

Pani Sangharsh Chalwal:¹ A case study from South Maharashtra², India

Kaustubh Devale³ and Suhas Paranjape⁴

Background and History

Pani Sangharsh Chalwal (PSC) is a movement active on water rights in South Maharashtra (Maharashtra, India). It is active primarily in the districts of Sangli, Satara, Solapur, and Kolhapur. In the last three decades this movement has spread both physically as well as in terms of content and ideas.

The history of the PSC may be divided into two broad phases. In the first formative phase it was known mainly as the *Mukti Sangharsh Chalwal*⁵ (MSC) and was on the whole confined to the one taluka⁶ of Khanapur in Sangli district. This formative phase is important because many of the formative influences in this period helped it acquire its main characteristics. In its second phase, the two SMOs the

¹ Literally The Movement for a Struggle around Water

² The written information that we have about this remarkable movement comprises a few articles (see bibliography) and a set of newspaper cuttings. It is just the tip of the iceberg and tells very little of the story. We have supplemented it with extensive interviews with leaders, activists and supporters. Suhas Paranjape has been involved with the PSC as a supporter and sympathizer from its beginning. Kaustubh Devale spent almost four months in the area talking to a variety of people. He had long, frank and intense discussions with Dr. Bharat Patankar. Besides Dr. Patankar, we have had fairly detailed discussions on the issues with a whole range of activists and supporters/sympathizers which included Dr. Anant Phadke, Ashok Jadhav, Avinash Kadam, Bhiku Deore (dada), Dhanaji Gurav, Dilip Patil, Ganpat Anna Ghagare, Humayan Mursal, Jayant Uthale, K. J. Joy, More sir, Sampat Desai, Sanjay Tardekar, Santosh, Seema Kulkarni and Vitthal Dangre and many others. We are grateful to all of them for welcoming us and giving their time unstintingly and for the open and frank manner in which they approached the issues. We are also grateful to the Patankar family especially Indutai, Jayant, Sandhya and James for bearing with our many impositions. Our information is up to date till the year 2012. Needless to say, we are solely responsible for the inaccuracies and shortcomings that may have remained.

³ Kaustubh Devale works as a freelance researcher and consultant in Pune, Maharashtra

⁴ Suhas Paranjape works as a Senior Research Fellow in SOPPECOM

⁵ Literally The Movement for a Liberation Struggle

⁶ (in South Asia) an administrative district for taxation purposes, typically comprising a number of villages.

*Shetmajoor Kashtakari Shetkari Sanghatana*⁷ (SKSS) and the *Maharashtra Rajya Dharangrast va Prakilgrast Parishad*⁸ (the Parishad) became much more important and the movement spread practically to the entire portion of the Krishna basin that falls in Maharashtra state. In what follows we describe briefly the two phases and some of the important struggles that shaped the movement.

The formative phase: the *Mukti Sangharsh Chalwal*

The occasion for the formation of the MSC was a confluence of a number of factors in the early 1980s. The backdrop was the Mumbai textile strike of 1982-83 that was led by Dr. Datta Samant. The strike was long drawn and unsuccessful and is a definite landmark in the labour history of Mumbai. It marked the decline of the prominence that textile mills and textile mill workers had in shaping the identity of Mumbai as an industrial centre. Most textile mill workers had originally migrated from rural Maharashtra to Bombay in search of permanent employment due to lack of consistent income because of rain-fed agriculture and dependency upon single crop in their native villages of Konkan and drought-prone regions of western-Maharashtra. During the 1982-83 strike, the striking unions asked the workers to go back to their villages to garner support, and as the strike dragged on and showed no signs of settlement, more and more workers decided to return to their villages. It was to turn out to be a historic demobilisation of the textile workers of Mumbai.

The strike years were also followed by a drought and the government had to provide work under the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS), especially in the drought prone areas like Khanapur taluka. A very large number of farmers and agricultural labourers, except for the very large farmers had to seek support from the EGS. Among them were also the textile workers who had returned to their villages. With their union experience they soon began to see the need to organise EGS workers who had very few facilities. Corruption and delays in payment were rampant. Many of these workers were in touch with the Shramik Mukti Dal (SMD). SMD was formed in 1980 as a political organisation with a revolutionary agenda that aimed at removing all kinds of oppression – class, caste as well as gender oppression. SMD activists, especially Dr. Bharat Patankar, who also hails from Sangli district, had also participated in leading and helping the 1982-83 Bombay textile mill workers' strike. Soon SMD activists began to provide active leadership to the struggle over the EGS.

With SMD leadership, the struggle soon spilled over to larger issues. The return of the migrant workers in 1982-83 had triggered discussions regarding local avenues of employment. Though the EGS was in place with an assurance that the state government would provide for employment to those who seek it and provide commensurate remuneration according to work done, what *kind* of work was to be provided was not specified. The SMD picked up this point and made it an important issue.

⁷ Literally the Agricultural Labourers' and Toiling Farmers' Organisation.

⁸ Literally, the Maharashtra State Conference of the Dam and Project Affected

SMD activists, along with other left parties had been part of the work of the Drought Eradication Committee which functioned in Maharashtra for many years after the great drought of 1972. In 1983, in Khanapur taluka, they demanded that instead of providing ad hoc work like breaking stones and constructing roads, work that contributed nothing towards drought eradication, work under EGS should be aimed at drought eradication. So along with organising EGS workers for their union demands, they also began mobilising for drought eradication.

Being one of the most drought prone talukas in Maharashtra, the idea of making drought eradication the central plank of their activity caught the imagination of people in Khanapur taluka. The movement that began to gain strength was formally established in October 1983 at its *Sthapana Parishad*⁹ and called itself the *Mukti Sangharsh Chalwal* (MSC) because it had as its larger aim the elimination of all oppression and saw their activity as framed by this aim. While mobilising and organising people around this demand of drought eradication in the villages of Khanapur taluka MSC got to know about quite a few plans developed in the British times for local water harvesting/storage structures, which had not yet been constructed. While the left parties did not officially join forces with the MSC, they did not actively oppose it either, and it received the backing of activists from local left parties within Khanapur taluka.

The Baliraja memorial dam

The struggle over the so called Baliraja memorial dam was one of the important formative influences for the movement. Yerala river, one of the major tributaries of the Krishna river, originates in Khatav taluka in Satara district in Maharashtra and flows southwards into Khanapur and Tasgaon talukas in Sangli district for about 120 km before it meets the Krishna. This once perennial river had gradually turned into a seasonal one by the 1970's due to a number of possible contributing factors: construction of small and medium water storage structures upstream; increased irrigation by farmers cultivating sugarcane along the banks and rampant sand excavation along and in the river bed. This gradually affected the surface as well as sub-surface water flows resulting in lack of ground water availability round the year for peasants without access to direct lift irrigation.

Sampatrao Pawar from Balawadi village on the Yerala banks in Khanapur taluka and a leader of the Peasants and Workers Party (PWP) who participated in and helped establish the MSC at its *Sthapana Parishad*, played an important role in the movement. MSC activists used *padayatras* (foot marches) with the help of local farmers along the river and other streams to explore possibilities of water harvesting and storage. One major cause for drying up of the river that was identified was the rampant sand excavations from the river bed. Balawadi and Tandulwadi, twin villages situated on the opposite banks of Yerala river, emerged as leading centres for discussions and debates about the issue and its probable solutions. The movement filed and won a public interest litigation it filed against sand excavation from the riverbed. Discussions between the MSM and farmers led to a suggestion to construct a small dam between Balawadi and Tandulwadi villages to ensure a permanent source of protective irrigation for

⁹ Literally, Establishment Conference

these two villages. The movement developed a twin strategy around sand excavation. They demanded a long term ban, but also demanded a change in the way sand excavation was carried out. In those days it was auctioned to private parties by the government. They insisted that the village communities be given permits to sell limited amount of sand (within the Minor Mineral Extraction Rules) the sand with a royalty being paid to the government, which was the earlier practice. The movement opposed auctioning of sand. In fact, it was their intention to collect money through sand excavation for a dam at Balavadi-Tandulwadi and stop all sand excavation after the dam was built.

K.R. Datye, a renowned engineer from Bombay, worked pro bono to develop a two-phase plan for this tiny dam. After completion it would irrigate almost 380 ha of land of 400 families from the two villages. The dam was named the Baliraja dam after the legendary farmer-king Baliraja and has become widely known as the symbol of what the MSC aimed at achieving. The first phase comprised a smaller dam that would serve to support a later falling gate structure erected on top of it. The movement has been able to complete the first phase and provide water to about 100 plus families, but has not been able to complete the second phase. It collected funds for the first phase partly through income gained from sand excavation and partly from urban sympathisers as loan. This loan was collected through a wide campaign in the cities in Maharashtra and elsewhere and a large part of the loan was returned when revenue was generated for the village committee through sale of limited amount of sand..

The sand excavation has been stopped. However, since the second phase of the dam has not been completed till today, the storage is small and only around 100 families from Tandulwadi and some dalit families from Balawadi villages respectively are using the water from this dam for more than a decade now. In accordance with the set of priorities discussed at the beginning of the movement, the water from the dam is not used for irrigating sugarcane and from about February till the onset of the monsoon, the water is utilised only for domestic purposes and not for irrigation. Issues related to the funds needed for the second phase, the desilting of the first phase and involving the government department in taking over and managing the full system seem to have taken a back seat as the attention has shifted to other and larger issues. The goal of an equitable access based system for all households in Balavadi Tandulwadi¹⁰ with an alternative crop pattern remains only partially realised.

Equitable water access and minimum water assurances

It is during this formative period that MSC took over the concept of equitable water distribution first enunciated and implemented by the late Vilasrao Salunke in drought prone Purandar Taluka of Pune district, developed it further with an additional emphasis on including landless agricultural families in the equitable water distribution. This was to become a central idea in the social and economic restructuring that the PSC envisages. The idea was that everyone should have an equal right to the

¹⁰ Equitable water distribution amongst all households of both the villages, irrespective of the size of landholding (including the landless), biomass-based land use and cropping pattern and sustainable agronomical practices were the main features of the initial design of the project)

water required for earning livelihood. This immediately involved the issue of how much water was required to provide livelihood for a typical family.

