well, at least someone will get to eat fish for a few days," Divli says as we walk away.

(Fieldwork notes, migrant labourers' camp, December 2001)

The monthly ritual of the distribution of grain is marked by its public character. Conducted in the middle of the huts in the camp and the open space, it is a public demonstration of the powerlessness of the cutters over the ability to assert their entitlements to a monthly quota of grain. The absence of the *mukaddam* at the distribution reinforces the powerlessness of the cutters so that their entitlements to grain can be cut and the amount of grain reduced even in the absence of the *mukaddam*. Apart from this, the distribution and re-distribution of the allotted grain to cutters also reinforces the dilemmas between the existence of fallback mechanisms in the resourceless home villages and the availability of employment on their seasonal migration trips without the existence of the necessary fallback mechanisms. While in the home villages customary work arrangements and village level agreements on payments through food entitle the poorer households to assert certain basic minimum of conditions are met; in the sugarcane fields there are no such entitlements of the workers that are recognized. In other words, while the Vasava sugarcane cutter tries to assert his/her right to the grain for putting in the required amount of work, the organisation of labour in the sugarcane factories ensures that the worker is recognized through his/her identity as a productive unit rather than in any other human way.

Black *jowar* grain then represents a tenuous surety to the labourers during difficult times in the migrant labour camps. Most migrants complain at the quality of the *jowar* grain distributed by the sugarcane factories- the grain being black, hard and tasteless. When the quality of the grains borders on the inedible, this grain (called *kali jowar*-or black *jowar*) is sold at the local shops for cash. A kilo of *jowar* from the sugar factories sells in the local shops for Rs. 3-5, as compared to the *jowar* from their villages, which sells in the same shops for Rs. 11-15 per kilo. Rs. 10 could buy a labourer 2 *brinjals*, 2 potatoes, 2 tablespoons of oil, half a kilo of broken rice grains - hardly enough for one person.

However, *jowar* is not only exchanged for money. In certain situations in the migrant camps, *jowar* becomes money. As the cutting season nears its end, shopkeepers stop selling their wares on credit. The *mukaddam* tends to increase the interest rate on the loans he gives out. Wandering merchants and fish-sellers too stop putting purchases on credit, and begin reclaiming debts. The latter especially begin demanding repayment in different forms-chickens, bicycles, teak wood beds and at times, even the matted bamboo walls used to build their huts. In such situations, the unappetising *jowar* acquires the functions of money. The migrant labour group researched for this study had reached its own understanding over the years with some of the itinerant merchants about the forms of payments. *Brinjal* had the same worth in weight as black *jowar*, while a kilo of frozen fish demanded two to two and a half kilos of black *jowar*. A glass of curd could be purchased in exchange for two glasses of

*jowar*-this is however a reluctant bargain on the part of the curd-seller, since *jowar* is not part of her daily diet, and is regarded as '*adivasi khorak*' (tribal food). However, she would be able to re-sell it in the local markets at Rs. 7-8 per kilo. One evening, an itinerant fruit-seller attracted two camps of potential clients by announcing a bargain of a 2 kilo melon for half a kilo of black *jowar*. She sold a whole cartload within half an hour. However, prestige foods like liquor and meat remain outside this exchange economy—no amount of black *jowar* can equal the value of meat or liquor. They can be bought either with cash or on a barter basis, the items of exchange ranging from chicken to radios and bicycles.

However, the adaptation of *jowar* as a means of exchange creates uncomfortable resonances at times with social hierarchies in the villages of origin. Kamnibai explained one evening, "you ask me why I don't like it here? The life here is no better than that of a *dhorkiya* in the village. We have no money, so we bargain with *jowar*. Just like the *dhorkiyas* in the villages [...] we had land, *kheti* and now the dam has made us no better than the *dhorkiyas*." *Dhorkiya* is a generic term in the *chaudkheda*, which refers alternately to the boys from poorer households in the villages hired to take care of cattle. They live in their employer's household and are paid through a nominal amount in cash, and through meals and *jowar* payments. The term also refers to the *Kotwalias*, a tribe the Vasavas consider lower down the social hierarchy. They are mainly basket weavers and trade mainly through payments in the form of *jowar* or *tuver dal*, and specifically refuse to give or accept cash payments.

However, apart from the uncomfortable resonance that their resourceless state draws with specific status groups that are lower down the social hierarchy, Kamnibai's statement also forces the analysis to look beyond a question of food security as a matter of legal access to food. Mukherjee (2003) regards these as additional conditions to satisfying the food security conditions that are characterized by the availability of food and the individual or household's ability to access food through endowments or extended entitlements as discussed earlier (2003: 13). Among these additional conditions, Mukherjee expands on what he terms 'the existence of institutional sanctions and the choice of food' (2003: 13). The former refers to the extent to which access to food is circumscribed by institutional elements like cultural traits, customs, traditions, religious practices and value-systems (2003: 14). Sen, too, has briefly referred to this in discussing the limits to exchange entitlements through legal, political, social and cultural elements (Sen, 1981: 48-50; Sen and Dreze, 1989: 25-31). For the sugarcane cutters, the lack of endowments and the shrinking of their exchange entitlement bundles is heightened by their slide down the social hierarchy of the villages. This restricts their access to loans with other moneylenders in the villages and emphasizes their positions of dependence on a 'care-taker' like the *mukaddam* in a manner analogous to the *dhorkiyas*, who are reliant on the goodwill and conditions of work imposed on them by their employers. Moreover, Kamnibai's statement also locates the sugarcane cutters, not within a system of patronage but very firmly within a monetary economy. The sugarcane cutters are aware that although it is the scarcity of food that drives them on the seasonal migration treks, this places them at the very edge of a hand-to-mouth existence. Within the monetary

economy, both in their home villages and in the sugarcane fields, they are forced to rely on their labour as constituting their only means of exchange. The ensuing cycle in which they are unable to build on this endowment and convert it into any form of investment results in a corroding of their customary entitlements within their villages and with their kin over time. The life in the camps is not only analogous to the everyday poverty of the *dhorkiyas* in the home villages, it represents the lack of entitlements that can help in the building of resources and livelihood and forces the cutters into a situation of bondage.

However, the pauperisation of the *adivasi* migrant labourer also is accompanied by everyday practices of discrimination among the caste-conscious farming society in the region of sugarcane cultivation. The migrant labourer is acutely tuned in to these practices, whether it affects his/her persona directly or may be directed in situations involving non-*adivasis*. Many of these practices are in conflict with Vasava ethics of food distribution and the significance of sharing a meal with a stranger. While sharing of food and water among the Vasavas can be dangerous for Vasavas specifically, and persons regarding themselves as *adivasi* in a broader sense; sharing of a meal with a non-*adivasi* is relatively free of such connotations. A Vasava takes pride in regarding themselves as people with '*udaar dil*'- a generous heart that speaks of hospitality of the host and enhances the status of the guest. Much is said by the single act of offering a meal. It could be invoked to tie the guest in the reciprocal relation of obligation. It could also offer the guest a status as a member of the

household, so that the boys who looked after the cattle of the household or minded the house ate with their employers. In this sense then, one of the strongest criticisms expressed by the labourers of the Gujarati farmers was not regarding the conditions of work that the labourers were subjected to. As Divli put it,

'I'll tell you why I don't like it here. Once we were picking vegetables for a farmer-brinjals, tomatoes, *mulis*, *choli*, cauliflower. There was this pregnant muslim woman who passed by-she wanted some water. The farmer refused, and forbade us to give her water. I was picking vegetables with my friend. The farmer was standing there watching us. Then he turned around to scold another labourer. My friend took the woman's pot, and told her to come back later. It was nearly lunchtime. When the farmer went for lunch, we filled that pot of water and stole some vegetables to give her. What kind of people would refuse to give a pregnant woman water, whatever religion she belongs to? My friend and I laughed so much. That farmer lost a lot more than he would have earlier.' (Divliben, migrant labourers' camp, February 2002)

The contempt that the labourers express for their *seths*, on the one hand, and their fascination with the ostentation of their employers came to a head in the debates that raged among the migrants in the camp on whether to attend a wedding meal in the Patel *faliyu* to which the *tukdi* had been invited that week.

The wedding in question was a lavish affair by all standards---sugarcane work had doubled that month to clear fields around the area quickly which would serve as parking plots for the 2000 cars expected. Naru, Surkiya, and the other youngsters and kids were star-struck on hearing about famous film personalities who were to attend.

Gimbhabhai was initially stunned and later stopped trying to understand how much the entire wedding would have cost, when he heard the cost of the canopy alone was Rs. 7 lakhs. The aspect that raised most debate in the *tukdi* was the invitation extended by the family to the *tukdi* to 'come for' the wedding meal. There had been a precedent a few years ago, that the old-timers among the cane-cutters remembered. What seemed like a generous gesture on the part of the bride and her family was perceived as a double-edged sword by many of the older men and women in the *tukdi*. They remembered how they had been made to side on the outskirts of the kitchen, hidden away from the other guests, just under a kitchen canopy since it was raining, amidst the ground turning into slush. They were served their food, and packed off as soon as the meal was over. 'We are not beggars', Nandadiyadada fumed. 'I have studied as much as them; I worked in the *mamlatdar's* office before the dam was built. I have come here because of the dam, because the water from my village comes here. I do not need their food---we have our *mando*, that's enough.' Many of the younger women were curious to go, drawn by the prospect of a sheer spectacle, rich food and their children's pleas. Some of their husbands seemed ambivalent. Barkiyabhai thought he would take his daughter along to 'see the wedding, but not eat'. Bhimakaka mentioned his experiences in Bombay as the servant of a Patel, who ate food cooked by his hand. 'yes, but you were his servant. Did he share the same plate with you?' was Gimbhabhai's question to him. The debate raged on until the day of the wedding. Eventually, Divli and Urmila went to see the wedding with the children, while the rest of the *tukdi* stayed at the camp-site.



