The Sardar Sarovar Dam Project

Subaltern Erasure and Neocolonial Advancement in Urban Development Discourse

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ABSTRACT

Spanning across the mid-20th century to contemporary society, the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project in India has been a site of highly contested legal, social, and economic controversies. The project was initially praised for the benefits it would bring to the communities clustered around the Narmada River, the site of the dam, through its innovative water irrigation and hydroelectric properties. However, the project soon tumbled into chaos as the social activist group Narmada Bachao Andolan 'Save the Narmada Movement' (NBA) protested and petitioned the Indian government to halt construction of the dam. Comprised of Indigenous peoples, climate protesters, and human rights activists, the NBA argued that the native people who lived alongside the Narmada River were being forcefully displaced from their ancestral homes, causing harm to their communities, and leaving them vulnerable to exploitation. In this paper, I seek to understand how the discourse surrounding the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project functions as a societal representative mechanism, and how this effects the way the adivasi and their struggles were understood by mainstream society. Applying an explicitly feminist and decolonial approach to my analysis of the discourse, I examine a legal document from the Supreme Court of India and the construction of wider economic narratives relating to the dam to explore the extent to which the discourse serves to erase subaltern identities and advance neocolonial ideologies.

INTRODUCING THE SARDAR SAROVAR DAM PROJECT

The deep and cascading waters of the Narmada River flow through the Indian states of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, forming a boundary between North and South India before spilling out into the Arabian Sea. Beloved in Hindu culture for its peaceful and prosperous spiritual significance (Apnisanskriti n.d.), the river became the site of a decades-long controversy regarding the construction and impact of more than 3,200 developmental dam projects in the late 20th century (BBC 2000). Initially conceptualized in the 1940s as the Narmada Valley Project, a hydroelectric and irrigation development scheme, opposition to the dam halted the onset of the project until 1979 (Sahoo, Prakash and Sahoo 2014, 888). The construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam, the biggest dam of the Narmada Valley Project, was controlled by the Narmada Water Dispute Tribunal, who oversaw the usage and sharing of the water between the four states of Gujarat,

Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra. In the same year the project began, the UN Development Program also joined the planning team. However, despite the original implementation of the Sardar Sarovar Dam going smoothly and the partnerships between different stakeholders appearing amicable, the dam was to become embroiled in heated and aggressive contest in the coming years (Sahoo, Prakash and Sahoo 2014).

Conceived as a forward-thinking project that embodied 'modern' engineering to provide power for the four states (Sahoo, Prakash and Sahoo 2014, 889; quotations added), the vast scale of the dam's construction forcefully displaced some of the state's most vulnerable adivasi (Hindi for 'original dwellers') and Indigenous people who live along the river. This displacement fostered anger and catalyzed rising protests from social and environmental activists who were concerned for the safety and livelihood of the Narmada River adivasi. Nonetheless, the dam also provided irrigation for 17,920 km^2 of land over 12 districts and 3,393 villages, and afforded flood protection for areas surrounding the river (Sahoo, Prakash and Sahoo 2014, 889). Why, then, was the project considered so controversial if it had so many tangible benefits to the wider community around the dam? Are there threads of colonial ideology or capitalist influence to be found in the decision to prioritize urban development over the welfare of the local adivasi? And how does discourse present an advantageous lens through which to ask these questions? To consider these questions, this paper seeks to examine to what extent the discourse surrounding the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project functions to advance colonial ideologies and erase the identities of the native adivasi living along the river.

British sociologist Stuart Hall examines how language and representation within society function to construct common codes of meaning. According to Hall, the concept of representation itself can be described as 'larger units of analysis – narratives, statements, groups of images, whole discourses which operate across a variety of texts, areas of knowledge about a subject which have acquired widespread authority' (1997, 27). Following Hall's definition, discourse can thus be termed the linguistic and representative practice through which social meaning is constructed. These various mediums through which discourse can present itself highlight its prevalence across social life and the power it has in maintaining social meaning. Therefore, by electing to research the discourse surrounding the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project, I hope to uncover how the representation of the project in normative legal and economic frameworks may be influenced by colonial ideologies, serve to uphold harmful Western jurisdiction, and subsequently marginalize certain groups. I hope to demonstrate the need for a decolonial, feminist critique of urban developmental discourse and the importance of implementing a more critically reflexive urban development praxis. As Laurie Flood says, 'exploring [neocolonial] patterns helps [to] shed light

on why development, which is supposed to be a beneficial process for all, often in actual fact causes both […] victimization and displacement' (Flood 1997, 16).