Simultaneously, therefore, experiments were initiated to assess the quantum of water required to sustain one family. The Centre for Applied Systems Analysis in Development (CASAD) and MSC took up this study in two villages, Balavadi and Benapur, during 1986 to 1991 as part of the Wasteland Integration Research Project supported by the Society for Promoting Wasteland Development (SPWD), Delhi. As a result of this experimentation and later interaction with experts, PSC now has developed a thumb rule that about 18 T of bio-mass are required for sustainable livelihood for a family and optimally utilised, requires about 6,000 m³ of water use. Further, again as a thumb rule, they assess that given the concrete conditions in this area, including an annual 80% dependable rainfall of only about 300 to 400 mm, about 2,000 m³ of this water use would have to come from exogenous sources, requiring say an allocation of about 3,000 m³ from dam storages in the area. Their new strategy of drought eradication and sustainable agro-industrial development is therefore premised on availability of reliable source of exogenous water of 3,000 cubic metres to every family, to be under local control of the people and adoption of a mixed crop pattern consisting of certain proportion between grains, vegetables, fruits, fodder, biomass for fuel and agro-industrial use.¹¹ The PSC has developed a full scale argument for restructuring irrigation in the Krishna Valley along these lines. (Patankar 1997)

Restructuring the Takari Lift Irrigation Scheme

By the end of the 1980s, the MSC was convinced of the practical viability of the equitable water distribution. The people from Balawadi and Tandulwadi had agreed to the broad principles of equitable access and had also developed a three acre model of land use with one acre of assured irrigation from the Baliraja dam. However, this would not take place until both phases of the dam were completed. Meanwhile there was another opportunity to develop this idea further.

MSC had worked out and demanded a restructuring of the Takari Lift Irrigation Scheme in Khanapur taluka with equitable water distribution as its principle. This struggle was launched in the summer of 1989 with a conference which led to a memorandum signed by 1,520 peasants that was sent to the Chief Minister. The original plan of this scheme was to lift 4.6 TMC water by up to 116 m using 31 MW of power to supply it to 30 villages (8 would be fully and 22 partially covered) thus irrigating around 13,000 hectares at a cost of INR 2,800 million. MSC, with the help of concerned experts in CASAD, put forward an alternative plan for allocating 3,000 m³ to each family in 60 villages to cover 60,000 hectares of land. Given the command area approach of the government, there were bound to be a number of problems.

¹¹ This norm of exogenous water of 3000 cubic metres to every family was substantially less than the norm suggested by the widely respected expert committee, appointed by the government of Maharashtra in 1978. It was popularly known as Dandekar-Deuskar-Deshmukh committee (The "Three D" committee) and had argued for a total of 750 mm of irrigation per acre. This is equivalent to 9000 cubic meter of water for 3 acres.

The first one was the basis of the Water User Associations (WUAs) that were supposed to manage irrigation at the lowest rung. The government treated only those who owned land in the area they had designated as the command areas as eligible to receive water and be a member of the WUAs. The alternative principle summed up the village allocation and treated it as an allocation to which every farmer in the village, including those outside the government designated area as eligible to receive water and to become member of the WUA. This itself was a contested area. After long drawn out negotiations, the MSC presented its alternative plan during a broad based meeting in the Shivaji University in Kolhapur, which was then accepted by the Chief Engineer who allowed such WUAs to be formed on a pilot basis. Negotiations were also going on about additional water to be given to the societies so as to serve everyone in the village and for the villages not covered.

However, things did not move very smoothly with Takari. The proposed restructuring was premised on a systematic completion of the present and the proposed restructured canal distribution system. Only the main canal network has been fully completed; the distributaries and minors are practically non-existent. Due to pressure from below, water is now being released into these main canals and some of the villages are getting water, and some, for example, Hanumantvadiye village, are trying to use the water they receive as equitably as possible, but on the whole, this has been happening without adequate distribution support.

Distinctive forms of struggle

What marked out the MSC were also the distinctive forms of struggle that it developed. If we take the example of Takari alone, there were a number of forms which were used. They included:

- Signature campaigns wherein thousands of signatures were collected.
- Poster exhibitions to create awareness.
- Resolutions of 12 Gram Panchayats from amongst the 30 potentially benefiting villages.
- Conferences with participation of toilers and peasants from the area along with state-level leaders of the toiling class.
- Padayatra along the canal where land was going to be submerged.
- Simultaneous Rasta Roko (road blockade) at 12 places wherein men, women and children participated with their cattle and carts thus blocking important road network of the taluka.
- Chavani Andolan (literally: camp agitation) where people marched into the taluka office and occupied it along with their cattle.
- Holding of People's Courts during the *Chavani Andolan* at the taluka centre.

All the campaigns that the MSC ran may be seen to be marked by a plethora of similar forms of struggle.¹² These forms were innovative, drew in a large number of people from different sections,

12 Information on these forms for the different campaigns may be found in many of the reports mentioned in the bibliography.

ranged from different kinds of action and media. In addition, there was the practice of negotiations being carried out not by individual leaders, by an activist team drawn from the gathered assembly which immediately after the negotiations reported to the larger assembly and obtained ratification from it.

These were characteristics the SMD brought to it and it is also reflected in the active and widespread support that the movement received from urban centres wherever SMD activists were working. The mobilisation of support and the required funds for the Baliraja dam was a protracted process that displayed all these characteristics. This made for transparency and created a different kind of trust and confidence about the leadership and people came to identify with the movement in a manner that was closer than mere 'support' and tended to become an identity that was capable of cutting across party lines. In fact, the MSC found support from many local activists belonging to various parties, except the BJP and the Shivsena, and many of them joined the MSC in this period.

In the later part, the Takari struggle has taken a different path. Of the 60 villages involved, the new village level Water User Associations that were proposed have been set up in 11 villages (and three have been registered). However, at present only the main canal has been completed for the most part and the rest of the distribution system has not been built and this has given a different twist to the issue. An agitation for releasing water even though the full network has not been built has been successful and water is now released into the main canal, some of this is diverted by farmers with their own effort and since the canal is unlined a lot of it percolates and appears as groundwater recharge in the influence zone of the canal. Those who are near the canal and those who have wells and are in a position to invest in pumps and the wells have been able to benefit. The major issues are now the release of water, whether the water charges, especially the electricity charges, should be paid or not and what they should be. Though the movement still attempts to raise the issue of the overall restructuring of the Takari scheme it is mainly the immediate issues around which the struggles are taking place.

Phase two: the PSC becomes a basin-wide phenomenon

By the early nineties, in its formative phase as the MSC, the movement had spread to almost the entire taluka of Khanapur. It had acquired a distinctive take on equitable and sustainable water use and had a broad plan of restructuring the irrigation system within the Krishna basin. It had also attracted attention from a number of people in the region also on count of its trustworthiness, honesty and the innovative forms of struggle that it carried out. During the early 1990s, the movement spread out in two directions and acquired its present distinctive innovative characteristic in that it joined together the struggles of the drought affected and the dam affected into a common basin wide struggle. They can both be respectively seen to be centred on two SMOs: The Shetmajoor Kashtakari Shetkari Sanghatana¹³ (SKSS) and the Maharashtra Rajya Dharangrasta va Prakalpagrasta Parishad¹⁴ (the Parishad).

¹³ Means the Landless and Toiling Farmers' Organisation

¹⁴ The Maharashtra State Dam and Project Affected People's Conference/Association

The *Shetmajoor Kashtakari Shetkari Sanghatana* and the struggle of the drought affected

The new phase also entailed a rapid expansion of the scope and reach of their work. They received support from many more quarters around the ideas developed by the MSC, especially in relation to drought proofing and equitable water access. However, an additional focus that equitable access received in the course of this expansion was the issue of equitable access to the Krishna waters between the areas on the immediate banks of the river and the farther placed upland areas of the Krishna basin. Almost all of the irrigation development up to the 1990s had been concentrated on and around the Krishna banks. The idea of equitable access now became a powerful argument for restructuring existing systems and developing new ones to convey water to the heretofore neglected upland drought prone areas within the Krishna basin. A broad front and sympathetic support cutting across party lines but firmly centre and left in orientation began to form around these ideas.

Nagnath Anna Naikawdi, legendary revolutionary of the freedom struggle and veteran of several struggles on behalf of toilers was an important supporter and later a leader of this movement for equitable distribution of water. He provided the leadership to the Hutatma Kisan Ahir Co-operative Sugar Factory¹⁵ in Walve taluka of Sangli district which was not one of the common run of the mill sugar cooperatives. It is one of the best run factories (it has always had one of the highest recovery rates of sugar in the state), it had a policy of supporting working class struggles and regularly kept aside a fund for such support, especially for the struggles of the unorganised. Naikawdi lent active support, not only politically, but by often providing food and board for the MSC activists and also by providing them with vehicles when moving about for campaigns and for movement related work. Comrade Nana Shetye of the Lal Nishan Party (Leninist)¹⁶ and other left-wing leaders also rallied behind these ideas. The result was the formation of the Shetmajoor Kashtakari Shetkari Sanghtana (hereinafter: SKSS)¹⁷ aimed at organising agricultural labourers and toiling peasants. The SKSS was formed at the Kini Parishad (conference held at Kini village) on 26th May 1993. The immediate context of Kini Parishad and the formation of SKSS was the demolition of the Babri Msjid a year earlier. After the demolition of Babri Masjid there was widespread mobilisation against the demolition and this culminated in the Kini Parishad. The conference was attended by more than 25,000 people including prominent leftist leaders like comrade Govindrao Pansare, Dr. Baba Adhav and socially empathetic film celebrity Nilu Phule. SKSS was the not only a movement of toiling peasants and labourers but also a joint front committed to eradicate drought and press for the issue of equitable access to water in South Maharashtra.

