



Narmada
Sangharsh
Parikrama

UPDATE

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Narmada Parikrama:

Singing songs, shouting slogans and deep in discussions, hundreds of people made their way around the Mother Narmada, circumambulating through the villages in Madhya Pradesh that will come under submergence of the Sardar Sarovar Dam. From April 4 to 10, the people in the valley reiterated their resolve to oppose the dam and displacement in the Narmada Sangharsha Parikrama.

The Parikrama started the village Balgaon and passed through over 45 villages and towns in five tehsils in the plains of Nimad. The Man-Dam affected people too joined, after their protracted struggle. Parikrama concluded with a large rally at Indore on April 10.

The Parikrama was undertaken to proclaim the resolve by the people to continue fighting for their right to life enshrined in the Constitution. The people highlighted the issues of the displacement and destruction in the other completed and proposed dams in Narmada valley, like Bargi, Tawa, Maheshwar, Man and called unto the people of the nation to join the intense struggle in the valley. The people challenged the attempts by the government to displace them by deceit and force while exposing the serious flaw and absurdity in the recent verdict of the Supreme Court, which had allowed the construction on the dam beyond 88 meters.

Parikrama was also to voice against the onslaught of Globalization on all sectors, esp. the agriculture. With the removal of quantitative restrictions from hundreds of agriculture-related items, the harvest of the Indian farmers will never get just price in the market and will reel under poverty. Saving the Valley from destruction is also for saving it from the global hawks.

From Balgaon on April 4th.....

Parikrama started with a festive flavour from Balgaon. Irrespective of caste and religion, men, women and children formed a huge rally with *Kalash* (a pot with Narmada waters), families putting a coin in it, symbolising their rejection of the illegal cash compensation and their resolve not to leave their houses and land for the ill conceived project. After the tiresome days – with the summer-sun blazing - the night halts were in the affected villages, where people dined, danced and discussed with the *Parikramavasis* till late night. At the Man affected Khedi-Balwadi village the solidarity dance went on till 3.30 next morning.

In each village people thronged to welcome the Parikrama with offerings of food and display of the agricultural richness of these villages. Young volunteers performed a play and put forward the issues of rural people in the context of corruption and globalization. A float with the harvest of Nimad, which will drown in the Dam, was an added attraction. The people were

Man Affected Siege the Dam, Arrests....

In the early hours of March 21, 2001 about a thousand adivasis affected by the Man Project in the Narmada valley stormed and occupied the dam site preventing any further construction of the dam. The affected families declared that until the State government completely rehabilitates all the affected families by allotting them cultivable agricultural land as per the policy, work on the dam would not be permitted. Representatives from the Sardar Sarovar and Maheshwar projects on the Narmada were also present in the *dharna*. Later on in the evening about 300 were arrested and brought to the Dhar Jail.

The Man Project is one of the 30 large dams being built in the Narmada valley and is situated in the Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh. This Project will submerge over 1000 adivasi families in 17 villages affected by the Project.

The Man Project received the conditional environmental clearance from the Central Environment Ministry in 1984. The condition of the clearance was that the affected adivasis must be resettled with agricultural land. The state government completely violated the conditions of the environmental clearance and the provisions of its own policy of 1987, of land for land to the oustees and compromised the rights of the people with paltry amounts of cash compensation. In 1994, the Appraisal Committee of the Central Environment Ministry blacklisted the Man Project for complete violation of the conditions of the environmental clearance.

In 1997, when the affected adivasis were given eviction notices, they organized themselves under the aegis of the Narmada Bachao Andolan and raised their voices. In April May 1999, the state government constituted a committee for the rehabilitation of the affected people. This committee, comprised of the affected people, elected representatives, government officials and two members of the NBA. The government order clearly stated that no construction work on the dam would be allowed to be carried out that would endanger any affected person whose rehabilitation had not been completed. But despite this clear order, from October, 2000 onwards the work on the spillway of the dam was started, threatening imminent submergence of hundreds of tribal families without resettlement. After many protest actions, the people laid siege on the dam.

The people were detained for 7 days without any legal basis. They were released unconditionally on 28th. But it detained main activists under various false cases. Ms. Chittarooma Palit and Urmila Patidar & 11 others were harassed especially, keeping them in jail for 15 days, unwarrantedly. The struggle is still going on and would reach to peak in the monsoon.

concerned not just about the dam but of the falling agricultural prices, the removal of Quantitative Restrictions, rising electricity costs and alternative development through local struggles against globalization and liberalization.

Representatives from the affected villages of Gujarat and Maharashtra, from the resettlement sites, colony joined the tribals and farmers of Madhya Pradesh. Supporters from different parts of the country and world strengthened the resolve of the people. Prominent among them were Prof. R.V.G. Menon, Sreedharan and Kunjikannan from Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad, Kerala, Suniti S.R., Lata P.M., from NAPM, Venu Madhav, Andhra Pradesh, and volunteers from Mumbai, Pune, Ahmednagar and other places.