A SHIFTING MECHANISM: COLONIALISM TO NEOCOLONIALISM

There has been much debate in recent years surrounding the language used to describe the South of the globe and the implications that terms such as 'third world' and 'developing' have for inhabitants of these countries (Silver 2021). Arturo Escobar discusses the thematic infantilization and salvation praxis of Occidental development discourse, which framed the South as lesser in its 'discovery of mass poverty in Asia, Africa and Latin America' (1995, 21). To maintain control over these countries, where there was increasing instability due to decolonizing struggles and the fight for nationalism, the 'developed world' created the narrative of the South as a problem that needed fixing (Escobar 1995). Not only did this bolster their economic, social, and political control, it also served to maintain Eurocentric ideologies as the hegemonic norm.

These colonial, capitalist, and ethnocentric views of what constituted a 'developed' country have been long contested by feminist theorists, with feminist urbanists calling for a decolonial approach to urban development (Beebeejaun 2017; Roy 2014). Every year, around 15 million people are displaced from their homes to make way for massive urban development projects such as dams, highways, and mining (Terminski 2015; cited in Aboda et. al. 2019, 100). Consequently, communities that are displaced often face increased risk to their social and economic capital, with women, the elderly, and children experiencing the worst impact due to their larger social vulnerabilities (Stanley 2004; Mehta 2009; Terminski 2011; cited in Aboda et. al., 2019, 100). To begin to understand why this is the case, I insist upon a feminist critique of urban development praxis, focusing through a decolonial lens which I contextualize further in this section.

As established, there is a pressing need for theories and praxis which actively address the prevalence of inequalities in the canon of global urbanism. One theory that seeks to understand the inequalities present in societies once ruled by colonizers is postcolonialism. Postcolonial studies grew in the late 1970s after the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (Rao 2013, 2) and in essence explores the cultural, economic, political, and historical impact of colonial rule on the world with the aim to destabilize ethnocentric perspectives. To condense its complexity into a singular postcolonial theory is not feasible, but a key tenet of the studies is that it is impossible to understand contemporary global structures and societies without also considering their relationship to colonialism (Elam 2019). However, theorists have also debated the legitimacy of the term 'postcolonial', asserting that 'post' signifies a moving past and that the prefixes 'anti-'

or 'de-' colonial better demonstrate the tight hold colonial ideologies still have over areas of the world (Rao 2013; Shohat 1992).

Akin to postcolonial theory, decolonization as a praxis is also concerned with dismantling harmful Eurocentric ideals and liberating historically oppressed groups. With no singular definition of what 'decolonial work' is, a common aim among the field is the dismantling of all colonial systems and structures present in society. In their seminal work 'On Decoloniality', Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh iterate the necessity for decolonial work to remain relational, citing the importance of 'different local histories and embodied conceptions' (2018, 1). Furthermore, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's (2012) equally explosive work 'Decolonization is not a Metaphor' calls for decolonization as an active, reparative practice that gives stolen land back to Indigenous communities. In the past few years, there has been an increase in cultural awareness of these spatial legacies and a recognition of the importance these lands had and still have for Indigenous communities (Champagne 2008). For the purposes of this critical case study of the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project, I utilize the term 'decolonial' as a reference to the praxis of dismantling colonial hegemony in all its forms, particularly the contemporary formations of such ideologies.

The work of cultural sociologist Paul Gilroy examines the shift from earlier technological and social formations to contemporary frameworks, and how this has ushered in new forms of colonial control across society (2016). He terms this shift neocolonialism. Writing within a European context, Gilroy examines how contemporary forms of colonial control, such as increased surveillance, new forms of warfare, and corporate governance, rely on 'a deficit of historical information about Europe's colonial and imperial past' (2016, xiv). Furthermore, he states that contemporary society is seeing a stark increase in binary oppositional groups, particularly within politics. Echoing Hall (1997), Gilroy establishes that these groups interact with themselves and one another through increasingly separatist language which is coerced at an institutional level through re-enacting these representations within common discourse (Gilroy 2016). Through these globalized, technological, and polarizing practices, neocolonialism establishes itself by assuming 'complex and novel configurations [through which the] "neo" secreted inside the postcolonial will have to be ruthlessly and repeatedly uncovered and interrogated' (Gilroy 2016, xvi). Therefore, I rely on Gilroy's formation of the concept of neocoloniality to inform my analysis of the discourse surrounding the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project.