¹⁵ Literally, hutatma is martyr and the factory was named after Kisan Ahir, a colleague of Nagnath Anna and a martyr of the freedom struggle during the 1940s.

¹⁶ The Red Flag Party (Leninist)

¹⁷ Literally, Organisation of Agricultural Labourers and Toiling Peasants.

The formation of the SKSS was followed by a series of actions in the 13 drought-prone talukas of the Krishna basin in Maharashtra spread over Satara, Sangli, Solapur and Kolhapur districts. The SKSS became particularly popular and active in the drought-prone Aatpadi taluka of Sangli district. A rally of more than 25,000 persons on 11th July 1993 demanded equitable access to the water from the Dhom and Ujani dams for all the households, including the landless. This was followed by more than 66,000 signatures (almost all the adults from Aatpadi taluka) on a memorandum demanding a rightful share from the dams in the basin. Fifty six Gram Panchayats, many co-operative societies, workers' unions, ex-armymen's associations, many teachers and students passed unanimous resolutions in support of the memorandum. Even the Panchayat Samiti, the taluka level self-government body, passed a resolution in support. State government announced in 1994 that water would be provided to Aatpadi taluka from the proposed Urmodi dam. People from all the 80 villages of the taluka refused to pay land revenue until the demand for an equitable share in the Krishna river water was met.

The movement for equitable distribution of the dammed water spread to 13 Talukas in the low rain fall zone of Sangli, Satara and Solapur districts comprising the Krishna basin in Maharashtra and big rallies of tens of thousands of people demonstrated the strength of the movement. In view of this, some individuals from the left parties and also from the Congress party supported this demand. The Nationalist Congress Party included this demand in its election-manifesto for the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly elections in September 1999, though after coming into power it dithered about fulfilling its election-promise. After repeated mass mobilizations by the PSC on the issue, the new Democratic Front government that came to power in 2000 in Maharashtra accepted the principle of 'equitable distribution of dammed water', in case of new dams. After assuming office, in 2000, it drew up a 51-point common minimum programme, Equitable water distribution on per capita basis was included as the first point by the N. D. Patil Committee set up for that purpose.

Restructuring of Tembu Lift Irrigation Scheme

The Tembu Lift Irrigation Scheme (hereinafter Tembu scheme) that was launched in 1995 was at least partially a response to the pressures to provide the drought prone upland areas of the Krishna basin with a share of the Krishna Waters. The scheme is named after Tembu village located in Karad taluka of Satara district on the Krishna River bank from where the ambitious lift irrigation scheme proposes to lift 22 TMC of water from the Krishna basin, carry it in five successive stages through 317 m to the highest point, irrigating 79,000 hectares of land in 173 villages situated in six low-rainfall talukas from Satara, Sangli and Solapur districts.

Atpadi taluka, a stronghold of the PSC was to receive 4.4 TMC of water irrigating 16,000 hectares of land in 63 villages out of 84 villages in the taluka. SKSS launched a struggle in Aatpadi taluka to press for restructuring of this scheme based on the principle of equitable distribution of water so that it would supply about 5,000 m³ of water to all the households, including the landless, in the 84 villages in the taluka. They also demonstrated that this was possible within the present 4.4 TMC that was being allocated to the taluka in the present plan.

In 1999 SKSS re-intensified its struggle for this demand, and its later application to the another areas of the scheme by launching a simultaneous 3-day dharna (protest) in the 13 drought-prone talukas of the 3 districts. More than 100,000 people, the dam affected and drought affected throughout the basin, participated in these protests. Finally, in September 2001, the government agreed in principle to reworking of the scheme on a pilot basis in Aatpadi taluka based on the principle of equitable distribution of water for all. The alternative draft proposal was submitted by SKSS in 2002 making a prima facie case that all the 22,000 households in Aatpadi taluka receive 5,000 cum of water per family. A joint proposal was to be worked out in detail by the irrigation department and the SKSS on how to operationalise the equitable distribution proposal and what its costs would be. For the first time that a government department has agreed to prepared an alternative detailed plan submitted by a people's movement.¹⁸ In August 2002, the Chief Minister issued instructions for giving administrative sanction to this plan within 3 months, though the bureaucracy was slow to act on it. What is important is that it illustrates the potential for significant transformation that the demand for equitable water distribution in drought-prone areas can create.

By mid-2003, it became evident that the Tembu scheme was far from being completed and there was very little progress on working out the alternative restructuring of the scheme in Atpadi taluka. The SKSS called for a total bandh (closure) in Aatpadi taluka on 15th September 2003. At the same time people from neighbouring Tasgaon taluka (drought-prone) organised huge rallies demanding a share of the Krishna river waters from the Tembu and Takari schemes. These rallies culminated in an indefinite sit-in of thousands of farmers in front of the Sangli District Collector's office on 1st December 2003. The concerned minister then agreed to extend the Tembu scheme to all the villages in the Atpadi taluka and reorganise it based on the principle of equitable water distribution amongst and within villages. It was also agreed to work out a similar alternative for Tasgaon taluka. At present, water user associations are being formed in the villages of the two talukas, details of the alternative scheme are in the process of being worked out, additional budget allocations are being sought for the revised proposal and the work on the necessary structures and main canals is nearing completion. The movement is concentrating on ensuring that funds are allocated for construction of the Tembu lift as per the restructured plan and work commences in the full.

Another issue related to the Tembu scheme is the issue of energy. The energy consumption in lifting water by as much as 300 plus metres has come under criticism and the movement is engaged in including an answer to the co-management of energy and water. There is also the issue of whether the farmers will have to bear the full burden of the electricity cost which would make irrigated agriculture prohibitive. In an alternative plan worked out with experts, the movement has proposed setting aside a certain proportion of the water to be utilised for producing biomass that would be used exclusively in regenerating energy use through use of biomass for energy saving biomass technologies as well as biomass derived energy generation. Levelised basin costs as basis for water charges and dedicated

¹⁸ Joy (2002) examines the issue of financial and energy viability of the alternative scheme.

energy saving biomass production and use are the two strategies that the movement has proposed to keep the energy and economic cost of water affordable for these drought prone regions. However, the main thrust of the present activity is oriented towards detailing the alternative distribution system and its costs.

The Dharangrast Parishad: the struggle of the dam affected

Large dams were once called the temples of modern India and exemplified the attitude to development during the hey-days of post-independence socialist influenced thinking in the government. Maharashtra, and particularly South Maharashtra probably has the largest concentration of large and medium dams in the country. In the hurry to construct dams on time and with as large a catchment as technically possible, the government looked at the dam affected as one more obstacles to be removed to facilitate speedy construction work. The dam affected, that is, those who lost their agricultural land or were displaced from the village where they were living were typically unorganised and unaware of the means and methods to oppose the state. Thousands of families have been uprooted from their ancestral lands and dumped into unfamiliar regions where the conditions are completely different.

Efforts to organise the dam and project affected began in the sixties and by the early 70s they were brought together under the umbrella of Maharashtra Rajya Dharan Grasta Va Prakalpa Grasta Shetakari Parishad¹⁹ (hereinafter: Parishad) led by Dr. Baba Adhav and Comrade Datta Deshmukh. The emergence of organised opposition by the Parishad had a role to play in the state government enacting the Maharashtra Rehabilitation of the Project Affected Act in 1986. This act, at present is one of the most progressive in India, and provides, amongst other things, a minimum of 2 acres of agricultural land in the command area to be provided to every dam affected family and specifies 18 civic amenities ranging from houses and schools to piped water supply and drainage to be provided for the new settlements of the dam affected people.

Struggles against MKVDC

The Bachawat Award of 1975 (hereinafter: Award), the award of the tribunal set up to resolve the interstate dispute over Krishna waters between the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh had specified the allocations for the respective states and had also ruled that whatever share of the three states is not utilised by the respective states by 31st May 2000 would then form a common pool, and would be eligible for reallocation in the next round of negotiations between the three states. By the mid 1990's the government realised that though a large number of projects had been planned, the actual impounding of water within Maharashtra in the Krishna basin was far below the quota allocated to Maharashtra state. This led to a spurt in the construction of as many dams as possible in order to impound additional water. The Maharashtra Krishna Valley Development Corporation (MKVDC) that had been formed in the 1990s was given the responsibility to ensure dam construction and the full

¹⁹ Maharashtra State Dam and Project Affected Farmers' Organisation

utilisation of the allocated quota within that time. Dam constructions were being pushed through without proper rehabilitation of the dam-affected villages.

The Parishad decided to oppose this fast-track, pushed through, development and thus initiated a flurry of struggles against the government and MKVDC in particular. The MSC leadership that had merged into SKSS after the 1993 Kini Parishad was already involved in some of the struggles of the dam affected, especially those of the Koyna dam affected, one of the oldest dams which still has a number of rehabilitation issues outstanding. In face of the MKVDC attempt at stepping up dam construction activity, they decided to take this on through the medium of the Parishad. They became active within the Parishad and challenged the government on the issue of proper rehabilitation of the dam affected. They also found in it an opportunity to join the two struggles by arguing that proper and speedy rehabilitation meant proper and speedy completion of dams and thus was in the interests of the drought affected. They took up the issues of the dam affected in South Maharashtra in all 13 talukas of Sangli, Satara, Solapur and Kolhapur districts falling within the Krishna basin and affected by the Bachawat Award. In a series of struggles starting from 1995-96 the Parishad took up the struggles of the dam affected persons in Uchangi, Chitri, Urmodi, Warana, Wang-marathwadi, Uttarmand and a number of other dams in these districts.