Access to a proper meal once a day still remains at the heart of the everyday life of households. Building credit networks or supplementary employment possibilities with the *halpatis* is rendered impossible by the migrant's status as a rival labourer. Associations with the *Patels* in the villages are hindered by the mediation of the *mukaddam*, and the perception of the male labour migrant as a pauperised and unpredictable in his emotional reactions, while women are unknown groups of labourers who stay restricted to the fields or within the camp. In such situations, credit networks are built centrally with the shopkeeper in the *tukdi*. Most *mukaddams* travel not only with *koytas*, but also in-resident shopkeepers, who may be kin or fictive kin of the *mukaddam*. This ensures a regulation of credit within the *tukdi*, and allows for a certain recovery of credit. Facilities like grinding of grain are availed of with the grinding mills in the resident village, mediated through assurances given by the *mukaddam*, and the credibility of the *mukaddam* as well as the *tukdi*. Since Ramabhai had been bringing his *tukdi* every year to this village for the last 12 years, were resident in the same neighbourhood through the eight months, and Ramabhai as a *mukaddam* had an extensive network and reputation for garnering work from the farmers outside of the areas allocated by the factory; his *tukdi* was considered creditworthy enough, not just by the local grinding mill, but also by the local shopkeepers and the milk vendors. As a result of which, *jowar* payments were arranged.

However central the *mukaddam* is in mediating between the worlds of the labourers

in the camp and those in the host villages, a migrant labourer still has a possibility of accessing a certain daily measure of food security independent for that moment from the panoptic hold of the *mukaddam*. This is based on the daily income inflow through the sale of '*chimdi*' (called '*bandi*' in Gujarati)---the upper leafy part of the sugarcane stalk that serves as an essential diet for milch cattle in the area. Since dairy farming is as prevalent as the monoculture sugarcane fields in the area, the demand for bundles of '*chimdi*' stalks is constant through the sugar harvesting season, with bulk supplies being transported to cattle sheds on the outskirts of the urban areas like Surat daily. This constant and urgent demand should theoretically offer a space for the labour migrant to negotiate and control his supply to the market. Bulk suppliers are willing to work on a semi-permanent contract basis with a particular group of migrants, wherein they would be assured of a certain minimum bulk of the *chimdi* bundles at the end of each day. However, language barriers, a fundamental suspicion of entering into contract relations with a Gujarati, the urgency to sell the *chimdi* bundles at all costs by the end of the day, and the surplus of labourers bring in a vulnerability to the migrant worker, so that prices of *chimdi* are controlled by the buyers. In terms of a comparison, while one *chimdi* bundle consisting of 100 sugarcane stalks is sold for Rs. 70-100 in Songadh *taluka*, in the non-*adivasi* regions this bundle is sold for Rs. 20. The price begins to tumble further by the end of the harvest season as labourers attempt to acquire as much income from *chimdi* sales to pay off smaller debt to shopkeepers and other merchants. The rights of the bundling of the *chimdi* and its sales belong to the cutter alone, acknowledged by both the farmer and the *mukaddam*. And for the cutters, the right to the *chimdi* sales still

offers a tenuous hope of consolidation and savings independent of the money earned from sugarcane cutting.

The migrant labourer in Gujarat then enters a completely different economic space that is quite alien to still surviving community institutions in the villages of origin. While in the villages of *chaudkheda* he/she may still be economically and socially marginalised, institutions of community decision-making on economic issues such as annual reviews of wage labour conditions and payments allow more entitlement possibilities than in living in the seasonal migration work sites. By this, I refer to a village level meeting organised with the *agewans* annually before *holi*. All the men of the village are required to attend, and air grievances or changes to existing systems of payments within the village economy. Though in its actual operation, landless households would be reluctant to express their views openly, the power play within the village allows for representatives to put forward complaints, suggestions and changes. This forum allows a basic wage entitlement structure for the year for the labourers----quite alien to their conditions of entitlements in the sugarcane cutter's camps. This attempt at consciously maintaining an egalitarian ethic is an aspect that until now draws its legitimation from their identity as displacees, rather than as Vasavas (it is not practiced in the non-resettled Vasava villages in the region). In this sense then, the labour migrants to the sugarcane cutters camps are required to create and rely on other extra-legal relations within the *tukdi* to create some kind of food security for themselves during the cane cutting season in Gujarat.

Women in sugarcane camps

So far, the chapter has centered on questions of access and entitlements for sugarcane cutters in the migrant labour camps. Under the pauperised conditions, many of these issues focus around food----from the reasons that motivate the long trip to the sugarcane fields to survival and subsistence in the migrant labour camps. However, as literature on the pauperisation of displaced groups has suggested, lack of entitlements to food constitute only a part of the overarching condition of hunger that affects these groups. Apart from Dwivedi (2002), most literature on displacement has only tended to allude to Dreze and Sen's work on hunger. They define hunger 'to embrace all kinds of social and biological disadvantages associated with infrequent food intakes' (Ravallion, 1992: 2). This implies that Dreze and Sen would consider a problem of hunger even in situations where the individual concerned would have adapted themselves to low food intakes. Although this understanding of hunger has changed the understanding of the concept radically in development studies, I would argue with Agarwal (1994) that it suggests a form of false consciousness, wherein individuals may be complicit in the perpetuation of their own oppression. Agarwal has contrasted this situation with the perspective of James Scott (1985), wherein even under the most oppressive conditions, the disadvantaged resist the forms of power exercised over them under a variety of guises such as passive non-compliance, sabotage, evasion and deception. However, under conditions of endemic hunger Scott's work raises questions on the idea of resistance 'to what?' and leads to the problem of forefronting resistance in every act

of the disadvantaged.

In this section, I hope to mediate between the adapting individual of Dreze and Sen; and the resisting person of Scott. As Breman observes, '[....] it would be wrong to assume that the army of migrant workers is one of helpless people whose spirit has been completely broken. To describe them in such terms would be to underrate their resilience and silent militancy...' (1990: 589). Sugarcane cutters are aware of the conditions of exploitation and hunger they face and respond to them with strategies of passive resistance, through avoiding any form of contract labour that allows them a route of escape, whenever need be (1996: 237). With the increasing efforts of factories to dissuade any form of organisation and protest for the cutters, a mood of protest pervades the life in camps through acknowledgement of a mutual condition of destitution through various expressive modes. In this I focus on women's talk and acknowledgement of their pauperised conditions and powerlessness against the power of the *mukaddams* and the sugar factories on the one hand, and within the household on the other. This is not to deny various other expressions of protest or acknowledgement among the men in the camps. However, my analysis has been based on definite gendered contingencies in the field, which allowed me greater freedom and access to the everyday conversations and meetings of women, rather than men.

This section attempts to examine generational memories of the times of hunger

amongst a specific group of women migrant labourers. Studies on the scarcity of food and times of hunger seek to define it as an event or a phenomenon through economic categories or historical studies that retrospectively demarcate 'difficult' periods in people's lives, individually or as collective memories. Most studies in this field on hunger focus on questions of food scarcity and malnutrition. Recent literature on famine has focused on local perceptions of the event of famine and in this sense; famine becomes more than just a lack of food supply (Vaughan, 1987; Pankhurst, 1992). While there is an enormous amount of literature on defined periods of extreme shortage to food entitlements among communities, there have been few academic studies or explorations of the way in which memories of hunger are called on and seep into the subjectivities of individuals, families and social groups (Pankhurst, 1992; Mukta, 2002).

I examine 'food and hunger' talk in sugarcane migrant labour camps in my region of research. Although I had talked to the migrant labourers and said that the main theme of my research was about their memories of dam-induced displacement, the stories that I heard recurrently in the labourers' camps were on the 'times of famine' and the dearth of food and suffering. Dearth of food, in the past and present, seeped into different facets of life among the migrant women seeping through memories of grandparents into re-writing the present for the younger women. Shortages of food are a recurrent anxiety among the households of cutters, both in their host villages upstream of the dam and in their places of work that has benefited from the vast network of irrigation canals built as part of the hydro-electric project. In this section, I would specifically

like to examine oral narratives and discussions among different generations of women cutters.

It is in this context of a capitalist agricultural economy that I would like to examine stories related to past and present times of food scarcity among the women cutters. In terms of food security, research from south Asia indicates the most skewed food distribution within the household often at the cost of the women and daughters of the house (Harriss-White, 1989; Dreze and Sen, 1989; Agarwal, 1990; Kabeer, 1994). Prospects of food insecurity loom larger over women than the male labourers in the migrant labour camps. As Teerink's (1990) study indicates, the hidden costs of the conditions of labour tend to be borne much more by the adult women than the adult men in the migrant labour camps. The responsibility of domestic work apart from the cutting of sugarcane falls on the women within a household. In terms of the distribution of food over meals within a household, a woman tends to serve herself the last during a meal (Harriss-White, 1989; Agarwal, 1990; Kabeer, 1994). Life in the camp also alters one significant aspect of access to food. Unlike in their villages, where market day is a vital institution---a day off for women and men, and a place to socialise, negotiate deals, and stock up for the week; there is no market or market day in the sugarcane labour camps. There are isolated shops in the neighbourhood of the camps owned and manned by the local villagers, or shops set up within the camp by the *mukaddam* or one of his relatives. Most women access these latter shops, if absolutely necessary. It is usually the men or elder children in the household unit who purchase the food items required from these shops, mostly on credit. However, these

shops do not offer certain facilities like grinding of grain, or fresh vegetables. In such cases, shops in the local host villages have to be accessed. This is mostly done by the young men in the camp. The only time women would venture out of the camps was in the company of other women. The host villages are experienced as too hostile to women to venture out alone. Women in sugarcane labour camps are, then, primarily in charge of making arrangements to ensure the household has something to eat each day from whatever may be available. On many days, this would mean that the woman would have to boil black tea for herself, while using the leftovers of flour to accompany the tea for the men and children in the household. Women also tend to lose out on meals on nights they have to go to the fields to load the trucks. Although it is the men who cook the meals for the household on such nights, I have observed women too tired on their return to eat and prefer to save the meal for breakfast the next morning. It is not infrequent to see arguments and fights within the household when a woman discovers the money earned from the *chimdi/ bandi* sales has been spent on liquor or gambling by the men. Women are then forced to buy on credit from the camp shops or rely on their networks of friends within the camp to borrow leftover food. However, given the scarcity of food, the latter instance is extremely rare. What is more common are instances described by Agarwal where food is shared between women who are neighbours or friends (1994: 85-87). While in Agarwal's work this mode of sharing is interpreted as an act of covert resistance against inequalities in resource distribution and control exercised by the conjugal kin, in the labour camps it could be interpreted as part of a moral economy of subsistence<sup>8</sup>, where resources are shared by