I see an example of the neocolonial shift in the work of Franz Fanon. In *Les Damnés de la Terre* (1961), Fanon wrote a visceral critique of the poisonous legacy that colonialism has left in many

of its former colonies, manipulating their legal liberation with continuing social and cultural bondage to their colonizers. His work focuses on the Algerian War of 1954-62, but I believe his commentary of the insidious clutches that colonialism still held over national elites in Algeria is applicable to the shifting relationship with colonialism and 'liberation' that India also underwent in the 20th century. He describes the 'empty shell' of national consciousness that colonialism left in Algeria and the neoliberal emulation of the 'bourgeoisie of the mother country which it hope[d] to replace' (1961, 148) by upper members of society. The initial lack of economic mobility of newly liberated colonies, combined with the inability to build on the small amount of power they were afforded by the colonizers leaving, forsook the national elite with the inability to connect with and subsequently help the masses (Fanon 1961, 148). This stark disconnect between the national elite and lower members of society is something I wish to examine further in my analysis of the legal discourse surrounding the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project.

The social rupture left by colonizers in recently 'freed' societies extends wider than just the relationship between the national elite and the masses. In her highly influential work, *Can the Subaltern Speak*, Gayatri Spivak questions how 'the third-world subject is represented within Western discourse' (1988, 271). She recounts the story of Bhubaneswari Bhaduri, a young woman in India who committed suicide in 1926. The motivations for her death were misconstrued by her community, so the narratives of her life and her death were altered against her consent. Thus, her voice, even in her death, was lost. Using Bhaduri's story to solidify the damage that misrepresentation can create, Spivak conceptualizes the subaltern as a figure for whom decisions are made insofar as their truth and voice are spoken for and over; a figure who is forced into the hegemonic narrative of civilization without being able to represent themselves truly or authentically. Unable to contest this violence with their own narrative voice, they exist outside of normative society, whilst being framed within it by their oppressors (Spivak, 1988). Subsequently, they are denied access to autonomy and they cannot speak for themselves. In my analysis, I seek to understand how the adivasi of the Narmada River may have been subject to the same representative extinguishment by the discourse surrounding the project, and thread a connection between this and the discursive subjection of Spivak's figure of the subaltern. I hope that conducting a feminist, decolonial reading of the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project discourse will help illuminate the ways in which discourse shapes social frameworks and maintains potentially harmful ideologies over suppressed groups.

FEMINIST CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

As established in my introduction of the work of Stuart Hall, I am attentive to the importance that discourse and language have in shaping cultural norms and ideologies. To generate a feminist connection between the importance of discourse and the discursive context of this article, I turn to Michelle Lazar's (2007) methodology of *explicitly feminist* discourse analysis to conduct my research into the discourse surrounding the dam. Lazar first introduces explicitly feminist discourse analysis as a 'perspective that is implicitly […] attentive to the discursive aspects of […] forms of oppression' (2007, 149). Although I do not highlight intersectionality as central to my theoretical framework, it would be remiss to exclude any mention of it in a feminist excavation of the discourse surrounding the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project. Subsequently, Lazar's focus on embedding intersectionality within the methodology of explicitly feminist discourse analysis must be attended to.

Lazar highlights an explicitly feminist approach to discourse analysis as one that is 'motivated by goals of social emancipation and transformation' (2007, 141). I connect this methodological aim to the transformative theoretical considerations of post- and decolonial theories contextualized in my framework. Therefore, I believe that conducting a discourse analysis that is aware of the intersections of oppression will provide a more cohesive understanding of the way the discourse functions to suppress the adivasi and advance neocolonial ideologies. Theorists have noted that feminist approaches to discourse and the politics of discourse are varied and multidisciplinary (Baxter 2003; Speer 2005). Lazar's method encapsulates this interdisciplinary focus, as another of its main features are its wide-ranging foci of subject matter with an emphasis on the interrelatedness between different discursive texts in society. I focus on this interrelatedness between the representations of the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project as I seek to understand how different legal and economic discursive actors function together in a network of neocolonial advancement and subaltern erasure. By applying an explicitly feminist critical lens to my discourse analysis, I focus on transformative and emancipatory analytical mechanisms for change.