The resultant movement is characterised by its innovative demands and organizational strategies that have laid a foundation for the expansion of the water rights for the dam affected. The Parishad has been able to see that the existing provisions are fairly and faithfully implemented but more importantly, it has been able to set important precedents, both in terms of demands raised and accepted as well as in the form of struggles. For example, they have demanded that rehabilitation be completed *before* any water is stored in the dam ('rehabilitation before storage') and have been able to speed up rehabilitation and see that this is largely adhered to in the later struggles. Interestingly, by tying the storage issue to rehabilitation, they have been able to draw the drought affected beneficiaries of the project into the struggle by arguing for complete rehabilitation as a measure to early storage and access to water.

The Parishad has been able to argue for a *pani bhatta*, or water allowance to be paid to those farmers who have been rehabilitated but not given land with irrigation. The water allowance is then meant to compensate the dam affected for the delay in providing water they should have rightfully got and at least partially make up for the difference in productivity between irrigated and non-irrigated agriculture.. They were successful in getting the government to agree in principle for the *pani bhatta* in May 2000 (Rs. 600 per family per month) and were able to implement it for some of the projects and more importantly, set a precedent that can be exploited later. Similarly, they have taken advantage of the fact that the government orders mandate exploration of no or minimum rehabilitation alternatives to the dams or projects before sanctioning land acquisition. The struggles around every dam have their own unique stories to tell, but for lack of space, one such struggle, the one around the Uchangi dam that combines many of these features is taken up below for a little more detailed description.

Uchangi struggle

In 1985, the Maharashtra government proposed a dam near Uchangi village on the Tarohol stream in the Ajara taluka of Kolhapur district. This proposed dam was to submerge roughly 222 hectares of land thus submerging six villages completely or partially. Chaphawade and Jeur were the most affected. The dam and its catchment fall in a high rainfall zone (with up to 4000 mm of average annual rainfall) and is not drought-prone. The local farmers traditionally create small temporary bunds and feeder canals to irrigate their agriculture lands so many farmers felt that the dam was not adding greatly to irrigation capacity. One of the reasons cited later in 1997-98 by the MKVDC, when Parishad took on the cause of Uchangi dam-affected populace, was that it was necessary to utilise Maharashtra's share of impounding water under the Bachawat Award.

In 1996, affected villagers of Chaphawade, Jeur and Chitale began protesting against the government when they came to know of the proposed Uchangi dam. They also proposed alternatives which they published in the local newspaper. They sought the assistance of the Parishad in 1997 and intensified their opposition. Given the evident popular opposition to the construction of the dam, the government began talks with the dam-affected villagers in November 1997. The villagers suggested scrapping of the present dam and exploration of other alternatives.

Here the movement was making a new kind of point, following the precedent set by the *Narmada Bachao Andolan* earlier, that the dam affected had not only the right to struggle for good and proper rehabilitation, but also to propose alternatives that would minimise submergence and the burden of the dam affected. The government agreed to consider the alternatives to the proposed Uchangi dam if the movement would put them forward. This agreement bolstered the confidence of the agitators and paved the way for development of a scientific alternative to government's plans. Parishad requested the assistance of engineer K. R. Datye (who had assisted the SKSS during Baliraja memorial dam struggle) and his colleagues from SOPPECOM and the *Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti* (BGVS)²⁰ to evolve an alternative. Accordingly, a Participative Resource Mapping (PRM) was carried out for the two villages. The alternative was based on information from the PRM, the toposheets and secondary information about the area through discussion with people. The Irrigation Department did not provide more detailed data of topographical survey that would have been required for a more detailed alternative.

However, even while the alternative was being worked out, the MKVDC unilaterally decided to begin dam construction in monsoon of 1998. In pouring rain, thousands of villagers gathered at the dam site to oppose the construction and staged a sit in. A large police force was present, but sensing the mood of the people and their determination, the government suspended dam construction.

Soon after, the suggested alternative was put before the government. It comprised of the following elements:

- Reducing the Uchangi dam height by 5 m to reduce the submergence area;

²⁰ Literally, India Science Knowledge Association.

- Constructing three supplementary storage dams at Dhamanshet, Khetoba and Cherlakatta which would more than offset the reduction in storage at Uchangi
- Watershed treatment for the area, along with about eleven checkdams on the streams between Khetoba and Chaphawade.

The total impounded water in the alternative would be 624 mcft, each family in the region would receive 3,000 m³ of dam water, and additional water from local watershed development would supplement this at a local level. Irrigated area would almost double, there would be no displacement of habitats and would greatly reduce the amount of good quality land that would be submerged.

The government did not accept the alternative. However, it did see merit in the Khetoba dam and also agreed to reduce the height of the Uchangi dam by 2 metres in December 1999. It also agreed that farmers who lost good quality land along the stream-banks because of submergence would be provided with lift irrigation for other parcels of land. These modifications meant that none of the houses in the village settlements would be submerged and those who lost good land would get some consideration. However, MKVDC has, through a Government Resolution (GR) of April 2004, decided to go ahead with the building of the dam according to the original design and height.

Lately, the Uchangi story has seen a number of twists and turns and has had an important role to play in the split that the movement has suffered and it is discussed separately as part of the discussion about the split.

Common mobilisations and struggles of the dam and drought affected

We have described in the foregone, different struggles of the drought and the dam affected led by a common leadership. Even more important perhaps are larger mobilisations and struggles in which the two sections have participated in a common struggle with a common charter of demands. This section describes some of those struggles.

The Thiyya Andolan (Indefinite sit-in) that was launched on 19th January 2004 in front of the office of MKVDC at Pune was one of the important examples. Around 7,000 drought and dam affected persons participated. This agitation was launched in response to a series of accumulated grievances of the drought affected as well as the dam affected and brought them together on a common agenda and charter of demands. Nagnath Anna Naikawadi, Ganpatrao Deshmukh, Dr. Bharat Patankar and Dr. Baba Adhav were in the forefront of the Andolan. The background to this was the failure of the government to keep to the promises it had made in the earlier period. The Tembu and Takari Schemes were incomplete and the movement was demanding their speedy completion and restructuring. The movement also felt that the government was using the drought of 2003 and the EGS works that it had undertaken as an excuse to reduce funds and delay the construction of many dams which the movement saw as the only true solution to drought proofing. Many of the assurances given to the dam affected in respect of proper screening of alternatives, of the pani bhatta, of 'no storage before completion of rehabilitation' were not being implemented. The Andolan declared that all the 7,000 participants would stage an indefinite sit-in at the MKVDC office until their demands were considered.

In view of the unprecedented action and the forthcoming elections due that year, the protestors received a quick response and negotiations were carried out immediately. On the second day of the agitation, the Home Minister and the Irrigation Minister agreed to some of the the demands and also agreed to continue discussions of the other demands. Some of the important measures that the government agreed to included the following. .

1. Rs. 1,500 crores would be made available and spent on dams and water systems before March 2004. Rs. 1,150 crores of these would be utilised within the Krishna river basin in accordance with earlier assurances.
2. Rs. 230 crores would be made available and similarly utilised for the rehabilitation of the dam-affected.
3. Equitable water distribution according to population rather than land was accepted in principle.
4. Re-examination of the new water policy that accorded greater priority to industry over agriculture in water allocation.

This was the biggest sit-in that the movement had organised, and possibly the largest indefinite sit-in on the drought issue by any organisation so far. Larger mobilisations have certainly taken place but did not have the nature of either a sit in or did not declare an indefinite sit-in. equally important was the way the Andolan was organised. The actual Andolan was preceded by a preparatory period in which every village and local organisation came together and thought who it had to send to participate and then had to mobilise the bulk of the funds. The SMOs did not provide funds except for its main activists. This process itself created and confirmed a lot of the bonding that happened within the movement. In Pune itself, local organisations, including working class as well as students and activists' groups organised food packets for the participants and also collected financial contributions from urban sympathisers. All these things contributed to making the event a nodal point in the formation of the PSC and its identity.

As a follow up of the assurances given in 2004, another Thiyya Andolan was launched on 14th February 2005 at the Azad Maidan (a large ground in Mumbai, close to the State Assembly and historically the place where protests and demonstrations have taken place) with the participation of about 1,000 protesters from six districts of south Maharashtra and Konkan. The Andolan demanded action on part of the government to implement the principle of equitable distribution of water and asked for a better rehabilitation policy along with increase in fund allocation for the proper rehabilitation of the dam-oustees. The Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Water Resources (Krishna Basin) and the Minister of Co-operation and Rehabilitation negotiated with the delegation. It was agreed that if people in an area form WUAs that may not conform to command areas and decide to redistribute water amongst themselves equitably, the government would recognise such WUAs and accept their plans, provided all the beneficiaries under the existing plan would also be part of the equitable water distribution. It was at this meeting that the ministers agreed that, as pilot schemes, the irrigation department would actively cooperate in three talukas -- Kadegaon, Tasgaon and Aatpadi -- by providing technical assistance to restructure the current canal schemes in accordance to the principle of equitable water distribution.

However, the issue of the additional funds necessary which would be required for the implementation of restructured schemes based on the principle of equitable water distribution was not resolved. The 'Urmodi pattern', wherein rehabilitation of the dam-oustees had to be completed as per the Rehabilitation Act before actual commencement of the dam construction work, was agreed to in principle by the government. The government also agreed to modify in the Rehabilitation Act after considering the note provided by SMD, which included the monthly pani bhatta as a mandatory provision. The ministers also agreed to explore the option of creating a special sub-head for rehabilitation funds and de-linking them from the funds meant for backlog completion. Another follow up *Thiyya Andolan* was launched on 26th November 2008 by the dam-affected populace from Satara district in front of the Satara District Collector office. In response to this on 17th December 2008 during the Winter Assembly session of the Maharashtra State Legislature the government promised to meet the demands of the dam-affected and also promised prompt action on its earlier assurances.

The present situation in the movement

Currently, the movement is at a cross road. It seems poised to expand beyond the confines of South Maharashtra and at the same time it has suffered a major vertical split towards the end of 2009. These are indeed challenging times for the movement.