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<sup>8</sup> James C. Scott's concept of the 'moral economy of subsistence' forefronts the peasant's perspective



those on the margins of subsistence. In the migrant labour camps, sharing food has specific patterns among women. Occurrences of sharing of cooked food were very rare among women. What is more prevalent is the practice of borrowing uncooked ingredients such as chillies and tea. This practice also extended among women to the 'lending' of foodgrains, especially *jowar* and rice, to those who had had to forfeit some of their monthly food entitlements due to their absences at work. My material differs here from Agarwal's (1990) in one regard. Agarwal's work (1990) discusses such sharing of food practices either as a form of passive resistance against the disempowerment experienced by individual women within the household or as evidence of the weaker bargaining positions of women within predominantly male based decision-making structures within the household. Food sharing practices in the migrant labourers' camps served more to reinforce solidarities and bonds between households through individual women rather than consolidate entitlements of women within households. In a context of widespread and intense food insecurity and hunger experienced by all members of the migrant labourers' camps, lending and sharing of foodgrains between women is more of a response to the food scarcity within a household, rather than that experienced by individual women. The common experience of hunger and women's efforts to negotiate this at the household level needs to be understood within a context of customary rights to food grains to another household and bargaining and fallback positions of households (Agarwal, 1990) as well as the intricacies and emotions around friendships, gendered relationships within the

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and defines the concept as referring to peasant values of shared preferences, rather than an ethic based on maximizing the returns of labour. The central assumption is that '[...] whatever their civil and political disabilities, the poor have a social right to subsistence.' (1976: 33)

household, understandings of hunger, values placed on asking and offering of foodgrains and the understood limits within the camp with regard to sharing of food. Among women themselves there are boundaries wherein food can only be shared upto a point without putting the household at risk. Although women are responsible for serving and distributing food during a meal; this is practised within a male authority of decision-making. In the event, the migrant camps often had incongruous sites of resource sharing. Two brothers with large households migrating to the camp shared their bamboo-matting to create a large single hut, but had separate hearths within the space to be independent of each other's grain resources. According to them it was done 'to prevent quarrels between their wives'. According to the women, it was the best strategy to see that the hut would not be split due to misunderstandings, and could continue to be shared by both households. This example serves to illustrate that although preparation and distribution of food takes place through and by women; they are still dependent on the male cutter for decisions regarding the undertaking of the migrant labour trip; the earnings of the camp are given to the men as heads of households and, more directly on food and foodgrains, since it is men who tend to inhabit public spaces such as shops and grinding mills. In other words, womens' access and entitlements to food in the labour camps is mediated in direct and indirect ways through their male kin.

The moral economy of the subsistence and sharing in the camps is also negotiated through the capability of one cutter's household to be able to lend food to another. These observations have been made in other contexts as well. Hartmann and Boyce

(1988) write about the regret of a woman in Bangladesh who had to balance the need for food in her household with the sympathy she felt with her neighbours who had requested a loan of foodgrains to feed her household. In the cutters' camps, women are located at this site wherein a commonly experienced condition of hunger evokes sympathies, without the ability to translate it into material assistance and sharing.

The social location of women in the camps as wives and mothers existing alongside their dependency on cutting and their male kin for food entitlements ensures that although women are not restricted or circumscribed through traditional rights to eating last or eating less as in caste-based societies, as the cutting season progresses, the availability and intake of food for women gradually declines. As *jowar* seeds are traded for other necessities, the numbers of *mando* available at each meal begins to decline. There were more meals consisting of tea, and half a *mando*. Or there is a dichotomy of food---with *jowariyo mando* (flat cakes made with *sorghum*) being prepared for the men and children and gruel made from left-over *jowar* for the women. By the end of the cutting season, many women in the camp were not only showing signs of acute anaemia, but also complaining about the problem of not being able to eat. 'I puke if I eat more than half a *mando*, I cannot eat more', was a standard complaint among many of the women in the *tukdi*. This complaint of the women cutters seems to substantiate Dreze and Sen's observation that individual's adapt to conditions of low food intake (Ravallion, 1992: 2-3).

Moreover, Dreze and Sen would regard this statement as indicative of the problem of

hunger. This observation does not, however, go further to interrogate whether this condition is recognised as one born of hunger among the hungry themselves. It is to understand the women cutters' recognition and expression of their physical and psychic states as born of a state of hunger that this section specifically focuses on women's discussions on hunger and food scarcity. Women's talk on and around hunger and times of hunger also creates solidarities between women amidst the life-boat ethics<sup>9</sup> of making one's household food secure in the cutters' camps. Moreover, the focus on women is emphasised not only due to the fact that women are in charge of preparation of meals; men too are in charge of providing food for the household by purchasing it in the open market. While in the male talk around food in the sugarcane cutters' camps, it is the public events of food and the symbolism around food that is consciously posited as a critique of their discrimination as tribal labourers as shown in the earlier sections, the female articulation around food expresses both everyday concerns of satisfying empty stomachs and a critique that is turned both inwards and outside---to the practice of debt bondage that is practised by elite members of their own villages, and which binds their men in a system that drags families into the plains. In critiquing this mode of recruitment of wage labour and the conditions of semi-starvation they work in at the sugarcane fields, it is also a critique of the system of capitalist agriculture that cannot function without them and yet discriminates against them.

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<sup>9</sup> Scheper-Hughes (1998) coined the term to describe the dilemma faced by those communities caught up within situations of scarcity of resources. Under such conditions, she says, the pragmatics of saving

The Vasava women tend to greet each other in the home villages through a question '*kai vaa? kai korti?*' (What's up? What are you doing?). In the migrant labour camps, this greeting changes, reflecting a change in the everyday world of the sugarcane cutters. In the migrant camps, women pass each other by with the terse statement, '*khaadhon?*' (Have you eaten?). The reply is unnecessary. '*Khaadhon?*' in the camps is as indicative of the literalness of access to a meal as it is of having time to rest at the end of the day. In the camps, where night loading sessions are part of the working day, labourers are starved for the space and time, which is not controlled by factory schedules. Among the men, the complaints about migrant camps often remark about having to leave half-eaten plates to rush off to a night loading session. Among women, who as the season progresses, may not even be privileged that access, '*khaadhon?*' in its terseness becomes a word spoken too much, indicating the anxiety of the speaker as much as her concern for her friend. Under such conditions of marginalisation within the household and the constant gaze of the factory officials, the question '*khaadhon?*', then, acquires an intensity of sharing and acknowledgement of a condition of hunger that strikes at the heart of the camp life of women. The everyday acknowledgement of '*khaadhon?*' gives expression to the most basic anxiety in the migrant labour camps---of food, of course, but also of the rest and re-creation of intimate bonds that a shared meal gives---aspects that are sorely missing in camp life.

Further, women's experiences, recollections, gossip and discussions in the migrant labour camps are permeated by two themes: of famine and of the decision to 'go to sugar'. The greeting '*khaadhon?*' then resonates for the cane cutters back into the past and out of the camps into their home villages. In other words, just as '*khaadhon?*' is illustrative of the pervasive but elliptical concern about food; evening gatherings of women constantly came back to talk about vegetable vendors, the comparisons between vegetables available in the camp and those in the home villages, times of food scarcity and famines without actually referring to food security and hunger in specific houses. Rather, discussions on food served as illustrative metaphors within conversations and arguments among women that commented on or critiqued the very existence and susceptibility of their households to times of spectacular hunger and the continued existence of everyday endemic hunger.

In contrast to the terseness and the generalised concern expressed through '*khaadhon?*', extended discussions around hunger problematise the existence of an unproblematic solidarity of concern that may bind women together in the camps. Understandings and reflections of 'hungry lives' that these women and their households lead vary noticeably between generations. In the migrant labour camps, it was the old women that narrated stories of a past famine that had swept through the countryside west of the present villages, around the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Guna's mother: we've heard of stories before our time about the famine, the elders used to tell us.

There was nothing to eat then. Then, you had a bad harvest, the rains failed and you have to eat

cattle. Even those who had *jowar* starved. They were afraid of others finding out. Children starved because there was nothing to eat. They used to roam the forests to find something to eat.

(Masuben, migrant labour camp, March 2002)

Surkiya's aunt: I remember this famine in my father's village. It was not a good time---terrible. People abandoned their children. Old people closed the doors of their houses and died. Men and women were roaming the countryside looking for food. If you found any, you hid it from your child and ate. Would anyone do that otherwise? (Vasantiben, migrant labour camp, February 2002)

Each of the above descriptions speaks more to its context rather than the 'event' of the famine itself. In emphasising the context in the above descriptions, I refer to Halbwach's thesis (1992) on the *Social Frameworks of Memory*, wherein social processes enable personal memories to be collectivised, and at the same time collective memory substantiates itself through individual recollections. These recollections of famine by two women of the same ages have different credibility among the others in the village and the camps. On the one hand, they were about events in their natal villages. These were also recollections of a famine that older men in the villages of fieldwork or the cane cutters among them did not recognise in terms of its occurrence. However, these stories were prevalent among the women in the camps and served as valuable pieces of narrations from the point of view of the context of their telling.

The two descriptions of famine were remembered stories of famine by old women who were sugarcane cutters. Narrated as part of a larger conversation on food and its availability, hunger here does not have an end, or a solution. People roam the

countryside in much the same way that they still do as part of their hunt for work in the plains. That these were narrated as part of a discussion, it could be argued, lent it this open-endedness. The famine memories were often evoked by the older women in the context of discussions in the camp about the terrible conditions of camp life. The old women emphasised the point that 'things were much better now', and that chronic hunger suffered in the camps could be nothing compared to the crippling starvation of bygone days. It could be argued that the stories of famine, as told by Masuben and other old women, encourage other food or food crisis stories, and for younger women in the camp or first-timers to camp life reinforce the idea that although conditions of living are bad in the camps, they could be worse without even the minimal food available and distributed in the camps every month. In this, the older women represent voices of authority wherein the camps are not necessarily legitimised, but definitely emphasised as spaces that make it possible for sugarcane cutters to protect their food entitlements.