Kisan Sammelen on April 6th.....

Hundreds of farmers from the Nimad and nearby areas condemned the removal of quantitative restriction (QR) on the agriculture imports and other imports which would harm the interests of small producers and traders in India, in an impressive Farmers' Convention on 6th April, in Badwani.

The speakers said that the removal of QRs on import on all goods since April 1st has pushed the economy of the country to a crisis. The worst affected due to this is the agriculture sector and

culture and life of Narmada Valley, we are on Parikrama and this is a part of our fight for a sustainable development".

Dr. Sunilam emphasised the need of combined struggle against the hegemony of WTO-IMF-World Bank. Sunilbhai, Kesla, explained the deliberate attempts of the policy makers to drive the farmer community to debt and destitution. Shamimbehen from Shahapur was also present during the Sammelen. Several Farmers Associations in Nimad and nearby places have actively participated in the Kissan Sammelen.

Every village participated in the Parikrama was with a *kalash*, (an earthen or brass pot with holy Narmada water) in which each family in the village immersed a coin in it as a symbolic renouncement of cash amidst slogans "we will not accept cash compensation, we will not sell our lands, our culture". Contrary to the Narmada Water Dispute Tribunal Award (NWDTA) Madhya Pradesh government is offering cash compensation instead of land for land. MP government did swear in Court that there was no land available, but yet the Supreme Court went ahead with the dam, thus

Narmada Villagers Stop Fake Survey : M.P. Police Fire in Air, Beat and Injure Many

Continuing with the repressive tactics, the Madhya Pradesh police intimidated and beaten the protesting villagers in Chikhaldha, affected by the controversial Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) and fired twice in the air on April 14th. Undeterred, hundreds of men and women from Chikhaldha and adjoining villages have blocked the Khandawa-Baroda Road for an hour. They have been demanding that the state government must answer their questions and follow the provisions of Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal (NWDT) regarding the displacement and resettlement. The officials and police went away after the partial survey.

The tension started when the officials of Narmada Valley Development Authority (NVDA) tried to conduct the survey of the households in Chikhaldha (Teh. Kukshi, Dist. Dhar). The village will be affected by the backwaters of the 90 meters of the height of the dam, though it may be submerged at 95 meters. However, the government could not resettle anyone of the 4000 people from the villages. The Supreme Court, in its order in October, 2000, has also wanted the NWDT to be followed. The Tribunal clearly laid down that only after the people below the required height have been resettled satisfactorily for six months, that area could be submerged. However, the government has taken up the height of the dam up to 90 meters, when even those affected by 80 meters have yet to be resettled.

The villagers asked the NVDA survey team, whether the government has land for land to be given to the oustees according to the NWDT, where was the master plan of rehabilitation? The officials conceded that there was no master plan of rehabilitation ready and the government has no land to be given for the project affected people. Despite this confession, the survey team tried to continue the work next day only in a few people's house. The people asked that the government officials should give it in writing that the survey was incomplete as it had excluded majority of houses. However, the officials were not ready to accept this legal and reasonable demand and instead they got the police to beat the people with lathis (batons) and even the women were not spared. They were incensed when the police behaved improperly with the women protestors. Police official Mr. Pawar threatened one villager by putting pistol at his ear. Munna Mansoori and four others got injuries while one of the main activists, Ashish Mandloi was mercilessly beaten. In protest over 300 people from Chikhaldha came out on the adjacent Baroda-Khandwa highway and blocked it for an hour.

the farmer community, since majority of our population is dependent on agriculture for their survival. Withdrawal of subsidies, import of agricultural products and thus devaluing the products in the country and the farmer not getting even the production cost are some of the results of this destructive agricultural policy. The Kissan Sammelen declared that "We are self reliant to meet our needs, the compromise is done not by the people, but by the Government, and we will not accept it".

Medha Patkar appealed to all organisations and right thinking people to come together to fight the monster of globalisation and to intensify the struggle. The octogenarian Baba Amte, at his age of 87, inspired the gathering with his illuminating speech. Administering a pledge, he said, "To protect the centuries' old

encouraging the government to violate the legal provisions and the rights of the people.

Noorji Bhai, Bali Behn with several Adivasis from Maharashtra and Gujarat joined in support of the Parikrama. The M.P. farmers acknowledged that the adivasis struggle and the Satyagraha launched in the tribal areas every year had saved the fertile lands in Nimad. The people strongly condemned the brutal massacre of tribals, including young children, in Dewas District carried out by M.P. police.