Poised for expansion

Over the last decade, and especially in the last five years, the movement has spread to areas outside its normal preserve of the 13 drought prone talukas of the Krishna basin in Maharashtra. One of the issues that has resulted in its spread is the issue of windmills and the issue of land acquisition and displacement caused by windmills and wind farms. The movement has come up with innovative demands for the compensation of those whose land is acquired for the windmills. The movement has opposed the practice of assessing worth of land and consequently the level of compensation on the basis of current use of land. The lands acquired are often wasteland and the government and the windmill operators have generally argued that they are worth very little and have assessed it accordingly.

The movement however has tended to give a series of arguments that move the focus to alternative use. For example in some cases it is argued that the land be valued not on the basis of what it presently yields, but on the basis of what its value is for the appropriator. Secondly, it is argued that providing land is tantamount to partnership and that landowners should be granted shares or percentage of profits. The important thing here is the change in discourse that the movement is bringing about: shifting the focus from present state and use to potential benefit to the appropriator. This is an important change and will give a much better bargain for the displaced. This has carried the movement eastwards into Solapur district and westward into Konkan.

The other major initiative that it is leading is in North Konkan, though the issue has the potential to cover all of Konkan. The issue is a complicated mosaic, but the movement seems to be utilising the

synergies caused by the many factors. On the one hand we have the process of land acquisition, specifically for two mega thermal projects as well as for a Special Economic Zone (SEZ). There is also the issue of water being provided to the thermal plants by diverting it from a major project that was supposed to irrigate a large tract of land including the very land that is now being acquired for the thermal projects! The authorities say they have diverted this water because it is not being utilised while the people maintain that they are not being provided water and hence it is not being utilised. And lastly there is the clause in the above-mentioned GR related to land acquisition for projects that enjoins the rehabilitation authority to first consider the minimum displacement alternatives before proceeding towards actual acquisition. The movement has put up a multilayered argument that may be summarised as follows.²¹ Firstly, it analyses the power situation in Maharashtra and argues that the many plants being planned in Konkan are not required and that the power requirements can be fulfilled by alternative means. Secondly, it argues that the water from the project which was originally planned to be given to farmers in the area is lying unutilised because of project management and not because of the farmers. It presents an alternative plan and crop pattern that shows that the proper provision of water would be able to provide biomass with an energy replacement value that is similar to the energy being generated. Thirdly, it argues that there is sufficient fallow land lying mainly with the government in the same area or its vicinity which can be utilised for the thermal plants. And fourthly, it invokes the GR clause and asks the government to accept one of the above three alternatives as the minimum displacement (what can be more minimum than zero displacement?) alternative. This is a powerful set of arguments that cannot easily be brushed aside, especially when it is backed by a mass movement and mass mobilisation.

The discourse and the manner of building an alternative that has arisen in both these cases has an importance of changing the discourse around project and displacements, and has immediate and long term potential of extending the movement to very large areas. Moreover, it does not require the water-centred explicit alliance of the drought and project affected that characterises the PSC but also constrains it in its spread (see below). It is now straightforward matter of building alternatives and alternative forms of discourse and struggle of the project affected. Given the current trend of the government acting on behalf of projects (whether they are large government irrigation or multipurpose water resource projects, or private mining projects, industrial estates, SEZs, roads, infrastructure, power projects and the like for private parties) to acquire land on their behalf claiming public purpose – what some have called accumulation by dispossession – the potential for extension of these ideas is much larger. If it takes up these issues in earnest the movement will grow and spread but also change significantly and move away from its focus on water per se that now characterises it, in a sense move away from being the distinctive PSC movement it is today..

A vertical split

²¹ For more a detailed discussion, see Joy K. J., Suhas Paranjape and Anant Phadke 2009

Just at the moment that it is poised for a major expansion, the movement has recently in 2009 suffered a major vertical split. As said earlier, the PSC leadership has essentially been provided by the SMD, because while other currents or individual leaders may be handling one or the other flanks of the movement, it is the SMD leaders and activists together who have provided the leadership that cuts across all its flanks. In the past too there have been differences and splits. There have been instances when individual leaders have differed and have moved away or split from the movement: For example, the break with the dynamic leader Sampatrao Pawar of Balavadi and with Raosaheb Shinde of Benapur. There have also been more serious schisms too; an example is that of increasing distance between Nagnathanna Naikawadi who was one of the movement's staunchest supporters, in action as well as in resource provision. However, in all these instances the group of SMD activists and leaders who comprised the PSC leadership were united and it was isolated individuals who left or parted ways. The more serious aspect of the 2009 split is that it is a vertical split that has cut vertically through the SMD, especially the group that is active in the PSC area. In the aftermath of the split, the portion that continues to use the original identity is best described as led by Dr. Patankar, while the other calls itself now the SMD (Democratic) (SMD-D henceforward)

A number of reasons have been cited for the split, more so by the SMD-D who have felt aggrieved by the events leading up to the split. There seems to be the following set of issues over which divergent views have arisen. Firstly, and this seems to loom fairly large, is the issue of Dr. Patankar's leadership and style of functioning. The SMD-D argues that during last few years it has become very individualistic and devoid of democratic decision making. More seriously, the SMD-D considered the attitude and role of the now-SMD led by Dr. Patankar in the further course of the Uchangi dam struggle as unacceptable. It needs to be discussed in a little more detail.

The first issue was the attitude towards the government's decision to revoke the reduction in height that it had earlier announced. SMD-D felt that not enough attention was given to the people's opposition to this decision and willingness to fight on this issue and that the restoration of dam height was too easily accepted. This acceptance implies that an additional 85 acres would be submerged, most of it good agricultural land, without any addition to their rehabilitation package to compensate for it.

The second issue was the ceiling to be applied in the command area of the project. It is customary to apply a ceiling in the command area of a project. Land above the ceiling is acquired by the government and is consolidated into a land pool that is utilised for the rehabilitation of the project affected. The amount of irrigated land in the project command that can become available for the rehabilitation of the project affected therefore depends crucially on the size of the ceiling. The smaller the ceiling the larger the land pool. The movement had been demanding a ceiling of 4 acres to be applied to the Uchangi dam as that is the ceiling for other dams in the area while the government was offering 8 acres. SMD-D feels that Dr. Patankar went back on the original demand of 4 acres and too easily accepted the ceiling of 8 instead of 4 acres - and that it was no accident that Babasaheb Kupekar of the NCP was the leader of the farmers from the Uchangi command area. The villagers want rehabilitation within the command area of the dam, but if the 8-acre ceiling is accepted, some of them will have to accept rehabilitation somewhere else. The SMD-D thus finds the role of Dr. Patankar in the Uchangi struggle unacceptable

and it has played a large part in finally precipitating the split. The Uchangi issue is not yet settled. The construction of the dam is not yet complete due to resistance of the villagers in Jeur under the leadership of SMD (D). They have successfully fought back to reduce the ceiling from 8 acres to 4 acres.

There is also the issue of political alliances. So far, the PSC, and the SMD, had refrained from closely allying with any one party and that in many ways was its strength. It had come closest to something of the kind when it gave a call to oppose the policies of the BJP-Shiv Sena government.(and in fact during the BJP-Shiv Sena regime, many leaders and cadre of both the Congress and NCP joined the mass actions of the PSC).. However, the call here was couched in terms of an anti-fascist and anti-Hindutva call and did not specifically ally with any one party. In 2009 however, after the split SMD unambiguously allied itself with the NCP during the Loksabha and Vidhansabha elections. After the split, this association of SMD and the NCP has become much more evident and by all appearances has grown stronger. For example, SMD actively campaigned for Babasaheb Kupekar of the NCP during the Assembly elections, when all these years, he has been the main political rival of SMD in that area. SMD (D) also points out that Dr. Patankar's main colleague in the Aajra area, Sampat Desai, was gifted a four wheeler with a fund to which Mr. Kupekar made a substantial contribution and this four wheeler was handed over to Desai in a public programme at the hands of Kupekar himself.

Pani Sangharsh Chalwal: A Case Analysis

Framing of issues and core promise

Formally, the SKSS and the Parishad are the organisations that carry out the activities of the PSC. However, so far as the South Maharashtra region is concerned, the unifying ideology, beliefs and leadership between the activities of the SKSS and the MRDPP is provided by the SMD, and more specifically by the South Maharashtra members of the SMD.

Issue Framing

The first phase of the PSC, the Mukti Sangharsh Movement (MSM) was mainly confined to the Khanapur Taluka of Sangli district. However, much of the main framing of the issues took place in this phase. This initial issue framing took place in a dual interaction, between the basic tenets of the SMD and an intensive study of the area and through discussions with local people, sympathetic local political leaders from various political parties and trade unions, urban intellectuals and pro-people scientists.

SMD's belief in the confluence of class, caste and patriarchal oppression meant that equity issues were clearly central to their concerns. But very quickly, drought was identified as one of the most important issues. The initial issue then was framed in terms of the lack of permanent measures to eradicate recurring drought. This linked up with the issue of lack of control over and rights to locally available natural resources by the local populace to ensure sustainable utilisation and equitable access. Since water was one of the fundamental means of production in agriculture, equitable water distribution then became an instrument to sustain basic livelihood for all and eradicate drought. In the long run, it became part of the fight against exploitative caste, class and patriarchal exploitation and for a

comprehensive and radical overhaul of social relations of production in order to ensure the right to local populace to not only determine, govern and sustainably manage locally available natural resources but also reap equitable benefits from the same. In the later transition to the second phase of the PSC, the issue of drought eradication became also an issue of parity and equitable access to Krishna waters for the thirteen drought prone talukas of the Krishna basin and justice for the project affected people who would be the ones who would sacrificing their lands for this purpose. Moreover, for the dam beneficiaries, the PSC's demand of equitable water distribution has meant an increase in number of beneficiaries, and for the dam affected it meant greater assurance of water for their lands in the rehabilitation areas.