LEGAL DISCOURSE AS SUBALTERN ERASURE: THE ADIVASI AND THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

As aforementioned, while construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam progressed, social activist groups began to fight back against the development project (Sahoo, Prakash, and Sahoo 2014, 890). The Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) was formed in 1989 in the state of Maharashtra to protest the displacement of the various adivasi communities from their land on the Narmada River. In 1994, the NBA sued the Supreme Court of India on the grounds of harmful treatment of

the adivasi and concerns for the environment surrounding the dam which further delayed the project (Culletf, 2008). One year later, the court restricted construction of the dam with a stay order that postponed the original lawsuit. This was not enough compensation for the NBA, who continued to protest. Eventually, in October of 2000, the Supreme Court of India reacted to petitioning from the NBA by ruling in favor of the continued construction of the dam, arguing that 'the displacements of persons need not 'per se result in the violation of their fundamental or other rights' (*The Union of India and Others v. Narmada Bachao Andolan*; cited in Culletf 2008, 975).

Central to my analysis is the fact that this verdict, which ruled in favor of the Union of India and Others who encompassed the upper echelons of Indian society, relied on Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. Article 21 outlines the right to life and personal liberty for those recognized by the law across India (Culletf 2008, 975). Therefore, any person who was not recognized legally, i.e. many of the adivasi who have lived in rural or small communities for many years, were left out of this ruling and were vulnerable to legal and wider social discrimination. This pattern of negating to recognize Indigenous communities as autonomous and legitimate was inherent in the first waves of historical colonial invasion and are evident in the decision the Supreme Court of India made. Subsequently, I argue that the decision is simply a neocolonial mechanism to marginalize the adivasi and reject them from normative social narratives and constructs, erasing their legal representation.

When writing his verdict in *The Union of India and Others v. Narmada Bachao Andolan* (2000) SC 3751 at 21, Justice Bhupinder Nath Kirpal stated that 'though these villages comprise a significant population of tribals and people of weaker sections [the] majority of them will not be a victim of displacement.' Justice Kirpal's choice to align the adivasi with those of purported 'weaker sections' in society speaks to the strong presence of hierarchy that has been part of Indian society for many years. Although the caste system can be traced back to ancient India, modern formations of social hierarchies have their roots in constructions from previous rulers such as the British Raj (Bayly 2001). The influence that colonial rule had over the shifting formations of the caste system thus highlight the neocolonial nature of Justice Kirpal's phrasing. I would also like to consider how, writing from his position as a Justice in the Supreme Court, he wields immense power over the legal proceedings. Therefore, there is a clear power imbalance in the hierarchy between himself and the group of adivasi he ruled against. This disconnect to the plight of 'lower' echelons of society, echoing Fanon's critique of the postcolonial national elite, is solidified when he insists that displacement 'will not' adversely affect the adivasi and that there is no place for victimhood in his decision.

Justice Kirpal continues to write that the adivasi will instead 'gain from shifting [into] the gradual assimilation in the mainstream of the society [which] will lead to betterment and progress' (2000, 21). I consider this statement to encapsulate the central goal that neocolonial discourse sets out to achieve; by removing the culture and history of the oppressed through the enforcement of the dominant culture upon them, they simultaneously equate their histories and communities to something 'lesser' than the betterment which the dominant culture can offer. In the legal context that Justice Kirpal speaks from, the verdict functions discursively to centralize the position of those enforcing the displacement and marginalize the identities of the adivasi. This prioritization of those in power in society and the suppression of the other is a key mechanism of neocolonial control (Gilroy 2016). Furthermore, Kirpal's specific wording of how the adivasi will 'gain' from their displacement imposes upon them the idea that those in power are more knowledgeable, and that their perspective as a marginalized group does not have any merit. This perspective fails to consider the cultural and historical significance that the land and the river have for the communities that lived there, instead giving precedent to the neocolonial drive for progress and the infantilization of occidental development discourse as outlined by Escobar.