However, the stories and their arguments are not accepted compliantly by the younger generation of women. For instance, the story of the famine was followed by a reference by one of the younger women on an incident that happened a few months ago at the camp wherein the entire foodgrain supply of 15 kilos was eaten and scattered by a wandering goat into the camp, prompting most households to barricade their huts with thorny bushes. The younger women also contest the arguments of the older women regarding camps enabling the protection of their food entitlements through referring to the quality of food available in the camps. One of the women, contesting the idea that



things were 'much better now' recalled a recent incident of food poisoning of her child through being fed stale fish. 'Here we don't even know what to feed our children. Food may be available but who knows what has been put into it. We still have to buy it from the *dublas* and *marwadis*<sup>10</sup> and we still have to rely on their goodwill....' (Kamuben, migrant labourer's camp, February 2002). This counter-argument did not only express a suspicion of non-*adivasis*. It also reinforced the dislike among the Vasavas of their inability to be self-sufficient as regards protecting their entitlements to healthy, regenerating food.

As illustrated in the earlier chapters, just as memories of displacement do not go uncontested between generations; and among the women migrant cutters hunger has different connotations over generations. While for the older women, this state of hunger and destitution is neither totally unfamiliar like in the famine stories, nor is it bereft of a history that begins with the dam as is evident through their narratives and songs. Moreover, the emphasis on food entitlements in the present day is about the basic availability of food. For the younger generation of women, however, endemic hunger in the camps has a genealogy of which they have no memory. Many of these younger women have been married into sugarcane cutters' households in the resettled villages. Their natal kin need not necessarily be sugarcane cutters, or be located in the Ukai displaced villages. However, criticism about their dependency on food cannot be

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<sup>10</sup> The *dublas* are classified as scheduled tribes in the Indian constitution and constitute a rival employment groups to the migrant labourers. The *marwadis* is a generic term used by the Vasava migrant labourers to refer to the local shopkeepers in their host villages.

identified simply with the Entitlement and Deprivation thesis of Dreze and Sen<sup>11</sup>. The younger women do not direct their criticism simply in terms of the system of debt-bondage, although they are aware of the terms and conditions involved. It is a criticism mediated by their social location within the migrant labourers' camps and the directed from within structures of dependency on the men and the sugarcane cutting work. In this regard, their criticisms are more potent in being directed from within the system and being directed at the various perceived complicities that sustain and perpetuate the increasing indebtedness of their households. The younger women criticise their men for dragging them and their households into the conditions of semi-starvation, and exploitation in the camps. Hunger talk is intrinsically linked to discussions on availability of food in the home villages. While the older generation focuses on hunger caused by external factors such as failure of rains, landlessness or the appropriation of their lands by the state agencies; for the younger women, hunger has causes and processes much closer home. In response to older women's famine talk, younger women's conversations question the need to come to the cutter's camps at all, if it were not for the debts taken from the contractor by their menfolk. As Barkiyabhai's wife, Kamuban, remarked bitterly,

'Who wants to come to this place year after year? Our men borrow money from the *mukaddam*. What choice do we have? If we let our men come alone, they will return with another wife. Even the *mukaddam's* wife comes along, although she is eight months pregnant. We women come because we have no choice.' (Kamuben, migrant labourers' camps, March 2002)

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<sup>11</sup> The Food Availability arguments are based on the premise that an individual is food insecure because there is a scarcity of the amount of foodgrains available (Mukherjee, 2003: 2). In contrast, the Entitlement and Deprivation thesis argues that food insecurity is an issue of access to food through economic, political and social processes rather than one of the availability of food (Sen, 1981).

During her stay Divli's mother never stopped complaining about her husband 'dragging them around to sugar, wearing torn old clothes with hardly enough to eat, while he travelled back and forth on their earnings.' Feminist scholars have remarked on a higher social status for *adivasi* women based on their higher wage participation rates (Omvedt, 1978), more visibility in the public domain and marriage customs like brideprice, wherein the groom's family pays a decided sum to the bride's family depending on socio-economic circumstances and the education of the bride. The argument tends to reify the concept of the tribe. As Unnithan argues based on her fieldwork, the absence of intentionally oppressive male domination does not mean an absence of structural gender inequalities (Unnithan, 1991). Nathan and Kelkar (1991) too caution against ascribing a better position to women in tribal society. They write, '[...] patriarchy is not simply control over women's labour in the sphere of reproduction, rather it is control over their total labour. Women do not control accumulation; they also lose any autonomy in both the labour process and in consumption. What is instituted by patriarchy is a relation of production within the family, whereby women's labour is exchanged for consumption which, in turn, is determined by the male head of the household [...] in the period of tribal society we can observe changes in the control over labour: from relative autonomy of those who labour, to a step-by-step institution of full male control over agricultural income' (1991: 162-163). In the camps, this observation is reinforced by the practice of handing payments of the season's work to the male who is considered the head of the household. In addition, the independent income that labourers can earn through the sale

of the *chimdi/ bandi* is also carried out by the men in the group, to protect women from sexual threats from non-tribals to whom they sell the *bandi*. Women too consent to this practice. It is this conjunction of the alienation felt by 'being dragged to Gujarat to the camps' and the control that the men exercise over their women's labour that reinforces the pauperisation and hunger felt by the younger women in the camps.

In addition, old famine stories are countered by younger women speaking about the exploitative and discriminatory practices within cutting work---corruption by supervisors on the day in reducing the tonnage of the sugarcane harvested for the particular day, hostile remarks or glances encountered on way to the fields or the extra hour they were made to wait at the local shop to buy their wares. In this famine talk becomes an illustration of a comparative mode of discussion on situations of destitution, past and present. Through famine stories the older women try to reinforce the point that at least in the camps they are assured of a regular supply of food grains. This though is often contested by younger women, who argue that the grains are either inedible and the systems imposed by their contractors of fines and debt interests that ensures that the labourers usually live in a state of hunger. Alongside is also a criticism of their male kin's decision to borrow money from the contractors that binds them to the labour teams for a year, or until they pay back the interest.

'Talk around hunger' among women cutters appears sharply divided between generational lines over memories and experience of garnering food entitlements. These divisions over the core of their everyday lives makes it difficult to imagine a

collectivity gathering around modes of resistance (Agarwal, 1990), structural inequalities in food entitlements (Harris-White, 1989) or through modes of expression that critique structures of subjugation (Vaughan, 1987; Raheja and Gold, 1994)<sup>12</sup>. Women's talk around hunger itself lends a complexity to this phenomenon of hunger in their lives. Migrant labourers' discussions around hunger were not only about the lack of availability of food. Through their stories and arguments, both the older and the younger women constructed a critique of the structures of decision-making within the households, of the differences and discriminations encountered in travelling to Gujarat, of possible deprivations in terms of health care suffered by their children and of their own vulnerabilities to social and political forces beyond their control. Dreze's observation (2004: 1729) that the right to food is not divorced from other social and economic rights such as the rights to employment, education, health and information is enormously relevant in this context as a starting point for understanding the fissures that the experience of hunger creates as well as the felt vulnerabilities that create jagged solidarities. In this sense, while the younger women, then, see their trek to the sugarcane fields through a lens of the appropriation of their labour---both within the households and stretching through the hierarchies of camp life; among the older women, the emphasis is on the ability to protect their food entitlements that the sugarcane cutting allows.

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<sup>12</sup> While Agarwal's argument has been discussed earlier in this chapter; Harris-White's pioneering micro-study (1989) on the dynamics of food distribution within caste-based households in north India emphasized the role of gender inequalities in north Indian societies that discriminated in the provision of quality care in food and health against women and daughters in households. Raheja and Gold's study in Rajasthan (1994) analysed the songs composed and sung by women in Rajasthani villages that parody the male dominance in kinship, social, economic and political life of their villages. Vaughan (1987) analyses womens' songs on the famine in Malawi that according to her '[...] contain

Along with this, there is also a tremendous sense of vulnerability as women. While there is criticism of their husbands and fathers for 'dragging them to sugar'; there is also a sense of inability to do anything about it. Protests or resistance might lead to breaking up of the household, so that the woman is again left to fend for herself. And in both, the labour camps and the home villages, single women are vulnerable to powerlessness and abuse----social and sexual. Women are acutely aware of this vulnerability so that despite this condition of semi-starvation, many of the female migrant labourers preferred to travel for work to sugarcane cutting camps rather than any other form of migration. For these women, the camp represents a sanctuary as compared to living conditions during '*chutak majoori*' or '*kola*'---the other two modes of migration. The vulnerability of women to sexual abuse is a constant source of concern, both in the villages and in the camps<sup>13</sup>. In contrast to the latter two, 'in a sugar *tukdi* one is never alone; we live together, and we know where everyone is. When we go to the fields or for a bath, we go in groups. You can't do that if you are a *chutak majoor*. And if something goes wrong, the *mukaddam* will help' (Kamnibai, migrant labour camp, December 2001). In other words, there is an acknowledgement that within the conditions of hunger, discrimination and struggles to protect their entitlements; the migrant labour camps represent the safest place as compared to the

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the possibility of expressing sexual antagonism in a socially acceptable way' (1987: 121)

<sup>13</sup> In this I am reminded of the incident involving Manju, a teenage girl from Amalpada accompanying a group of *chutak majoor* on their way to earn some money harvesting vegetables near Bardoli, in Gujarat for ten days. The girl was initially to be accompanied by her mother, who had to pull out at the last minute because of ill-health. The household needed the earnings, and although accompanying her relatives and neighbours in the *tukdi*, Manju was clearly terrified---silent and subdued---an entirely different person from the one I had met and chatted to in Amalpada.

two other modes of migration. It not only protects them from sexual violence and social discrimination; the camps also afford a space for the sharing of concerns, ideas and consolidation of energies and interests, and an expression of these.