Sunil bhai who is leading the struggle against the Satawa dam said that the government was no longer independent to address the plight of the

farmers due to the WTO and signing away of its rights. To fight globalization Shri R.V.G. Menon of the KSSP said that "our consumption is our weapon" that the foreign companies can understand. He held a soap made of coconut oil by village women and said this sells for Rs 6 with no advertisements from Miss World but simply as "soap made by your neighbor." About 85% of the soaps on sale come from one foreign company, he noted, while expressing the need for alternatives and changing our consumption patterns. A presentation of the 3 meters errors in surveys in the SSP submergence zone reminded people that the war was on and that no matter what engineering qualifications or financial power the dam-builders possessed it was obvious that the project was full of errors that the nation should be ashamed of and it was the government that was unscientific and fanatically going ahead with a flawed destructive project.

During one of the addresses, Medha Patkar pointed out that people who go on the Narmada Parikrama are not afraid and come what may, they go with strength and devotion. Given the current context of globalization and corruption that went much beyond the Tehelka expose, she talked about the need for a movement that was needed to save the entire country, not just Narmada.

On the last day the Parikrama was given a rousing welcome in Dhamnod town, with the meeting going well beyond midnight and early next morning at Mhow where thousands gathered to hear to Swami Agnivesh, Mohini Giri and Medha Patkar amongst others.

Indore Rally – Court Under Attack Again.....

About two thousand people from Narmada valley along with the prominent social activists severely criticized the Supreme Court verdict as 'anti-people' decision and have asked the Court to make them too the party to the contempt proceedings against Adv. Prashant Bhushan, Arundhati Roy and Medha Patkar. This was declared at a large rally held at Indore on April 10, at the conclusion of the 'Parikrama'.

They have asked as to why only Medha Patkar, Arundhati Roy and Adv. Prashant Bhushan were singled out for the contempt notices, as thousands of the people from the valley and their supporters from all over India have publicly criticized and rejected the verdict of the Court and the anti-people, unconstitutional attitude of the court in the Narmada case. They said that they

were ready to prove that their criticism of the Court has sound Constitutional basis.

The Signatories include social activist Swami Agnivesh, Socialist ideologue Surendra Mohan, trade unionist Tulsi Boda from Gujarat, former chairperson of National Commission on Women, Ms. Mohini Giri, leader of Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha, Com. Janaklal Thakur, Dr. B.D. Sharma (former Commissioner of SC/ST and chairman of Bharat Jan Andolan), Abdul Jabbar of Bhopal Gas Affected People's Organization, senior journalist Prabhush Joshi, Prof. RVG Menon of Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad, Sanjay M.G., Vimalbhai and Suniti S.R., Sukhendu Bhattacharya, Anitha, Jacob Vadkancherry, Abhoy Singh and Lata P.M. from National Alliance of People's Movement (NAPM), Adv. Bagdi, Mahedrabhai etc. from Indore.

Various organizations from Madhya Pradesh like Adivasi Mukti Sanghatan, Samaj Pragati Sahayog, National Alliance of People's Movements, Samajwadi Jan Parishad, CMM and Ekalavya etc. also participated. Almost all the speakers harshly criticised the Narmada verdict by the Supreme Court. Swami Agnivesh termed it as 'shameful'. Surendra Mohan made it clear that the wrong verdicts of the court could be changed as the Parliament and the state legislatures revised them five times in the past.

Medha Patkar, along with the representatives from the valley emphasised the need for a coordinated struggle of peasants and tribals and other exploited classes to safeguard their right to life, livelihood and their resources. Devram Kanera, the senior activist conducted the meeting.

The people returned back home more strengthened and enthused after Parikrama. They are aware that in a couple of months' time, because of the callous and corrupt attitude of a powerful few, the Valley is going to face unprecedented submergence. With the dam of immorality high, a moral war has to be waged, daring the rising waters. The determination was strengthened and the resolve reiterated.

Comrades..... Be A Part

After the irresponsible Supreme Court verdict allowing the work on the dam, as expected and as was intended, the politicians and bureaucracy have become arrogant and are dismissing the issues of displacement and resettlement with contempt. This is the crucial test and opportunity to stand by the people in the valley and fight against the repressive system and for the rights of the people. ***To keep on the fight and participate in it when the situation seems depressing and bleak and to be with the people's field level struggle is the real test of our commitment and political responsibility.*** Be a part of the new awakening at this crucial hour.

Spread the Message

The message of Andolan, the ground realities and people's resolve through various and your own ways... Use your writing, speech, creativity, art, contacts and communication abilities to tell the world around you that the people in the valley are still fighting and there is no way for all us but to fight and be a part of it.