ECONOMIC DISCOURSE AS NEOCOLONIAL ADVANCEMENT: MODERNISATION AT ANY COST

The 20th century is often referred to as the 'urban millennium', or the 'Asian urban century' (Roy 2014). More than half of the world's urban population now lives in Asia, a development that has sought to 'disrupt the canon of global urbanism by foregrounding the cities of the Global South' (Roy 2014, 14). The shift of attention and resources to these emerging mega-cities in the South has led to a change in economic hegemony. New economic models of capital accumulation are rising against a backdrop of the crumbling neoliberal economies in the North, visible through divisive actions like Brexit and increasing wealth gaps in 'developed' countries (Roy 2014).

As these 'mega' urban landscapes grow, the inequalities faced by women and marginalized groups become more visible as 'women are increasingly forming the majority of urban populations across the global south' (Chant and McIlwaine 2013, 1). At a micro level, women face increased risks to their wellbeing and safety, with a lack of practical infrastructure like lighting and segregated toilets, reproductive and labor divisions with domestic spaces, and mental and physical health problems when working with harmful cooking fuels. At a meso urban development level, they lack access to property rights with male-lineated inheritance and customary law, and a lack of representation in political and urban power (Chant and McIlwaine

2013). These risks are exacerbated as the Global South grows, calling for an intersectional urban development shift.

The growing economic power of societies in the Global South presents an interesting connection with Gilroy's concept of neocolonialism. The economic benefits the Sardar Sarovar Dam would bring to the Narmada River area were central to its initial conception and construction (Sahoo, Prakash and Sahoo 2014, 888), and can be traced through the discourse to contemporary times. To examine how the discourse functions to represent economic growth and neocolonial modernization as the hegemonic narrative surrounding the dam, I return to Justice Kirpal's verdict. Rife with textual reference to the positive economic impact the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project exhibits for Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and their surrounding states, he repeatedly references Article 12 of the International Labor Organization Convention[1] (No. 107). This article states that (tribal) populations shall 'not be removed […] from their habitual territories except […] in the interest of national economic development' (Kirpal 2000, 19). However, theorists have established that despite the viable economic benefits of the dam, the energy produced was used 'primarily by urban consumers, for business and agricultural pumping, all at subsidized rates' and that 'poor [did] not benefit from this subsidy' (Baviskar 1995, 28; Savur 1995, 161-2; cited in Flood 1997, 14). It is clear that the wider economic benefits vastly outweighed the rupturing displacement of the adivasi in the eyes of the Indian national elite, as they would be afforded subsidized rates for energy production. This utilitarian approach of focusing on the economic benefits the dam would bring, alongside excluding those most in need of financial assistance such as the displaced communities, and the desire for progress served to oppress the adivasi of the Narmada River (Flood 1997, 13).

As explored earlier, Escobar focuses on the important role that economic power had in the creation of developmental discourse, and this is something that can clearly be seen in the neocolonial discursive shaping of the economic benefits of the dam project. With the World Bank's 1948 definition of 'poor' as any country with a lower per capita income than $100, the 'essential trait of the Third World was its poverty, and the solution was economic growth' (Escobar 1995, 24). In her 1995 essay '*Let us Not Dam Development*', Indian academic Manorama Savur highlights how dams were 'integral to India's development vision […] ideal since they are amenable to top-down planning, provide tangible benefits to industrialization needs, and to modernized agriculture' (Savur 1995, 156; cited in Flood 1997, 12). Inclusion of 'integral', 'ideal,' and 'tangible' all speak to the highly positive representation the dam had within an economic framework. Savur's statement highlights the wider discursive aims of those who

championed the dam's economic legitimacy and echoes the reasoning that Justice Kirpal gives above for the continuation of the project.

This idealization of dams as instrumental in the industrialization and modernization of India connects to the ideology of economic advancement evidenced in critiques of occidental development discourse (Escobar 1995). The utilitarian push for economic and industrial progression at the expense of the poor demonstrates the neocolonial influence on the development project, with the drive for modernization and capitalist gain central to the motivations for the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project. Escobar's analysis of the economic representation within development discourse comments on how colonial developmental discourse created the binary relationship between developing countries and economic advancement, so therefore newly liberated colonies were still influenced by the idea they had to generate high economic wealth to keep up with wealthy Western countries who set the economic norm for the rest of the world. I consider this a potential explanation as to why India was so determined to reap the economic benefits of the dam over the welfare of the adivasi, as it would align them with the neocolonial ideology of economic progression.