While food often remains the central illustrative metaphor through which sugarcane cutters describe their lives as sugarcane cutters, among the women cutters food talk is part of conversations, references and arguments on relationships within and outside the camp involving their bodies, work and health. Although these hunters and gatherers are moving to more prosperous, and irrigated areas to sell their labour and garner grain for eating, the absence of enough to eat for the 8-9 months is pervasive and their expressions and articulations about this contradiction inhabits camp life. The absence of enough nourishment to reproduce and replenish themselves seems to be articulated by their bodies---while the women cutters pride themselves on their '*katthan*' (hard) bodies that can withstand unrelenting hardship so that 'it needs a tough blow with the *koyta* to injure them' (Kamnibai, migrant cutters' camp, December, 2001); the bodies are actually deprived of food and reject food ('we cannot eat more than half a *mando*') when they go hungry for long periods of time. In other words, while the bodies and stomachs are required to be strong to garner food and entitlements to foodgrains, they are not strong enough to withstand the fruits of the labour after being worn down by years of deprivation, both in the camps and in the villages that cannot provide them with an arena for garnering food entitlements to reproduce and replenish themselves in the first place.

The violence of displacement continues to be felt in multiple forms in the sugarcane cutters camps, among men and women. Although Ukai displacement is absent in the articulation of their memories, all sugarcane cutters continue to experience the forcible nature of displacement over the last 30 years. At the core of the continuing displacements is the experience of a near-total loss of entitlements and struggle to rebuild these, sometimes over generations. To this extent, hunger continues to be entwined with the experience of displacement among the *adivasis* caught on the wrong side of the Ukai dam. The women's exchanges and conversations fall in the midst of such a struggle between an event and a continuing process, the memory of the spectacular destruction of entitlements and a silent destitution that continues to gnaw away at their lives, and their ability to reproduce and replenish themselves. While for the older women, the memory of spectacular disasters through famines and dams threatens to overshadow the current destitution, the younger generation find the distress palpable in their own lives in the present, and continues to reinforce the sense of their continuing marginalisation.

This chapter has attempted to focus on the meanings that food and the lack of food acquires among a marginalised group of persons; wherein implicit understandings about the emptiness of the stomach serve to create solidarities rather than any discourse on the causes for their marginalisation. Apart from the literalness of stomach hunger, the unfinished meal in the migrant labour camp stands in for hungers of many kinds--- illustrations of past famines and floods, of dislocations due to development projects, of present discriminations at celebrations, at longings for 'home', and of a basic claim to



the dignity of being human. Hunger talk and famine stories intertwine to produce a narrative of marginalisation, and a continuation of marginalising conditions from decisions regarding sustenance within the household. It also produces a continuing narrative of pauperisation and hunger from the past times of famine to present times of food insecurities. Food becomes one of the most illustrative metaphors of just such a condition. In my fieldwork, talking around hunger represents the marginalisation felt by women through the manner in which they describe their lives in the camp and the worries and concerns in accessing edible nutrition for them and their households. In articulating these concerns, they also criticise the discrimination and marginalisation faced from the non-tribals, who rely on trade with the labourers for their own livelihood.

### Concluding remarks

The violence of development, then, continues to be felt in multiple ways among the poorest, whether in the displaced villages or away from them. The Ukai project promised to bring prosperity to the region through 'growth', 'alleviation of poverty' and 'progress'. These are words that are as widely used as they are loaded. From the promise-filled times of the 1960s, large projects have been shown to create poverty and 'development' problems rather than alleviate them. In the instance of displacement through large development projects, the contradictions within the assumptions of progress and poverty alleviation ambitions of the development enterprise are rent wide open. As this thesis has shown, the initiation of development through the Ukai project

meant little to the displaced villages. Every aspect of a healthy and regenerative existence were denied to this group of displacees, and pauperisation has become a way of life for many among the displaced villages.

However, in studying the adverse effects of displacement, and especially development-induced displacement, the emphasis so far has been in terms of looking at the resulting fallout as events rather than processes. In this, I point specifically to the fact that there have been few in-depth studies on the displaced and resettled groups over a long period of time. Displacement, and the resulting conditions of poverty and deprivation are ongoing struggles for people caught up on the wrong side of the 'progress' machine. This is so much more since the poverty and pauperisation is much more than inadequate incomes or calorie intakes. It is the product of a multiplicity of factors. Land, literacy, infant mortality rates and life expectancy are some of the more commonly discussed markers. Processes such as usury, irrigation, sanitation, employment need to be addressed simultaneously.

Hunger lies at the core of the lives of all those 'adversely affected' by development. Hunger, not unsurprisingly, also lies at the core of memory and everyday lives of the various groups of displacees from the Ukai project. Hunger here is a far more complex phenomenon than indicative of a lack of adequate nutrition. In the displaced lives, it is both a representation and an actuality. For some the representation of hungry lives in the village thirty years after the event of the dam displacement is indicative of the various betrayals that relate to a total failure of responsibility on the part of the state to

the rebuilding of entitlements----the provision of productive land, building of new skills and provision of jobs. Among the sugarcane cutters, in whose lives hunger is both a memory and an actuality, and whose lives are inhabited still by endemic hunger created through the total loss of entitlements through after the dam displacement, this hunger continues. This is low level, less visible hunger---a process much more challenging to understand in its implicating and indicating of debilitating social, political and economic structures within and outside the villages. This chapter and thesis has attempted to document this process among the Ukai displacees, and emphasise the idea that it is not enough to understand the dam displacement as an event. The process of losing and rebuilding entitlements among the displacees recreates inequalities that are as much fallouts of the events of displacement as indicative of continuing displacements among the most vulnerable in displaced communities.

## CHAPTER 7

### Conclusion

The research in this thesis has taken as its central focus the displacement of the Vasavas of three *talukas* of Songadh, Ucchal and Nizhar due to the Ukai dam. Of these, the fieldwork focused on the memory and lives of the Vasavas from 3 of the fourteen villages in Songadh *taluka*. The focus on displacement in this thesis explores the way in which memories of displacement vary tremendously in terms of gender, generation and class.

Although the focus of the thesis is on the varying experiential and remembered worlds of different gendered, age and landed groups in the three villages, displacement due to the Ukai dam did create a tremendous dislocation for almost every household in the displaced villages. In this it altered drastically the existing social structures, economic relationships, landscapes of habitation and survival for the displacees. The first chapter has examined the policy and decision-making structures that exacerbated the marginalisation and suffering caused as a result of this process. In the official discourses the Ukai project was believed to be a beneficent force and a technological wonder. The focus on the construction and engineering miracles of the dam received legal and constitutional approval through the legislative discussions and sanctioning of huge financial resources to these projects without much scepticism. On the ground, the financial and technological resources were concentrated in the effort of the building of the dam, wherein resettlement was seen as part of the effort of dam construction. This meant that in the official literature the focus on resettlement was a minimal part of the project priorities, and the accent was on displacement rather than

resettlement. Such a lack of concern was reflected in the official publications on the Ukai dam as well as the legislative debates wherein not only was rare time devoted to discussing resettlement, but the more radical demands for compensation to be based on the right to social justice got quashed in favour of compensation claims based on social welfare schemes that were quite alien to the already existing ways of life of the displaced groups.

The erasure of the issue of displacement did not tend to be reflected among the recollections of the non-*adivasis* in the local areas working with the displaced groups at the time. These included local level bureaucrats and groups of concerned citizens including Gandhian workers. The recollections of these individuals and groups tended to remember displacement as a fractious and chaotic process. It is among the recollections of these individuals that the enormously difficult nature of dispossessing and at the same time rebuilding entitlement structures for displacees became evident. Rehabilitation emerged as a process requiring far more than welfarist approaches to the process that is long term by its very nature, and for which there may not be a certainty of a sustainable rebuilding at the end of the process.

The legislative debates and the interviews with the local level bureaucratic cadre as well as some of the NGO leaders and concerned *adivasi* citizens in the region indicated to the widespread belief and assent to the direction of development that was suggested by the Nehruvian ideology of the developmental state. To a large extent, projects such as those of Ukai were seen as beneficial to specific perceived crisis of food supply, power generation and the control of the furies of

the rivers. Alongside, they were also perceived to be intrinsic to the aspirations to modernise India based on a technological model of development. The assent of the decision-makers, bureaucrats and ordinary citizens to this vision of development created dilemmas at the local level but also resulted in few questions about the construction of the dam *per se*. All efforts were then concentrated on speedy and trouble-free displacement and resettlement.

The Ukai dam then is an aspect of the ideology of modernisation and development that was widely accepted and believed in at the time, and that emphasised the logic of accumulation. The displacees were, and continue to be, tied in to this project through both their participation in the construction of the dam and of the giving up of their villages and lands to enable the construction, as well as being part of the labour force that enabled the potential of the irrigation of the dam to be realised. However, the emphasis on the technological aspects of dam-building led to rendering the difficulties and suffering caused by the dam invisible.

Moreover, the research, contrary to expectations, found that rather than the most impoverished, it was the social and political elite in the villages who utilised the trope of displacement and impoverishment to forefront their claims to the injustices of displacement. In other words, for this group of displacees the memories of displacement have begun to stand in for many aspects of everyday life in the present in the villages. In delineating this argument, this chapter draws centrally on Halbwach's observation (1950) that collective memory is framed in particular ways depending on power relations and the politics within the

collective groups. In the displaced villages, the dominant story of the displacement due to the Ukai dam that is related to the visitors to the villages---non-*adivasis* that include government officials, political representatives as well as teachers, health workers or research students, has been characterised as the generalised narrative. This is a narrative that is clearly within the domain of the landed men in the village---very often these being the representatives of the villages to the non-villagers. It is not only the space within which this narrative is allowed to be told that determines it to be a story of the landed men of the villages; the concerns articulated within the narrative represent the needs and the urgencies based on the class and land. In focusing on the memories of displacement due to the Ukai dam and the subsequent resettlement, the narrative delimits the experience of displacement to one that involved a betrayal---in terms of the failure of state agencies to meet up to the compensation measures promised to the displacees. In this, the dominant generalised narrative excludes narratives that break the structure and intent of this generalised narrative from the specified format of laying claim to rehabilitation measures that are in consonance to what was lost by the landed households. Its focus on land also excludes other dimensions of the experience of displacement in terms of the longing for old villages, the alienation from the sacred geography of the older villages, the relief of having got away from debtors in the old villages, and a lessening of the burden of work on large farming lands as is felt by the women in the displaced villages. Crucially, the argument of the chapter is that the dominant generalised narrative of the landed men also concretises displacement for the resettled villages into one solitary critical event of the loss of land---an experience not necessarily shared

by the landless labourers and immigrants into the villages just a few years before the construction of the dam.

