

1.THEME- STRIVING FOR EQUALITY

Abstract

This text focuses on inequality that is prevalent in our society and agitation movements that were erupted against them such as Tawa Matsya Sangh where the people protested against the government since they were not satisfied with the rehabilitation of the displaced community.

Main Text

Throughout the world – in every community, village, city and town—you will find that there are some people who are known and respected because of their fight for equality.

Often, some of these persons become more widely recognised because they have the support or represent large numbers of people who have united to address a particular issue of inequality. In India, there are several struggles in which people have come together to fight for issues that they believe are important.



When dams are built thousands of people are displaced. Whole villages are uprooted and people are forced to go and build new homes, start new lives elsewhere. Most of these people are poor. In urban areas too, bastis in which poor people live are often uprooted. Some of them are relocated to areas outside the city. Their work as well as their children's schooling is severely disrupted because of the distance from the outskirts of the city to these locations. This displacement of people and communities is a problem that has become quite widespread in our country. People usually come together to fight against this. There are several organisations across the country fighting for the rights of the displaced.



Narmada Movement is a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) that mobilised tribal people, farmers, environmentalists and human rights activists against the Sardar Sarovar Dam being built across the Narmada River in Gujarat. It originally focused on the environmental issues related to trees that would be submerged under the dam water. Recently it has re-focused the aim to enable poor citizens, especially the oustees (displaced people) to get full rehabilitation facilities from the government.

People felt that their suffering would not be in vain... accepted the trauma of displacement believing in the promise of irrigated fields and plentiful harvests. So, often the survivors of Rihand told us that they accepted their sufferings as sacrifice for the sake of their nation. But now, after thirty bitter years of being adrift, their livelihood having even being more precarious, they keep asking: "Are we the only ones chosen to make sacrifices for the nation?"

The Tawa Matsya Sangh in Madhya Pradesh is example of people coming together to fight for an issue. The Tawa River flows through Betul, before joining the Narmada in

Hoshangabad. The Tawa dam began to be built in 1958 and was completed in 1978. It submerged large areas of forest and agricultural land. The forest dwellers were left with nothing. Some of the displaced people settled around the reservoir and apart from their meagre farms found a livelihood in fishing, they earned very little.



In 1994, the government gave the rights for fishing in the Tawa reservoir to private contractors. These contractors drove the local people away and got cheap labour from outside. The contractors began to threaten the villagers, who did not want to leave, by bringing in hoodlums. The villagers stood united and decided that it was time to set up an organisation and do something to protect their rights. The newly formed Tawa Matsya Sangh (TMS) organised rallies and a chakka jam (road blockade), demanding their right to continue fishing for their livelihood. In response to their protests, the government created a committee to assess the issue. The committee recommended that fishing rights be granted to the villagers for their livelihood. In 1996, the Madhya Pradesh government decided to give to the people displaced by the Tawa dam the fishing rights for the reservoir. A five-year lease agreement was signed two months later.



Tawa Reservoir

With the TMS taking over the fishworkers were able to increase their earnings substantially. This was because they set up the cooperative which would buy the fishes from them at a fair price. The cooperative would then arrange to transport and sell this in markets where they would get a good price. They have now begun to earn three times more than they earned earlier. The TMS has also begun giving the fishworkers loans for repair and the buying of new nets. By managing to earn a higher wage as well as preserving the fish in the reservoir, the TMS has shown that when people's organisations get their rights to livelihood, they can be good managers.

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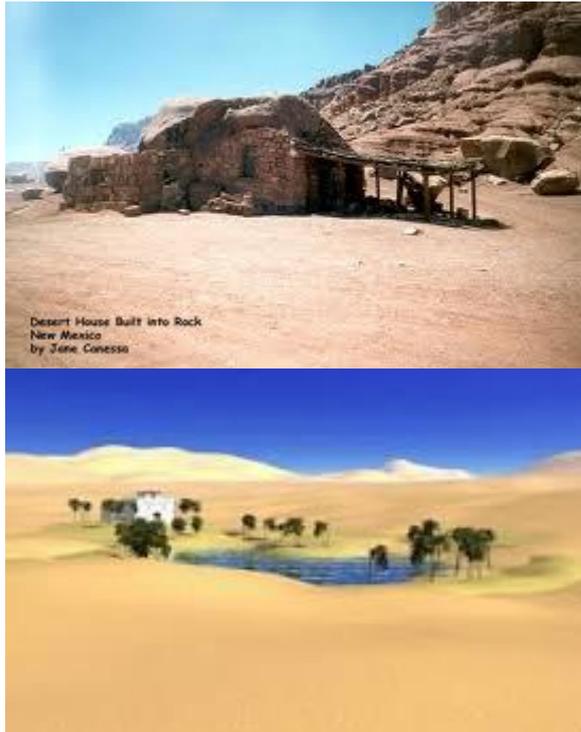
2. THEME - LIFE IN HOT DESERTS

Bashir is a 19 year old boy and working at a petrol pump in Cairo, the capital city of Egypt. He belongs to a desert tribe called Bedouin. It is a nomadic tribe, but recently his family is settled in a remote area of northern Egypt. He went to Cairo with a neighbouring family in search of some job. Many people from his locality go to cities in search of jobs. Remote areas have less job opportunities. He also faced many problems in getting a job because every employer in the city wanted an educated person and Bashir is not literate accordingly. At last he got small job at a petrol pump as a helper. He can afford a simple living with his salary.

Bashir now wanted to get his younger brother to the city. His name is Badrul. He wants Badrul to get education in a school so that he may not face the same problem of unemployment in coming times. These days all work is technology based and education is required to understand the technology.



The life in remote desert areas is very tough. Desert is an arid region featured by high or low temperatures and with scarce vegetation. Sahara desert lies in the north of African continent. It covers eleven countries like ---Sudan, Egypt, Tunisia, Mali, Mauritania, Chad, Morocco, Niger, Algeria, Libya and Western Sahara. It is difficult for anyone to live in place where there is no water to drink and no grass for animals or cattle to feed on and no water for cultivation of crops. When we think of a desert we visualise the sand stretches and sand dunes. Sahara desert is covered with elevated plateaus with rocky terrain and also gravel plains.



The scorching heat and parch dry is the part of desert climate. Days are very hot and nights are too cold. People wear heavy robes to protect themselves against dust storms, hot winds and too cold nights. Bashir and his family also wear heavy robes. He reminds of an incident that his friend died due to snake bite while playing. Animals like camel, hyenas, jackals, foxes, scorpions and many varieties of snakes and lizards are also found here.

It is very difficult for Bashir's family to find any occupation other than rearing of livestock like –camels, goats, sheeps, horses and donkeys. Bashir's father collect milk, hides flesh and hair from livestock. Hides of animals is used for leather, from which he makes belts, shippers, waters bottles and bags. Hair of animal is used for mats, carpets, clothes and blankets. These articles are sold in the nearby market. This is how they earns their livelihood.

Bashir's family live near an oasis, where a little greenery is there with cactus, date palms and acacia. Bashir helps his father in cutting and collecting the stems of date palms when he is there with his family. The date palm stems are used to cover the roof of the houses to protect them from heat and hot winds. Their live stock also gets fodder from desert vegetation. The oasis in the Sahara and Nile valley in Egypt support settled population, since water is available, the people grow date palms, crops such as rice, wheat barley and beans. They grow cotton also which is world-wide famous.

The discovery of oil/petroleum is in great demand throughout the world. Bashir wants his brother Badrul should get employment in any of these oil companies. But it would be possible when his brother would go to school and avail required education. He made up his mind to get his brother to Cairo for studies.