What is important here in the framing is the confluence of drought eradication and equitable access to the Krishna waters with the broader long term aim of overthrowing caste, class and patriarchal oppression. There are many groups working with the long term objectives that the SMD had. However, it is the articulation of those broader goals with the issues of drought eradication and equitable access to Krishna waters and the skill with which this was done that has made the PSC what it is. It allowed the PSC to represent itself as the bearer of the general interest of the region even while it championed the cause of those suffering from class, caste and patriarchal oppression. If we accept that at least one aspect of the exercise of hegemony by any social group is the ability to represent its own interests as general and universal interests, it may be said that the PSC succeeded in counter posing a hegemonic viewpoint of the oppressed in South Maharashtra.

Moreover, this interface also provided the PSC with the creative challenge that has fed its growth. The articulation of this interface is a constant effort as newer and newer issues have emerged, newer and newer areas have been added and more and more local issues with local specificities have also been included. As a result what we see now is an elaborate alternative that ranges from macro level policy issues – that themselves range from globalisation, participative irrigation management and water policy – to micro level issues of proposing alternatives to existing projects or proposing new projects.

Core promise

The core promise of the PSC can also be seen to be at two levels. For the more politicised participants of the PSC, especially the SMD leadership, it is this elaborate alternative itself. While the mass propaganda so far has focussed on equitable distribution of water, the very demand for inclusion of landless labourers and deserted women in this equitable distribution organically touches the gender and caste dimension of the issue. This is because dalits constitute the majority of the landless labourers and all deserted women are landless. It is the promise of the abolition of exploitative hegemony of upper castes and classes and patriarchy through the change in methods of production leading to a decentralised agro-industrial society making use of local as well exogenously supplied natural resources in the transformed means, methods relations and forces of production. In other words, a revolution that not just seizes control of the means of production as developed by the capitalist forces but rather radically restructures them into a decentralised renewal based means of productions in a stateless and exploitation less society.

This however is likely to be an insider view of the leadership. It is suggested that the larger unifying core promise of the PSC is constituted in simpler terms. It is simply the promise of drought eradication through access to additional water and the vision of a more equitable and just society. In these two planks one can see two different elements being brought together. On the one hand are water issues, moreover, water issues related to livelihoods, economic concerns if they may be so called, and also issues of a more just and equitable society. However, is not just a general vision of a just and equitable society, it is very much a vision that is based on a certain identity, a regional identity that the PSC leadership has been careful to inculcate. It is an active appropriation and interlinking of traditions that the PSC holds important – the legacy of the Satyashodhak movement, Jotiba Phule, Shahu Maharaj (the progressive ruler of Kolhapur, the traditions of the great king Shivaji,) the legacy of Babasaheb Ambedkar and, inserted within this framework, the legacy of Karl Marx. In fact, Dr. Patankar, who is one of the active symbols of the PSC, begins almost all his speeches with a steady invocation of all these legacies.

It is thus not just a movement for equitable water rights, it is a confluence of the summative identities of the traditions/legacies just named. It is this that makes for the bonds within the PSC, not just the common demand for water but these shared legacies. It is perhaps also important that South Maharashtra is a region in which it is possible for the legacies to come together, not without problems, but nevertheless come together. In other areas, they may not combine as easily. For example, landlessness is relatively smaller in South Maharashtra. However, in Marathwada region of Maharashtra, where landlessness is high, landlordism is stronger, and the conflict between the rural landed upper castes and the landless and marginal dalits is sharper, it will be more difficult to combine the legacies of the Satyashodhak Samaj and Babasaheb Ambedkar because their main followers are likely to be engaged in a sharper struggle. Even in south Maharashtra, inclusion of landless agricultural labourers and of deserted women is not the central plank of the movement. The central plank is equitable water distribution in general and hence the anti-casteist, anti-patriarchal posturing is not the central ideological or programmatic driving force of the movement, even if the leadership has been emphasising anti-casteist, anti-patriarchal legacy. There are very few women activists/leaders in this movement and none of women's issues have been taken up by this movement on a similar scale or manner.

In Vidarbha, which falls in an assured rainfall zone largely, other factors rather than water may be more important for livelihood assurance and the demand for access to water may not have the sufficient urgency to bring together different sections into a common movement. In all probability, therefore, the confluence of the demand for equitable access to water, drought eradication and the combination of the various legacies sustaining the vision of a just society may be a unique phenomenon that gives the PSC its identity, and also perhaps defines its constraints.

Major impacts

Mainstreaming the concept of equitable access

The most important impact of the movement is the change in discourse that the PSC has been able to bring about in respect of water use. It has brought the issue of equitable access to water into the mainstream and has forced all political currents to respond to it and to take some stand on it. The particular concept of equitable access was pioneered by Vilasrao Salunkhe of the Pani Panchayat in the early 70s. The PSC has taken it over, refined, it and built a reasoning around it and made it the basis of an alternative path of development for the Krishna basin. It has now become a concept that is a widely accepted term, though it is understood quite differently by different political currents. There are many distinctive aspects of the way that the issue of equitable access to water has been introduced by the PSC into the mainstream discourse.

The most important change in the concept of equitable access is the one pioneered by Vilasrao in the Pani Panchayat where every household got water enough to irrigate half an acre per family member irrespective of the total land it might own. Access to water was here delinked from land ownership and land rights. Implicit in this is a concept of need. Need is here assessed as the amount of irrigated land that would be required to provide livelihood and sustenance to every member of the household and this was taken to be roughly half an acre per capita. The PSC has taken this further by emphasising the inclusion of landless labourers. This has the potential of becoming a redistribution of productive assets in the villages. Secondly, PSC has worked out a quantum of water amounting to about 3,000 m³ of water per household and uses this amount as a thumb rule in its assessments.

The significance of this change is not clear unless it is contrasted with the dominant approach of the irrigation establishment. It basically thinks in terms of contiguous command areas and providing water to the land in the command areas and equity within the command is to assure equal water delivery to all the land in the command. Here access to water becomes mediated by ownership of land in the command. The PSC concept would start with the people and their requirements and the command would then be derived from it. This is essentially a difference between a land centred and people centred approach to water and irrigation.

Right to water as part of the right to livelihood

Water is also seen here as a means of livelihood and equitable access to water is seen as part of a right to livelihood, and hence it is extended to all, even the landless. Here the landless labourers are seen essentially as landless farmers or peasants and are therefore counted as part of all farmers. It is argued that giving them the right to water will enable them to acquire land for farming and farm it profitably. Similarly, water is also seen here as an independent means of production and the PSC has also argued that equitable access to water, de-linked from land rights is akin to land reforms in that it is a redistribution of the means of production, since if we look at land and water together as forming a productive unit, equitable access brings about a radical redistribution of this productive capacity that can supplement land reform without necessarily countering it.

Since every farmer is entitled to water in proportion to the number of persons the right to equitable access to water stands as an independent right de-linked from land rights and landholding. This provides

expanded access to poorer farmers which is an important input in their primary source of livelihood which is agriculture. Moreover, since exploitative hierarchies based on class, caste and gender exercise their power in rural areas through control of land, delinking access of water from land also has an implicit challenge to the hegemony exercised by these hierarchies. What is remarkable is that it has found its way into the manifesto of the ruling coalition which included allocation of water according to population as an important clause in its manifesto.

Inclusion of dam affected and their access to water

As importantly perhaps the change in discourse also involved a change by including the oustees who 'sacrificed' their land for the greater good and therefore stood in need of recognition and compensation for making equitable water access possible. This is a theme that runs through many of the speeches given from the PSC platforms, by small and big leaders alike and by those who are insiders as well as outsiders who are called upon to share the dais and express their views. And that itself indicates the power of the pressure for inclusion of the dam affected that the PSC has created. It is because of this inclusion that the forces of the dam affected and the drought affected have been able to combine instead of being pitched against each other.

The movement has strongly argued for water rights for the dam affected. Though the idea that the oustees should receive irrigated land has been there in the movement right from the beginning, the new stress on their right to water, up to and including the pani bhatta in the interim period is a much sharper focus on the rights component. Equitable access therefore does not just mean water for the command areas as it used to mean when the focus was on the irrigable gravity command rather than the individual farmers who were served, but it now means equitable access for the combined community of the dam affected and the potential beneficiaries.

Facilitation of rehabilitation, dam construction and water access

Hand in hand with the change in discourse, the movement has also had an important impact on the water resources in the area. Through its agitations, it has helped in the rehabilitation of the oustees, facilitated dam construction by demanding and getting greater fund allocations for the dam projects as well as for rehabilitation. It has also kept up the pressure for greater fund allocation to the major lift schemes in the area like the Tembu and Takari schemes.

However, it may perhaps be said that the movement has been much more successful in expanding water access than in distributing it equitably, especially within the village/command. It is noteworthy that the acceptance of proportionality to population is implicitly mainly aimed at regional distribution and allocation. It is not very clear whether it applies to the micro level and intra-regional water access. Use of the word population implies aggregate and bulk allocations rather than individual allocations, though there is still sufficient ambiguity to allow the movement to interpret it in its own way. So far at least, its major achievements in terms of equitable access have been in changing the discourse and in

getting it accepted in principle by the government. In this respect the imprecision of the term is an important component that allows different participants to identify with it and participate in the movement without major clash of interest.

Methods

Strategies employed by PSC

Joint action by drought and dam affected was of course the core strategy that has been the innovative element, the USP of the movement. But as it went along it also evolved innovative political and mobilisational strategies that were important in its growth and spread.

Relations with other political forces

The leadership of the movement which rested with the SMD attempted a way of operation of the day to day organisation of activity which has often been upheld as a non-sectarian approach within the left but has been rarely practised. The insistence was on the programme and the founding strategy rather than on party affiliation and activists from the other left parties, especially the local activists, were invited and even encouraged to work for the movement without severing their party ties. This created a broad left political space and the movement has had the support and participation of many left activists and leaders over the years.

As far as the larger polity was concerned, the movement drew a clear cut line between the Hindutva parties on the right and the others, and similarly welcomed any of the leaders from the non-Hindutva parties who wished to participate in the rallies and protests. However, the same sort of caveat generally operated that in one way or the other they had to show their agreement to the basic concept of equitable water distribution and their opposition to the Hindutva forces.