THE FUTURE OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT PRAXIS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF COUNTER-DISCOURSE: CONCLUDING REMARKS

I set out to examine to what extent the legal and economic discourse surrounding the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project acted as subaltern erasure and neocolonial advancement. By relying on legal texts from the Supreme Court of India as well as a wider examination of the beneficial economic narrative presented of the dam, I demonstrated how the discourse functioned to negate the adivasi from social recognition and legal protection, furthering their position as subalterns on the periphery of society. I also demonstrated how the wider economic discourse of the dam was represented as highly beneficial to wider Indian society through a neocolonial prioritization of the benefits it would bring to businesses and the national elite. It was only through the immense strength of the Narmada Bachao Andolan and their efforts to alter the way the project was represented in normative society that attention was brought to the suffering of the native communities. Their efforts successfully generated enough awareness about the damaging effects of the dam on the adivasi that the World Bank withdrew their funding, and the project faced numerous disruptions to its construction.

The Sardar Sarovar Dam Project is unique in relation to other large dam constructions due to its charged history and changing representation within the public eye. Although the project is continuing, the NBA managed to massively shift normative and mainstream perceptions of the

project and brought more careful consideration of its consequences to the wider public, despite the huge socioeconomic and legal forces it was up against. They rejected the normative narrative of the beneficial nature of the dam, conjecturing the neocolonial influence against the effect on the adivasi. It is in the power of alternative narratives such as the one the NBA put forward that I see a feminist and decolonial avenue for future research. I suggest the praxis of counter-discourse - focusing on situated narratives from those in marginalized and oppressed social groups - as one way that neocolonial and harmful representative practices could be prevented in future urban development projects. As explored in my theory section, decolonization is about the reparative theoretical and material aim to help uplift those who have been systemically oppressed by a system that prioritizes Eurocentric, universalist ideals. Turning to counter-discourse and narratives presented by marginalized people offers a reparative chance to challenge ideas that have historically upheld normative, Eurocentric social frameworks.

There has been little effort to retroactively analyze the effects that large dam projects have had economically, socially, and environmentally, hence 'the validity for and against dams by governmental institutions and NGOs cannot be resolved one way or another because of the lack of past and present post-project evaluations' (Jagadeesan and Kumar 2015, iii). Although I agree with this statement insofar that there is validity for dam projects, as they offer great resources for irrigation and hydroelectricity, I argue that it is imperative for such future urban development projects to be implemented with a decolonial, feminist perspective in mind to prevent other native communities from being marginalized by potential displacement. Instead, I insist upon an urban development praxis which includes all members of society and is attuned towards specific cultural and social needs that different communities would benefit from.

The Sardar Sarovar Dam Project was conceptualized with the aims of progressive irrigation, modernized farming, and economic advancement. During the project, the native people of the Narmada River were excluded from legal and cultural systems and left with no legal or social framework to help ease the trauma of displacement from their ancestral land. I have analyzed several discursive texts which demonstrate the neocolonial tendencies of the dam discourse and how this presented itself in the Indian elite through their lack of national consciousness, choosing to prioritize the project over the welfare of the adivasi. From the court's denial of the legal rights of the adivasi, to the continuing controversy of the resettlement plans, this project failed to implement an intersectional and egalitarian urban development praxis at the expense of the adivasi and their cultural heritage. I believe the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project provides an important example of the dangers of a neocolonial urban development praxis, but also of how fighting for the rights of those adversely affected by such systems can shift perceptions and bring justice to

the oppressed and a more reflexive attitude towards urban development in general. Thus, the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project serves as a warning for the perils of neocolonial urban praxis and urges a more reflexive, feminist, and decolonial disciplinary approach to developmental discourse.

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[1] The International Labor Organization is a tripartite U.N. agency that has been in operation since 1919. The ILO brings together governmental bodies, employers, and workers to organize labor standards, policies, and programs that promote acceptable working conditions.