The research then concludes that the contestations between the dominant generalised narrative and the existence of memories among other groups such as women and the landless in the villages emphasise the centrality of displacement in village life. Through the emphasis on dam displacement as a single critical event in the life-history of a particular group in the displaced villages, the research seeks to emphasise the emergence of the landed leadership that is attempting to unify the fragmented villages under a single identity of the displacees. The foregrounding of this identity also is associated with a process of laying claim to resettlement and rehabilitation as an inadequate component of the Ukai dam-building exercise and the efforts of the leadership consisting of the second generation landed men in the displaced villages to assert a strong claim of redressal of past injustices.

However, as the third chapter explores, for the landless and the immigrants in the villages, displacement is not a condensed traumatic experience like the one illustrated by the dominant discourse in the villages, or one whose memories are akin to those of the landed households. In the life histories of the landless and of the immigrants, there are a number of moves in search of livelihood, and in many such narratives displacement due to the Ukai dam emerges as just one in a series of movements. More significantly, it is not only the normalisation of an experience of uprooting in their life-histories that constitutes the different remembering of Ukai. Just as among the landed households, the structures of



remembering at the individual and collective levels are affected by the structures of everyday lives in the present. Among the landless and especially the sugarcane cutters, the routines of their day-to-day lives of cutting cane as demanded by the rhythms and requirements of sugar production, leave little space for remembering and consolidating memories of past uprootings. Further, these seasonal migrations also alienate the seasonal migrants further from participation in the social, economic and political institutions of their 'home' villages. This ensures that their present structures of needs and demands are further marginalized in their home villages and their individual stories of needs borne out of inadequate and thoughtless compensation by the state during the Ukai dam displacement find no place within the overall remembered history of the resettled villages. In this, the third chapter focuses on the growing social, economic and political marginalisation of the sugarcane cutters in their home villages, the anxieties and the helplessness experienced by the cutters to address this process therein.

The fourth chapter analyses the entitlements to food among the most impoverished of the displacees through the arguments of Dreze and Sen. In trying to understand what the form of the loss of entitlements meant among the cutters, the most destitute group in the displaced villages, it was observed that the trope of marginalisation focused on hunger just as much as the one among the landed in the displaced villages had focused on the dam, displacement and inadequate compensation. However, while among the landed marginalisation is a remembered and articulated collective story, among the sugarcane cutters marginalisation inhabits specific metaphors, and spaces in the camps.

Marginalisation is not about the loss of specific sites of habitation and the livelihoods associated with them; it is about living away from familiar foods and expected codes of interaction. It is about being in alien spaces that deny even the familiar routines to the individual and his /her body through food and work routines. In denying a semblance of control over their lives through the system of debt-bondage with labour-brokers who are members of their own displaced villages, the felt experience of marginalisation is further acutely felt even within places that in migration literature would be termed 'home villages'. Food becomes one of the most powerful metaphors of their powerlessness and central to this experience of marginalisation. Many of the interviews and discussions among the migrant workers in the camp reveal a preoccupation with food, eating and access or lack of access to food. Hunger, as stated before in the narratives of the sugarcane cutters is more than a trope---it inhabits their daily worlds. Endemic hunger is not only a question of access to entitlements or the lack of it. It also frames their decisions on livelihoods, their social relationships and their descriptions of their worlds and everyday lives, and not always explicitly. It is in the presence of hunger in their lives and in their descriptions of their lives that endemic hunger acts as a subversive trope. Hunger, in this form, creates a narrative which implicates the state at one level, but also implicates those groups in the villages who are part of the structures that create conditions of chronic hunger through many months of the year. In this narrative, hunger is a condition that was inflicted in the past and continues into the present.

Focusing on the felt experience of marginalisation in this manner threw open the domain of a 'displaced community' that creeps into the studies discussed in the

thesis, by virtue of the constitution of their ethnographic subjects or the agenda and direction of studies on displacement that look towards addressing the problems of rehabilitation in displaced groups. Marginalisation is remembered, experienced and lived differently among the different class groups in the *chaudkheda* villages. Apart from differences in the memory and lived experience of displacement among migrants and non-migrants, gender differences also impinge on the understandings of displacement in the *chaudkheda* villages. While there is no general disagreement with the collective generalised account of the Ukai dam displacement, it is mediated by the experiences of women as bearing a burden of work within and outside the home. Displacement here has a different sense, within the experience of women belonging to landed or non-landed households in the villages. Especially among the women from landed households, resettlement created less of a burden of work for them within their households leading to a sense of relief. However, for those landed and non-landed households where the opportunities of employment for the male members are restricted, the anger of women around the Ukai dam is palpable. The reasons for the anger diverged from the generalised narrative in that it is not so much a demand for recompense as it is for a destruction of a process that divorced them from known sources of security and entitlements such as fodder and firewood areas, familiar sources of food and water, and kin and community networks. Simultaneously, while for the women from landed households resettlement on smaller plots of land had reduced their work burden, for the women from households with marginal or no plots of land, displacement has given rise to an additional burden of searching for employment under casual contracts alongside the burden of feeding their families. This does not mean that the experience of

displacement among landed women is not anxiety-ridden. But the locus of those anxieties is not accompanied to a large extent by the experience of chaos and uncertainty regarding livelihoods that landless women experience.

The thesis attempts to understand these different strands and metaphors of marginalisation in the villages and in the lives of the sugarcane cutters. While the thesis has explored the awareness and anger regarding their marginalisation both in the villages and in the camps through the trope of displacement and hunger, and the centrality of land and food; impoverishment weaves into the lives of the displacees in multiple ways. In other words, this thesis has explored the ways in which displacement is experienced differently, remembered differently and has had a differential impact on the life and livelihood of different groups of displacees. This study is unique in tracing these differentials in the lives of the inhabitants of the three villages studied. It shows that 'displacement' by the dam continues to occupy a large space in the memories of the male landed. In the memories of the cutters, 'displacement' stands in for the multiple displacements that they have faced in their lives. This thesis thus concludes that 'displacement' is not experienced in a unilinear way, and while gender and generation are critical components to this remembering, the hierarchies of fine inequalities among the displacees themselves means that the cutters find themselves gradually being pushed further into economic, social and political limbo and doomed to a state of long-term and continuous wage hunting and gathering.

This thesis leaves open a number of questions and issues that need further research. One of the major questions is that of the research on gendered

memories and development-induced displacement. Although some research on this already exists, it has tended to confine itself to structural questions of gendered relations, their access to resources in the post-displacement period and to the breakdown of kin structures and their impact on women. In such a context further research is needed on the changing relations experienced by displacees with income generation activities and work, in a more abstract sense. In this sense, an experiential study of these within the framework of power relations between the developmental state and *adivasi* society would allow for a more intricate understanding of the traumas of dislocation, that does not only limit itself to the loss of livelihood strategies and cost-benefit analyses of displacement processes. Furthermore, it would also allow for a more gendered understanding of displaced groups within which contradictions and varying emotions regarding displacement are present, and do not fit into neat formulations of a displaced 'community'.

Furthermore, the emphasis on life-histories and memory work needs to be explored further in displacement studies to be able to fully understand the tenor of power relations within events of displacement and in the post-displacement period both within the displaced groups and in its interaction with the state and the non-displaced groups. Such an emphasis help understand the subjective dimensions of the loss of home, livelihood and social environments by the displacees. It would also open out the dimensions and boundaries of a 'displaced community' in the post-displacement period. In this it allows for an intricate understanding of the displacees' perceptions and constructions of a 'community' in the post-displacement periods. Such an imagining of a 'community' becomes

particularly relevant to examine in the context of the state and various agencies' attempts to reconstruct structures of entitlements and livelihoods for displacees in the aftermath of involuntary displacement. As is shown in the instance of Ukai, displaced communities tend to reconstruct their own histories, within which definite groups are enabled or disabled to particular structures of compensatory measures and entitlements that could lead to the immiseration of certain groups compared to others.

Finally, these observations are not meant to negate or dismiss the very real dislocation of social worlds faced by displaced persons and households. Any analyses of the memories and life-experiences of displacement must be placed within a larger context of impoverishment, loss and inadequacy of compensation measures. Therefore, such 'thick descriptions' of displaced groups that address the micro-politics of displaced groups would only allow for a better understanding of the intervention of policy initiatives in post-displacement scenarios, and address the layers of impoverishment and hunger that tend to persist in resettled villages for generations.

I conclude this thesis with an observation about the contemporary context within which studies on the rebuilding of the lives in displaced *adivasi* villages may need to be placed. So far in political and popular non-*adivasi* discourse, the issues of displacements and the memory of social disarticulations in the villages under study have been constructed within the context of a particular kind of statist narrative through the 30 years that the period of this study spans. Succinctly, this is a discourse that situates the dam as *necessary* for the

‘development and uplift’ of the ‘poor and backward’ *adivasi* population in south Gujarat by creating jobs, irrigation and electricity for the region. Which groups benefit from these facilities is not a moot question within this discourse. It is a narrative that is characteristic of the dominant political culture in Gujarat and in recent years is beginning to be characterised by two processes: a drive towards capitalist accumulation through a development paradigm of ‘modernisation’ and the prevalence of a religious sensibility that defines citizenship in terms of a dominant Hindu identity. The two processes characterise a ‘culture of political authoritarianism’ (Mukta, 2003), a homogenising trope that at the level of a development paradigm encourages the growth and availability of abundant and cheap labour, is intolerant of dissenting voices to its model of development and has followed an economic policy that encourages investment of large industrial complexes and agriculture based on industrial models. In the socio-political arena it is a culture marked by attempts at erasure of differences, especially focusing since 1990s on the religious and political ‘Others’ in its concept of a *Hindu rashtra*---tribals, Muslims and Christians living in Gujarat. In recent times, within these political and development agendas, the *adivasi* areas become a site where these imperatives of the state’s aspirations collide----most development projects such as dams and industrial complexes have been planned in regions of south Gujarat, which have some of the largest *adivasi* populations in the state. The period post-1995 has also has also witnessed tensions and attacks on religious groups such as the Christians by *adivasi* groups in south Gujarat. The story of development-induced displacement, then continues acquiring various faces and rationalities and ensuring that, for some, further displacements cannot be discounted in the name of progress and prosperity.