It also helped that the PSC operated in areas that formed the political base of some of the important ministers of the government. It became impractical for these ministers and their parties to ignore / avoid the demands of PSC, which was winning such wide support for its ideas. Moreover, the espousal of the cause of the dam-affected and drought-affected by some of these ministers earlier when their parties were not part of the ruling government had an important role in helping them come to power. This made it politically difficult for them to ignore their demands once they came to power.

However, there also seems to have been a downside to this and with some regularity, leaders have been dissociating as much as associating with the movement. Early leaders like Sampatrao Pawar and Raosaheb Shinde are no longer part of the movement. Similarly, the late Nagnath Anna Naikawadi, a great supporter and prominent leader, was also not associated with the movement towards the end of his life. In sum, the growth of the movement cannot be seen as a linear process of increasing accretion; in fact, it is possible that the number of active leaders and activists of the movement has remained the same or even been reduced and there has been a process of turn over within the movement.

More serious are the differences in strategy that are reflected in the recent vertical split. The movement has always operated as a pressure group with respect to the ruling parties and their constituencies. The difference now is related to the degree of association with the ruling parties. The portion of the SMD leadership led by Dr. Bharat Patankar chose to go with the ruling Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) in the Assembly elections in 2009. The plea was similar to the principle that was applied for participation of leaders in PSC rallies, that they proclaim in some way their acceptance and support of the PSC principles. The other group that now goes as SMD(D) believes that this is going too far, and while it is permissible to have such participation in individual rallies, mere proclamation of allegiance to a viewpoint is not enough for such a close political collaboration. This shows up the limitations of maintaining the type of broad political alliance mentioned above without getting embroiled in party politics. SMD (D) argues that the unequivocal support to the NCP is a departure from the earlier norms and will harm the movement in the long run.

Building alternatives

By far the most innovative aspect of the PSC has been its attitude towards alternatives. Normally, protest movements do not consider it their responsibility to provide an alternative to what they are protesting against. It is generally assumed to be the responsibility of the state or the other party to provide that alternative. What is novel here is that the movement considers it an important point to be able to articulate an alternative that would satisfy the conditions they are demanding.

There are a number of fall outs of this conviction. First, it means that the suggested alternative must be shown, at least prima facie, to be feasible, practicable and viable. It puts on the movement the responsibility that the demands it makes are not unrealistic and are not so to speak 'asking for the moon' and are not an excessive demand put forward mainly to up the ante and raise the level at which the final anticipated compromise would take place.

It also implies that authentic and detailed information be available if an alternative is to be worked out. Since the state is often the repository of this information, it leads to a demand for greater transparency in information exchange and towards a right to information (RTI). Many of the struggles therefore have had a component of RTI to their struggles, much before the RTI Act was passed by government. The strategy helped the movement develop scientific plans based on government data and was seen as part of the decentralised democracy with parallel people's power that the movement visualised.

It also implied that the movement had to go into the technical details of many things related to land water and energy management. The movement therefore required a close collaboration with technical experts. In fulfilling the demands of the movement and the questions it set, the experts themselves have had to evolve new ideas and innovative solutions. The close link between innovative and alternative technology and technologists has been a strong feature of the movement and has much to do with getting the government to accept their ideas at least on a pilot scale.

However, the limitations of such an effort should also be kept in mind. At best the movement could demonstrate outlines of an alternative. The contribution was mainly in the form of demonstrating a

prima facie feasibility, practicability and viability of the possible alternative. Working out of an alternative to an existing government scheme or plan is, in its totality, an exercise that required information, funds and manpower of the same order of magnitude as the original government effort and this is well nigh impossible for the movement. Moreover, the issues involving restructuring were aimed at large irrigation systems and there was no 'scale model' that could be demonstrated for them as could be done for other spheres, for example watershed development, where alternative plans for watershed development could be developed or for sanitation where village level plans were feasible. For this reason, many of the alternatives proposed by the movement have remained at the prima facie level, and for lack of sufficient funds have taken unanticipated shapes like they have in Baliraja and in Takari.

Confrontation and collaboration

The requirements of maintaining a strategic confrontation and a tactical collaboration with the state has been an acknowledged problem for self professed revolutionary parties and movements whose ultimate aim has been the revolutionary overthrow of state power. The PSC has been able to maintain this balance quite well. One component of this has been the strategy of alternatives. This has often allowed the movement to gain wider acceptance, often cutting into the political base of the ruling parties themselves. It also makes it difficult for the government to dismiss the movement's demands out of hand and paves the way for negotiation. It also helped form a basis for further collaboration in detailing and implementing alternative arrangements. Thus it made it possible for the movement to maintain its strategic opposition even while engaging in tactical collaboration which was now grounded in the alternatives which provided a clear basis and reason for the collaboration.

However, this was also backed by a sophisticated choice of timing, form and of agitation. Election times were utilised skilfully to force candidates from all parties to take a stand on the issues the movement raised. Persistent questioning of this type had led to the now ruling party political leaders accepting and supporting the movement's demands before they came to power creating a favourable climate for negotiations later on. Similarly, timing was often chosen to coincide with anniversaries of important social and political figures and memorable events. This helped the movement claim the combined heritage of all the figures it held dear. Most of the forms that the movement chose were militant, participative but disciplined. The Thiyya Andolans, or indefinite 'sit in's described earlier and the way they were organised created a whole set of activities and processes around them which helped root the movement among different sections and also created the informal networks of relations and processes that characterise a social movement.

The movement also had a clear sense of when to withdraw and an orderly withdrawal was an important component of the way the struggles were organised. It generally did not bite off more than it could chew. Though a whole charter of demands was often repeated during an agitation, it was fairly clearly divided into its long term and short term components. The main objective was seen as twofold. To create awareness around the long term objectives, and agreement was often sought from the government in principle rather than in great detail and to make actual progress on concessions from the

government in respect of the short term demands. Moreover, the process of agreement on those issues also was related to an orderly withdrawal. A verbal promise was never considered sufficient, it was insisted that the decisions be minuted and the minutes include future course of action. This enabled the movement to create an instrument of accountability in the form of a written document or minutes which then were used for implementation, follow up and subsequent agitation and struggle if needed. The ebb and tide of confrontation and collaboration with the government was thus seen in terms of a process that ensured progressive accumulation of strength; of increasing concessions without loss in militancy or strategic confrontation.

Combined with this was a strategy of utilising the space within the existing government framework and laws to push for expansion of existing scope of legislation. As part of this, PSC launched agitations for effective implementation of existing legislation in a more equitable and transparent manner. One such provision is the provision in the rules that alternative avenues for fulfilling project objectives that minimised displacement be considered before a project is sanctioned and implemented. This clause is being effectively used to demand consideration of equitable and displacement minimising alternatives. The demand for a pani bhatta also arose out of a similar interpretation of the interim benefit clause.

Participation in the movement

The participation in the campaigns of the movement has been very large. Participation in local campaigns and struggles has been quite large and in the decentralised protest demonstrations tens of thousands of people have been reported to have gathered at each of the taluka centres in the 13 drought prone talukas of the Krishna basin. The strength of the movement is indicated by the Thiyya Andolan that the movement organised in Pune in 2004. More than 7,000 persons had come all the way to Pune, more than 200 km away from their villages in order to participate in the Andolan. As pointed out earlier, each of these itself involved a process at the village level in which at least the active people in the village had to participate.

The different forms of agitations, struggle and outreach that the movement had evolved also facilitated the participation of people at various levels and brought into its ambit all sections of rural society. In different struggles, women constitute one third to half of the total mobilization. The movement also called on teachers, the youth, the dalits, those who toiled, the *bahujan samaj* – in short it utilised the many identities prevailing in society for its benefit. An important component of this was the experts and technically and scientifically trained persons who they sought to draw in by virtue of exhibitions, fairs and a discussion of the alternatives they put forward. The movement also maintained close interaction with emerging innovative technologies in intensive farming, organic farming and low external input sustainable farming. The importance of these interactions lies in the cross-bonds, the informal bonds that form across sections and identities within the movement and gives them the character of a movement rather than a campaign.

Leadership and decision making within the movement

As mentioned earlier, the leadership of the movement is essentially the SMD activists and leaders in the area. The PSC as a whole has also associated with it the names of renowned leaders through the two SMOs as well as their association with the various campaigns and actions of the PSC. Most of the local SMD leadership is drawn from rural youth who have had various degrees of professional and educational backgrounds, but a majority of them are well educated. All of them come from rural and farming backgrounds and many come from poor farmer or agricultural labourer backgrounds.

Initially the entire leadership was treated and treated themselves as activists. Exigencies of the situation have now also created a parallel hierarchy of leadership that is clearly visible. Prominent among the activists-leaders is Dr. Bharat Patankar who has acquired a stature, length of political experience and acuteness and innovative thinking that is quite in advance of other activists in the region. There is also a second line of activists-leaders who have a comparable length of political experience and ability but do not have and/or are not conferred a similar stature. There is then the third rank of activist-leaders who have joined the movement much later and have a comparably shorter length of political experience. In spite of gender being large in the writings and demands of the movement, the presence of women in the activist-leadership positions is small and their contribution to decision making is even smaller.

Decision making within the movement is a complex process because the movement does not necessarily have a formal structure that determines the process. In this process we may distinguish campaign related decisions, SMO related decisions and long term decisions. However, one trend was quite clear, that in overall decision making SMD exercised a major influence and also provided the continuity of interrelated decision making that characterises a movement and confers it a constant identity over time.