Support Actions

In whatever ways you can. Organize rallies, seminars, other programmes. You can also undertake research, undertake specific tasks for Andolan. Write to the President and Prime Minister, the Union Ministers of Water Resources and Minister for Social Justice, the Chief Ministers of M.P., Maharashtra and Gujarat to stop the illegal, unjust construction on the dam and save the people and resources of OUR country. Remember, such unviable and destructive

projects are more serious form of corruption, that too in the name of development! Umpteen number of Tehelkas and Boforses are hidden in one single such project.

An Appeal

The Narmada Bachao Andolan is a people's movement supported by concerned citizens like you. Contributions in terms of volunteer time, money and voluntary expert inputs are much needed and most welcome. If you'd like to participate please fill the form and get back to us:

I am enclosing a donation of Rs _____ (as honorarium of an activist – Rs.1000/-) and/or Rs _____ for the other expenses of Andolan.

I would like to volunteer during the period _____ in the villages.

Please make your donation payable to Narmada Bachao Andolan and mail donation and/or form to Ms.Parvin Jehangir, 261, Jupiter Apts, 41, New Cuff Parade, Mumbai 400 005 Tel. 022-2184779 Email: <jeha52@bom2.vsnl.net.in>

News from the Courts

Review petition: Filed by NBA for review of the SC decision was dismissed on March 29, without hearing from the petitioners by the Chief Justice Anand and Jst. Kirpal. In their order they said "The contentions raised in the review petition, in effect, seek to challenge the correctness of the said judgment and that is impermissible being outside the parameters of review." While Jst.Bharucha wrote in his five line order "The learned Judges who wrote the majority judgment have found no case for a review. The review

petition must, therefore, be dismissed. I stand by the view expressed by me in the minority judgment."

Contempt petition: Medha Patkar, Arundhati Roy and Prashant Bhushan are asked to appear in person in the Supreme Court on April 23 regarding the contempt of court proceedings, which were initiated by the Court on the basis of false allegations by some advocates. They petitioned the court that during the dharna outside the court by NBA on the 13th December 2000, these three have

assaulted, threatened to kill and manhandled the advocates when they objected to anti-court slogans!

Notice to Jamuna Devi, Deputy C.M. of Madhya

Pradesh: Legal notice is served to Jamuna Devi, to apologize and take back the false charges she made, against NBA and Medha Patkar that NBA receives foreign money and are stooges of foreign countries. Failing which, she will face prosecution.

Notices to V.K.Saxena, Dainik Bhaskar and Indian

Express : For opening a vilification campaign against NBA, by means of advertisements in the national and regional language newspapers, spending lakhs of rupees, legal notices are sent to Dainik Bhaskar, Indian Express and V.K.Saxena for the defamatory advertisement. **MP petition:** Supreme Court has not given any date for hearing the petition filed by Madhya Pradesh government for revising the tribunal and lowering the height of SSP.

Maheshwar Project - Large Scale Financial Irregularities: Asks CAG To Investigate

While on one hand the fact that the S.Kumars is negotiating with the BHEL for the purchase of power equipment finally and decisively clarifies that Siemens has withdrawn from the Project despite S.Kumars protests for many months, on the other hand the lower costs being offered by the BHEL for the purchase of turbines has begun to open up the Pandora's box of financial irregularities and malpractices that the Maheshwar Project has been based on.

In this context, the Narmada Bachao Andolan expresses its deep apprehension that the work on the dam site and other sunk costs are actually far less than is being claimed by the state government and the Project promoters, thus leading to the real possibility of the diversion of funds to other concerns managed by the Project promoters. The NBA also believes that there has been a systematic over invoicing of all components of the Project. It may be recalled that in the course of the last 7 years since privatization, the Project costs have been raised by the Project promoters five-fold from Rs. 465 crores to over Rs. 2250 crores. Since most of the Project is being sought to be financed with public funds, the Narmada Bachao Andolan has made formal and confidential representations to the CAG and the RBI to investigate the status and actual use of public funds being infused in to the Project.

It may be recalled that Siemens is only the last foreign agency to desert the Project. This Project has been successively deserted by the US power utility Pac- Gen in 1998 and the German power utilities Bayernwerk and VEW Energie in 1999. Subsequently, the German government guarantee sought by Siemens fell through in August 2000 and the Portuguese government also refused ABB a guarantee in January, 2001 leading to the cancellation of Rs. 700 crore loan from a private German bank.

Monsoon Satyagraha Ahead.....

As planned in the strategy meetings, there will be a FIERY SATYAGRAHA in the coming monsoon, facing the rising waters. The levels at which waters will rise are unknown.... but Baba Amte's house, where water had reached its doorstep in 1994 itself, can't be easily saved, if rainfall is as high as 1994. ⇒ Get Ready to come over to the valley ⇒ Motivate others in hundreds to participate ⇒ Enroll as Satyagrahis ⇒ Organise support actions at your place during the Satyagraha in the valley. Details of Satyagraha will follow soon.