Glossary

(Unless specified most words are vasava words)

**Abdha:** vernacular term in gujarati, marathi, vasavi that refers to obstacle/ troubles/ nuisance

**Adivasis:** scheduled tribes in the Indian constitution

**Adivasi khorak:** lit. translation---tribal food

**Agewan:** village elder

**Bhadku:** gruel cooked by boiling sorghum flour and adding salt for taste

**Bhagats/ karigars:** medicine men. *Karigar* is a less skilful tribal medical expert who specialises in specific cures

**Bajro:** millet

**Bidi:** a form of cigarette, with tobacco wrapped in betel leaf

**Binkhatidars:** landless labourers

**Bigha:** a unit of measure of land

**Bhaat/ dangar:** rice

**Brinjals:** eggplant

**Champo:** unit of measure of grain equalling 7 kgs. of grain

**Chatkas:** stanzas in songs

**Chaudkheda:** local Gujarati term referring to the 14 displaced villages

**Chavanas:** a spicy Gujarati snack

**Chimdi/ bandi:** the top of sugarcane stalks that serve as fodder for milch cattle

**Chulhas:** cooking hearths

**Chutak major:** casual labourers

**Dada:** vasavi and gujarati term for an elderly person

**Dadar:** a local strain of sorghum grain

**Daku:** dacoit

**Daru:** toddy (vasavi term)

**Deval:** church

**Dholak:** a vasava percussion instrument

**Dhorkiyas:** term of reference for local boys hired to graze cattle in the village

**Diwali/ navratri:** major Gujarati festivals



- Doha:** vasavi term for an old man
- Faliyu/ fali/ faliya:** gujarati/vasavi/gamit terms for a hamlet
- Garib lok:** poor people
- Guntha:** a measure of land
- Halpatis:** a tribal group living in the region of Bardoli in south Gujarat
- Holi:** a major festival for the Vasavas, usually in March-April
- Jamai/ khandhadio:** form of marital relationship wherein the bridegroom lives with his wife's household and works either for the family or in the same village
- Jhoopdu:** a flimsy hut constructed with wood pieces, straw and/ or plastic sheets
- Jowar:** sorghum
- Jungle mandalis:** forest co-operatives
- Kathiawari:** term of reference for immigrants from Saurashtra region, located to the western part of Gujarat
- Katthan:** strong (vasavi/ gujarati word)
- Khata:** revenue record
- Khatidars:** landholders
- Koyta:** a pair of sugarcane cutters who make up a team, one of whom cuts the cane and the other bundles up the cut cane
- Kriya:** death ceremony among the vasavas, usually held a year after the event of death
- Latha:** toddy (gujarati word)
- Mahudi:** buffalo
- Mando:** thick flat leavened bread made from jowar flour
- Majoori:** labour
- Majoors:** labourers
- Mamlatdar:** taluka level revenue official
- Mukaddam:** labour broker for the sugarcane cutters and the sugarcane factories
- Panchayat:** village council of elders
- Papads:** a spicy snack
- Patel/ pateliyo:** village elder who leads the *panchayat*
- Pattas:** revenue records of land
- Pindak:** vasavi term for a drunk, good-for-nothing
- Poojari:** priest
- Ran:** field

- Roti:** fine flat leavened bread made from wheat flour
- Sahebudiya/ sahib:** officer
- Sahukars:** money lenders
- Sarkar:** a generic term of reference for government; but *sarkar* is also personalised to refer to representatives of the government, for eg., police officers, bureaucrats, politicians
- Sarpanch:** elected head of a village or group of villages---a government office
- Sipadas:** policemen/ soldiers
- Taluka:** an official category of regional administration---a group of villages constitute a *taluka*
- Tambaku:** tobacco
- Tekri:** hillock
- Thapu:** a flat terracotta dish used for roasting *mandos* and *rotis*
- Tukdi:** a group of migrant labourers under the charge of one mukaddam or labour-broker
- Tur:** a vasava wind instrument played at death ceremonies and funerals
- Tuver:** a cereal cooked and eaten with *mandos*, *rotis* and rice
- Ujaliyat:** *adivasi* term of reference for non-*adivasis*, especially Gujaratis
- Ujadiyaat:** the word means 'uprooted' in vasavi. In Gujarati, the root term is 'ujad' meaning barren. 'Ujadiyat' is a term of reference for those displaced by the Ukai dam. It is used by non-displaced *adivasis*, Gujaratis and the displaced villagers alike, in referring to themselves. It is not just used for those living in the resettled villages, but also individuals and households that might have resettled in non-displaced villages in the region
- Vadil:** a village elder
- Yahaki:** mother

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Amniben Jalamsinghbhai, December, 2001

Barkiyabhai Kikabhai, March, 2001

Bhilkiyabhai Remabhai, December, 2001 (also interviewed in Seltipada)

Bhimabhai Samabhai, December, 2001 (also interviewed in Seltipada)

Dasrathbhai Upadiyabhai, March, 2002

Divliben Gimhabhai, December, 2001 (also interviewed in Amalpada)

Gimhabhai Rupabhai, December, 2001

Ganpatbhai Jalamsinghbhai (Guna), December 2001

Jalamsinghbhai Honiyabhai, May, 2002

Jatariyabhai Ubadiyabhai, March, 2002 (also interviewed in Amalpada)

Jermabhai Atariyabhai, December, 2001

Kamnibai, December, 2001

Kamnibai's husband, December, 2001

Kamuben Barkiyabhai, March, 2001

Kiliyabhai Jhalubhai, March 2002

Masuben Rajubhai, March, 2002 (also interviewed in Vajhpur)

Murabai Gimhabhai, December, 2001 (also interviewed in Vajhpur)

Nandadiyabhai, December, 2001

Nareshbhai Jalamsinghbhai (Naru), December, 2001 (also interviewed in Vajhpur)

Punglibai, December 2001 (also interviewed in Seltipada)

Rajubhai Bhidabhai, January, 2002

Ramabhai Ubadiyabhai, December, 2001 (also interviewed in Amalpada)

Sameerbhai Swaroopsinghbhai, December, 2001 (also interviewed in Seltipada)

Shantuben Jatariyabhai, January, 2002

Shivabhai Puniyabhai, December, 2001 (also interviewed in Seltipada)

Shobhitaben Shivabhai, December, 2001 (also interviewed in Seltipada)

Sugariben Nandariyabhai, February, 2002 (also interviewed in Seltipada)

Sureshbhai Vechiyabhai (Surkiya), February, 2002 (also interviewed in Vajhpur)

Vantiben Dasrathbhai, January, 2002 (also interviewed in Amalpada)

Vasantiben Vacchyabhai, February, 2002 (also interviewed in Seltipada)

Vechiyabhai Bandaliyabhai, December, 2001

Amalpada

Alubhai Ubadiyabhai, October, 2001 (*Sarpanch*)

Amnaben Motirambhai, April, 2002

Atmarambhai Diwaliyabhai, May, 2002

Barkiyabhai Nooriyabhai, May, 2002

Bapjibhai Ganiyabhai, October, 2001

Bibiben Ganjibhai, May 17, 2002

Bharatbhai Jethiyabhai, October 2001

Bhilkiyabhai Mahudiabhai, May 2002

Damubhai Dasrathbhai More, May, 2002

Ebulaben Bhamtiyabhai, May, 2002

Emubhai Sidiyabhai, October 2001

Fatubhai Vethaliyabhai, April, 2002

Ganapatbhai Vasava, October, 2001

Honiben Roopobhai, May, 2002

Ishwarbhai Bapjibhai, April, 2002

Jantubhai Rajjiyabhai, April, 2002

Jermiyabhai Kotabhai, October, 2001

Karsanbhai Santubhai, November, 2001

Maganbhai Padriyabhai Kathod, November, 2001

Muraben Valjibhai, November, 2001

Nandadiyabhai Vasava, April, 2002

Nooriben Kantilalbhai, October, 2001

Parvatiben Ishwarbhai, April, 2002

Paylabhai Kachariyabhai, May, 2002

Radiyabhai Vadiyabhai, April, 2002

Ramabhai Ubadiyabhai, May, 2002

Rameshbhai Kiliyabhai, October, 2001

Rasubhai Nandadiyabhai, May, 2002

Rulaben Vijaybhai, May, 2002

Shaileshbhai Damjibhai, February, 2002

Singabhai Pohnabhai, November, 2001

Ukadiabhai Buddhubhai, May, 2002

Umeshbhai Raghubhai, May, 2002

### Vajhpur

Bhangadiben Bandaliyabhai, May, 2002

Bhimabhai Samabhai, May, 2002

Bhamtiyabhai Bhardiyabhai (*Patel*), September, 2001

Devrambhai Devobhai, September, 2001

Devsinghbhai Dadubhai, September, 2001

Emuben Devsinghbhai, May, 2002

Fatubhai Jhunjhabhai, September, 2001

Gimbhabhai Rupabhai, September, 2001

Kilaben Kathodiabhai, September, 2001

Madhukarbhai Gimbhabhai, May 2002

Naniben Harisinghbhai, September, 2001

Oliyabhai Karmabhai, September, 2001

Rajubhai Divanjibhai, September, 2001

Ranjitbhai Udariyabhai, September 2001

Rupiben Damjibhai, May, 2002

Samabhai Magiyabhai, May, 2002

Shanjibhai Jatariyabhai, September, 2001

Sunilbhai Ruliyabhai, September, 2001

Sureshbhai Oliyabhai, September, 2001

### Seltipada

Babubhai Mirajibhai, September, 2001

Bhilkiyabhai Bhesabhai, April 2002

Chhaganbhai Napariyabhai (*Patel*), September, 2001

Fulaben Fatubhai, May, 2002

Haruben Kalyabhai, October, 2001

Jahgumaharaj, Seltipada, May 2002

Jalamsinghbhai Kalyabhai, April, 2002  
 Jayniben Dhanabhai, April, 2000  
 Jemaben Gehmubhai, August, 2001  
 Kikiben Mirajibhai, September, 2001  
 Kiliyabhai Jalubhai, May, 2001  
 Oliyabhai Chhagubhai, October, 2001  
 Prakashbhai Remabhai, May, 2002  
 Rameshbhai Radtiyabhai, October, 2001  
 Sameerbhai Swaroopsinghbhai, May, 2002  
 Sariben Jalamsingh, October 2001  
 Sindhubhai Gehmubhai, August, 2001  
 Sugiben Bhilkiyabhai, June, 2002  
 Sunilkumar Maganbhai, October, 2001  
 Ukajibhai Sajnabhai, May, 2000

#### Other interviews

All individuals who have requested confidentiality have been listed as anonymous.