Campaign related decisions were taken by the group of leading activists related to that particular campaign. The composition of this group depended on the campaign under consideration. If the campaign was not only about wider policy issues, but related to a particular project or dam or village/s, a substantial group of persons from that particular project or dam or village/s were chosen to be part of the decision making process. The meeting usually called the Karyakartyanchi *baithak* or the activists' meeting would be the body that deliberated and took decisions related to the campaign. It could and often did comprise persons/activists from different parties, and in many of the larger campaigns, the number of SMD activists could be outnumbered in terms of numbers as well as in terms of stature, for example, when leaders like Nagnath Anna participated in these meetings. As has been pointed out earlier, campaigns were carried out in a transparent manner and negotiations took place in the presence of the assembled persons, not necessarily at the negotiation table but outside or in close proximity and the results were immediately conveyed to and ratified by the assembly. This was what created the trust and openness that characterised the movement.

The SKSS started out with a formal structure but soon the formal structure was as good as abandoned. Membership was in principle open to anyone agreeing with the programme and paying membership fee, though this was soon abandoned.. There is no process any longer of who is a formal SKSS member. In that sense, SKSS is now informally the PSC and all those who profess to be part of it are by virtue of that part of the movement. All calls given in its name are calls given by the PSC leadership. The Parishad

does have a more formal structure and the dam affected are in any case a much more clearly defined entity than the drought affected. The Parishad sporadically asks for membership dues and enrolls members and asks for donations and contributions when the dam affected get their benefits and compensation. For this reason the Parishad has a more formal presence. Since most of the work is carried out by the activists and in the form of specific campaigns and actions, the decision making body of the regional activity of the Parishad is simply the group of activists looking after a particular campaign or action.

The relationship of the PSC and the SMD is a complex one. SMD has regional committees and a central co-ordination committee that takes its decisions. Regional centres comprising members within a region are virtually autonomous bodies though they do have to conform to the decisions taken by the larger group and the central leadership. Thus the PSC is led by the South Maharashtra members of SMD. Normally larger policy decisions are discussed and decided upon in the central co-ordination committee. Important campaigns and agitations may also be discussed by the central body. However, for most part, the regional committees and their leadership are free to take their own decisions, especially day to day decisions, though of course they are expected to follow the guidelines that may be evolved by either the general body of the SMD or the central co-ordination committee from time to time. Many of the particular characteristics of the PSC come out of the shared perspectives between the central and the regional – in this case, the South Maharashtra centre – of the SMD. The group is fairly small (a little less than a hundred). Membership of SMD is characteristic of a political grouping and one can only become a member after understanding and agreeing to the basic documents that outline the basic principles of SMD and a fairly intensive interaction with and formal acceptance by the existing members of the group.

Recently, in the period leading up to the 2009 split, there have been more and more complaints about the violation of this decision making process and a loss of its collective character of the decision making within the SMD as well within the other fora in South Maharashtra in which SMD operates, including that of the PSC. The criticism is basically directed at Dr. Bharat Patankar for taking unilateral decisions without regard to collective processes. Dr. Bharat Patankar has always maintained that he has followed all due process wherever it was formally required. It is possible that both processes may be true and that the informal modes may have changed in favour of concentration of decision making in the hands of Dr. Patankar even while the formal processes have been observed. If this were to continue at least one of the important elements that made the PSC more than a series of campaigns and more of a social movement might be weakened substantially.

Resource mobilisation

Very often the resource mobilisation – in terms of financial resources above all – in left currents comes from the funds accumulated through trades union or mass organisations associated with the movements. Since both the SMOs lack a formal structure and membership, resource mobilisation through the formal structure is small. The Parishad may periodically have some contributions from members when it receives lump sum payments for compensation arrears and the like, but these too

tend to be intermittent and not very large. Most of the resource mobilisation therefore has to come from elsewhere.

The issue may again be divided into two parts. Resources needed for campaigns and specific actions and resources needed to sustain full time activists and long term activity. Resource mobilisation for specific campaigns follows the same logic as that of campaign decision making. It is limited to those campaigns and the net may be spread as wide as across the state and beyond, as for example was the case for the Baliraja dam when resources were mobilised from many places in the state as well as outside in small sums. The resource mobilisation activity itself flows into the campaign activity and also becomes a tool for awareness creation and outreach. There have been many innovative strategies often built into the campaign itself, for example, the mobilisation of food packets for the Thiyya Andolan in Pune in 2004 mentioned earlier.

Resource mobilisation for full time activists and long term activity is a different kettle of fish. For those full time activists belonging to other organised parties, their sustenance as well as the ancillary resources needed for their travel usually comes from sources specific to that political party, while their incidental expenses and support required for participation in the campaigns is part of the resource mobilisation effort for that particular campaign. Resources for the sustenance of the SMD full time activists come from the resources generated by SMD. The SMD has a rule of a 'levy' for its members whereby members are expected to contribute one per cent of their income to the SMD pool for its full time activists. Though it is not paid by all members and it is not clear whether the one per cent rule is uniformly applied, the SMD does generate a pool of funds for its activists. Full time activists are paid a minimum subsistence amount out of this fund that can at best pay for their travel. This amount is generally much smaller than what would be needed to live life even slightly above subsistence level in those areas. Often this amount is supplemented by spouse's income or family support or small time assignments and other work which may be taken without hindrance of their political activity. In practice it may not be wrong to say that the SMD contribution supplements the other sources of income and allows the family to let the activist work full time. These amounts may be small or large, and often in cases like those of Dr. Patankar, quite substantial. A couple of activists of SMD have been supported for some years with a very modest but very valuable monthly honorarium of one to two thousand rupees by Trusts like the GM Trust, a small family trust in Mumbai, and the renowned Samajik Krutadnyata Nidhi, set up by some of the progressive, socialist leaders in Maharashtra to support full time activists. In the early phase of SMD made conscious efforts to collect small donations from urban sympathisers but over time this practice has weakened considerably.

For a few years spanning the nineties and the early years of the twenty first century, the Walwe Sugar Factory helped support activists by providing them with bed and board as well as providing them with 'wheels', vehicles when they were needed to run campaigns or organise actions. This support, especially the vehicle support, which as the leading activist-leader was available mainly to Dr. Patankar, helped the movement improve its outreach immensely and build a basin wide network and constituency. By the late nineties, however, relations between Nagnath Anna who was the moving spirit behind the Walwa factory and the SMD leadership, especially Dr. Patankar, had begun to deteriorate and the movement

felt the need to take a distance from Nagnath Anna. The support provided by him, especially the vehicles, became an issue. It was essential to procure a similar kind of support for maintaining the basin wide networks and continuity that had emerged. As a consequence, the SMD began a special drive to collect funds to buy a small car and gift it to Dr. Bharat Patankar on his 50th birthday that fell in the year 2000. An extensive campaign by SMD succeeded in its objective and the car was gifted to Dr. Bharat Patankar as a mark of respect and homage to the work he had put in over the years for the movement.

The gift probably created as many problems as it solved. The first problem was the maintenance and upkeep of the car and the fuel cost involved in the extensive travels that it had to undertake. Most of this was borne personally by Dr. Patankar or his family though the movement did contribute through the interest earned from a fixed deposit in a bank especially kept aside for that purpose. Having the vehicle at his disposal greatly increased the scope of the movement and incessant travel has been the lot of the vehicle for many years now. However, it also greatly increased the distance between Dr. Bharat Patankar and the other activist leaders. Very soon Dr. Bharat Patankar became the sole face of the movement in most of the basin. The movement began to be more and more identified with Dr. Patankar the roving ambassador who carried it everywhere. This identification between the movement and Dr. Patankar was soon to become a problem and contribute significantly to the split that took place in 2009.

Handling contradiction

The remarkable success that the PSC has had in expressing itself as the movement of the drought affected and the dam affected and their mutual mobilisation for each other's demands obscures the difficulty of handling the contradictions between them. It is important to realise that while at a systemic and a macro level, their interests may be shown to be historically and potentially very similar if not identical, at a micro level their interests are clearly and plainly contradictory. While it is nice that the dam affected join the mobilisation for the demand that dam projects be expedited and receive greater financial outlays and that the drought affected join the demand for better compensation, in any given project the command area farmers will be pushing for as large an increase in storage and availability of water as possible while the dam affected will be pushing for a similar reduction. The parties who were shoulder to shoulder in the Mumbai march do not sit shoulder to shoulder in Urmodi or in Uchangi or in any other project. They sit across each other.

It is only when we place it in this perspective that we see how remarkably successful the PSC has been, and also we should realise how fragile that ability is. It is only constant and creative application of negotiating and mediating skills that has made this possible. However, the case of the Uchangi dam, especially in the context of the split illustrates the fragility of the situation. Take for example, the case of the ceiling in Uchangi, whether it should be 4 acres or 8 acres. Who decides? It is obvious that Dr. Patankar felt that 8 was a more pragmatic figure since he accepted it. However, as the SMD(D) pointed out, 4 acres was the norm in all comparable projects in the area, and there was no special reason to go out of the way and favour command area farmers by increasing the ceiling to 8 acres. Moreover, increasing the ceiling to 8 acres meant that the land pool would not be sufficient to ensure rehabilitation in the vicinity of their original villages for most of the rehabilitated families. It is clear that eight is

favourable to the command area farmers while four is favourable to the dam affected. The issue then is one whether we can indefinitely continue to find a balance acceptable to both, or do we at some point have to make a choice. The presence of this contradiction at the heart of the identity one has created is therefore fragile²² and in the PSC has been continually resolved through innovative and creative means. The moot point is how long and how indefinitely this can continue. As we have said earlier, the movement is at a crossroad, but whichever way it goes, or rather, whichever way the two sections go, historically, whatever the PSC ac has achieved so far will remain a remarkable success of making water a central point in welding an alliance of the drought and the dam affected.

²² The state is therefore able to pit the dam beneficiaries and the dam affected against each other; This is what was done in the case of the Sardar Sarovar Project in Gujarat . However, normally command area farmers in most of the other dams in the PSC area constituted the drought affected and could be brought into the strategy on that basis. In Uchangi, however, the command area is not part of the drought prone region, This also clearly shows the limits of the expansion of the strategy; it is confined to the drought prone regions and outside that region the potential of bridging the contradiction is likely to be much smaller.

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