Anonymous, Fort Songadh, January 2002  
 Anonymous, Ahmedabad, August 2001  
 Anonymous, Baroda, August 2001  
 Anonymous, Fort Songadh, January 2002  
 Anonymous, Ukai Nav Nirman Samiti, January 2002  
 Anonymous, Malaria Worker, Jamkhedi PHC, January 2002  
 Bhatt, V R, Deputy Executive Engineer, Ukai Dam Division 1, May 29, 2002  
 Chaudhari, Sanmukhbhai, District Collector, Surat district, August 2001  
 Chaudhary N K, Under Collector (Irrigation), Ukai, May 2002  
 Desai, Manjulaben, Ukai Navnirman Samiti, January 2002  
 Gamit, Navalbhai, ex-deputy *Sarpanch*, *Chaudkheda* villages, Limbi, August 2001 and November 2001  
 Joshi, R M, ex-Director of Food Supply, Govt. of Gujarat, September 2001  
 Joshi, A K, Deputy *Mamlatdar* (Planning), Department of Tribal Development, September, 2001

Joshi, Satyakam, Centre for Social Studies, December 2001

Dr. Mehta, Praful, CHC, Palsana, January 2002

Patel, N N, Deputy Executive, Ukai Rehabilitation and Resettlement, Ukai,  
January 2002

Mr. Patel, Deputy Collector (Additional Charge), Land Acquisition and  
Rehabilitation Office, Fort Songadh, January 2002

Segabhai, Radtiyabhai, Limbi, November 2001

Dr. Shroff, Jayesh, Physician, Sanjeevani Hospital, Chalthan, January 2002

Soyantar, T D, Ahmedabad, August 2001

Fr. Stany, Free Legal Aid Centre, Surat, January 2002

*Talati*, Ukai Rehabilitation site no. 3, Fort Songadh, January 2002

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Soyantar, T D, Ahmedabad, August 2001

Fr. Stany, Free Legal Aid Centre, Surat, January 2002

*Talati*, Ukai Rehabilitation site no. 3, Fort Songadh, January 2002

Appendix 1Resettlement measures

The resettlement measures broadly included those relating to:

1. land: with the Gandhian intervention, the initial policy of cash compensation was revised and compensation for land was now based on the principle of 'land for land' compensation. However, due to the scarcity of enough cultivable land, land compensation was graded into the size of landholdings in the earlier villages. The maximum amount of land compensation was 4 acres, and the rest of the compensation as in cash at the rate of Rs. 72 per acre. The other categories of land compensation were:

<u>size of landholding</u>	<u>size of compensated plot</u>
less than 3 acres	same size as the land lost
3-9 acres	3 acres
9-12 acres	upto 1/3 <sup>rd</sup> the size of the original plot
more than 12 acres	4 acres

(Source: Deputy Collector's Office, Fort Songadh: 1969: 8-9)

For those who did not want to avail of this compensation, cash compensation was available on the condition that they would not claim residential plots in the resettlement colonies, but would move away from the area. The rates of compensation were:

1. landless (per household)	Rs. 450.00
2. those cultivators not entitled to any land in resettlement sites	Rs. 550.00

3. those cultivators entitled to land Rs. 670.00

in the resettlement sites

(Source: Deputy Collector's Office, Fort Songadh: 1969: 12-13)

There is another aspect of resettlement that has proved more contentious. The lands that were acquired by the government but did not submerge were rented out in the initial years on an annual basis. These were termed as '*eksali* lands'. They were to be rented out on doubled revenue. Those '*eksali*' lands that remained free of submergence for a number of years (the GR remains vague on the specific number of years) were to be rented out on a triennial basis. The land revenue to be charged in this case was 12 times the normal rate. Not only would this be unviable for many of the erstwhile owners, who have continued cultivating this land over the years on an annual basis, the debate arises over the government's attempt to redistribute this land among those whose compensation has been left incomplete due to the unavailability of land over the years since displacement. This has created disputes and rivalries within and between the villages as the original owners resist handing over their lands to other groups.

2. Village level facilities: at the village level, a well was planned for every 100 households and cattle troughs were allocated to each village. Cremation grounds were also to be allocated on a village basis. The resettlement conditions also included the construction of school buildings, village squares and any public utility buildings that would be lost in the submergence (Deputy Collector's Office, Fort Songadh, 1969: 10). Apart from this metalled roads were to be constructed connecting the different villages in the

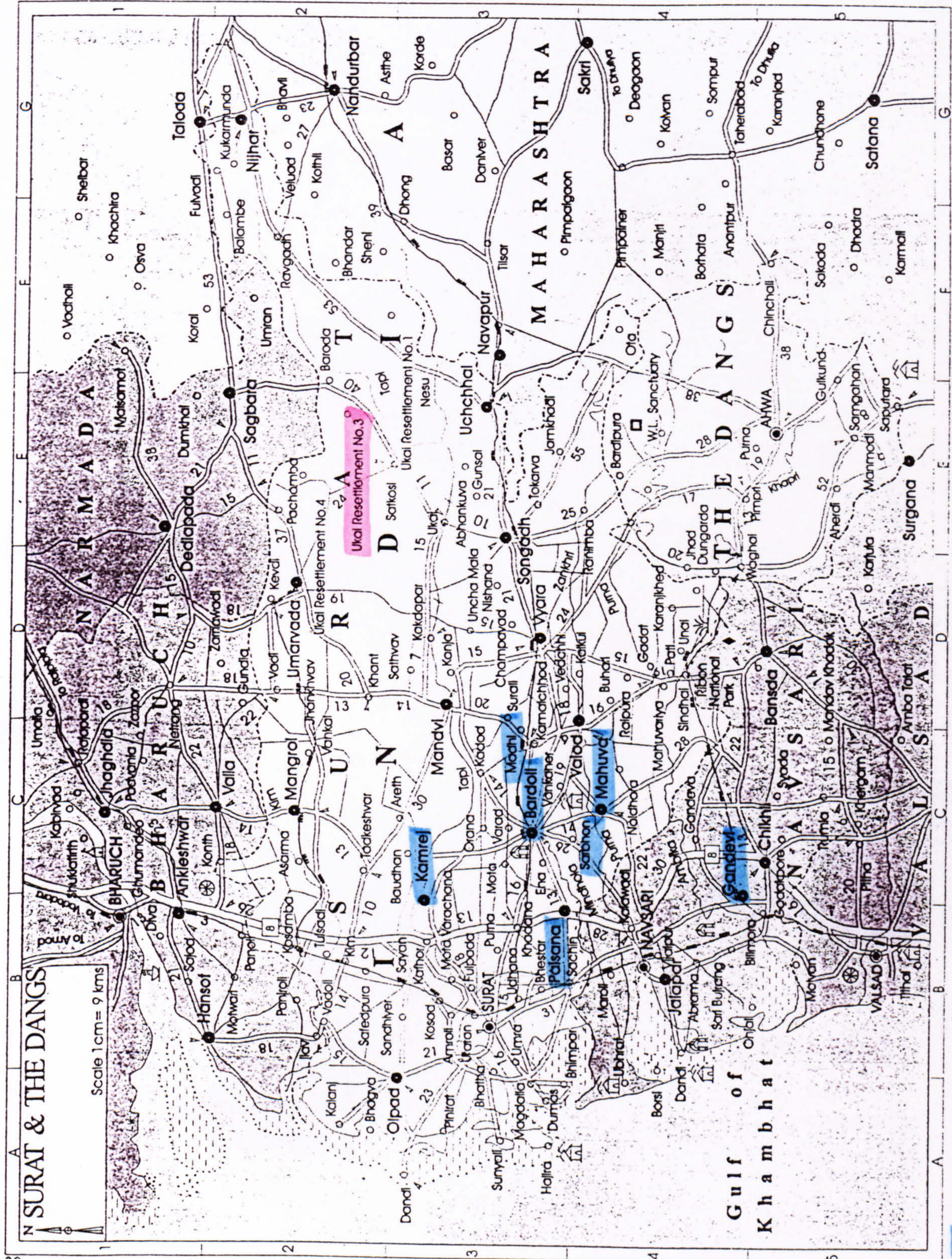
resettlement sites. Of all of these conditions, the villagers are satisfied only with the provision of school buildings, village squares and the public utility buildings. The other facilities were non-existent (roads) or had been out of use (wells) soon after their construction.

3. Alternatives to cultivation: Through the intervention of the Ukai Advisory Board, training courses were set in the Ukai township in carpentry, masonry, tailoring and blacksmithy. A scholarship of Rs. 30 per month and free accommodation was also offered at Ukai as part of creating employment opportunities for the oustees. However, there were no facilities for accommodation made available for oustees, and the Rs. 30 scholarship did not suffice for their sustenance (Deputy Collector's Office, Fort Songadh, 1969: 11). The programme as a result has been utilised by villagers from the areas neighbouring the Ukai township, rather than by those from the displaced villages. The resettlement office also provides 'oustees certificates' to those seeking admission in higher education and for employment. Though this certificate is meant to be a form of positive discrimination in employment in industries in the area, no person from the displaced villages has ever been employed in these industries since the construction of the dam (Mankodi, 1992).

**Appendix 2****Maps**

1. Plan of the submergence area of Ukai dam
2. Map of Surat district and work sites of the sugarcane cutters
3. Location of Surat district in Gujarat state





WORK SITES OF SUGARCANE CUTTERS IN 2001-2002 HOME VILLAGES

REF: GOG. 2003. GUJARAT ROUND ATLAS. AHMEDABAD: ANANDA SAHITYA PRAKASHAN

