

**DEVELOPMENT-INDUCED DISPLACEMENT: A STUDY OF SARA
JOSEPH'S NOVEL *BUDDHINI***

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English, in the Partial Fulfillment of the
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DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

I declare that this dissertation entitled “ Development-Induced Displacement: A Study of Sara Joseph’s Novel *Buddhini*” is my original work conducted under the supervision of Dr Debajyoti Biswas. This is submitted for a post-graduation degree and not for any other degree or work. Apart from the help I took has been cited, it has been written by my research.

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CERTIFICATE

I certify that this dissertation entitled “Development-Induced Displacement: A Study of Sara Joseph’s Novel *Buddhini*” is prepared by Dipika Hembrom, Roll no:- PGENG408A22011, for the partial fulfillment of the MA in English at Bodoland University.

She has done this research work under my guidance and supervision.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation deals with Development-Induced Displacement in Sara Joseph's novel *Buddhini*. This project presents the plight of the Santals of Dhanbad, district of Jharkhand, who were uprooted from their soil due to the construction of the Panchet Dam across the Damodar River by the Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC). It also powerfully highlights the risks associated with our relentless industrialization and disregard for ecological realities. The Santals were forced to abandon their homeland because they lacked social, political, and economic power. This dissertation is examined in the light of post-development theory. It focuses on the negative consequences of development projects which include marginalization, social and psychological problems, increased poverty, and loss of identity. It has shown the courage and willpower of Santals to fight for their homeland and some even sacrificed their lives in the conflict. The government forced them to leave their homeland in the name of development. This dissertation has mostly focused on the struggle and trauma of Buddhini Mehjan, Jagdip Murmu, and the Santal community of Dhanbad.

Keywords: Post-development, Displacement, Santals, Conflict, Homeland.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 An Introduction to the Study Area

Displacement-Induced Displacement refers to the forced dislocation of millions of people from their homes, lands, and livelihoods as a result of numerous large-scale development projects carried out by public or private organizations including dams, reservoirs, power plants, plantations, urban renewal projects, oil gas, highways, and mining projects. Development is a process of growth towards improved living standards, social welfare, people's well-being, and the reduction of inequality, and it is this process that leads to advancement and constructive change in people's lives, societies, and the economy. Worldwide advancement has been facilitated by development projects, but they have also forced people from their homes and worsened their lot in life. "Development-induced displacement is increasing in depth and intensity all over the world and particularly in developing countries"(Chikkala and Kumar, 2021).

Worldwide, the greatest cause of the construction of dams is displacement. According to a report of the World Commission on Dams (2000)"the construction of large dams has led to the displacement of 40 to 80 million people worldwide since 1950"(Terminski,48). 15,000 people were impacted by the building of the world's longest man-made dam, the Hirakud Dam. According to the most recent estimates, more than 1.26 million people were relocated as a result of the 1994 start of building of the Yangtze River's Three Gorges Dam(Terminski,49-50). Dams are built for hydroelectric generation, irrigation, flood control, and reservoir building. But millions of people will be displaced as a result of the dam's development. According to the World Commission on Dams report, by the end of the 20th

century, there were over 45,000 major dams in over 140 nations. Large-scale dam construction had a profound impact on the lives, livelihoods, cultures, and spirituality of indigenous and tribal people. Displacement deprives people of homes, culture, livelihoods, social networks, environmental conditions, community life, and a sense of belongingness(Lone, p.217). Millions of people who lost their lands for development projects are simply ending up as “development refugees”(Mathur, 1995).

The rights of the impacted population to appropriate housing, just compensation, and participation in decision-making processes have been emphasized by several legal and human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Economic Cooperation, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Social and Cultural Rights.

Sara Joseph is a highly acclaimed Malayalam novelist, short-story writer, political commentator, and activist. She is the founder of the activist organization 'Manushi' and a pioneer of the feminist movement in Kerala. Some of her well-known pieces are *Aalahayude Penmakkal*, *Othappu*, *Ooru Kaval*, *Mattathi*, *Gift in Green*, and *Buddhini*. For her novel *Aalahayude Penmakkal* (Daughters of God the Father), she was awarded both the Vayalar Award and the Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award. Her work, particularly *Buddhini*, traces the detrimental effects that dam construction has had on the lives of indigenous people, mainly the Santals of Dhanbad.

River Protection Forum lecture held in Chalakudy, Sara Joseph was introduced to *Buddhini* by poet and political activist Civic Chandaran. The news article, 'Recovering *Buddhini* Mehjan from the Silted Landscapes of Modern India' by Chitra Padmanabhan, which was published in *The Hindu* on 2nd June 2012, is where Chandaran discovered the story of

Buddhini. This news article brought the origination of Sara Joseph's novel *Buddhini*(xi). It is not the original Buddhini's 'life story or a historical novel'(xiii). The novel highlights the themes of displacement, gendered subalternity, alienation, loss of belongingness, evil politics, land acquisition, caste, and oppression. In 2021, Sara Joseph was awarded the *Odakkuzhal* Award for *Buddhini*. *Buddhini* was originally written in Malayalam by Sara Joseph and later, translated into English by her daughter, Sangeetha Sreenivasan, "a fiercely individualistic novelist"(Joseph, 2021).

Sara Joseph's novel *Buddhini* is the heartbreaking life story of a Santal girl, Buddhini Mejhan, Jagdip Murmu, and the Santals of Dhanbad, who were caught in the frame of India's post-independence developmental strategies. The novel represents the motive of Damodar Valley Corporation to develop the Nation, "where Buddhini Mehjan emerges as a figure of subaltern resistance and resilience"(Arasi M J and Dr. S. Rasheeda Sulthana, 2024, p.138).

The story of the novel *Buddhini* is narrated from the perspectives of two modern characters: Rupi Murmu, a young journalist, and Sucharita, a distant relative. The book is an enduring tribute to the female voice as well as to lives and tales that should not disappear within the forth of time. For the sake of the improvement of the country, they were uprooted from their residences, agricultural land, roots, and culture, marginalized, and left with nothing. When the Panchet Dam was built, around 56.4% of the local population was forced to relocate. The Panchet Dam's detrimental effects on the Santals' way of life are emphasized throughout the novel.

Sara Joseph wrote this narrative to preserve the heartbreaking tales of the Santal people, who were forced to flee from their ancestral homeland of Dhanbad in the Jharkhand region when the Damodar Valley Corporation built the Panchet dam. She has demonstrated

how the country's progression always depends on the backbone of the oppressed communities. Through the novel, the author “evokes *Buddhini* with vigor, authority, and panache, conjuring up a robust and endearing feminine character”(Joseph, 2021). Additionally, she “powerfully invokes the wider bio-politics of our relentless modernization and the dangers of being indifferent to ecological realities”(Joseph, 2021). The concepts of development, nation-building, displacement, development projects, and land acquisition are central to novel *Buddhini*. The issues of belongingness, alienation, compensation, and resettlement are raised. The novel covers the story of two characters, *Buddhini Mehjan* and *Jagdip Murmu*. This narrative deals with history, bio-politics, a nation, a woman's life, the life of the Santal Community, their land, and their way of living.

The concept of development as a whole, according to post-development theory, is a mirror of Western and Northern domination over the rest of the world. Growth toward improved living standards, social welfare, people’s well-being, and the reduction of inequality is called development. Development led to an unbalanced ecology and a large divide between the rich and the poor. Development allows people to make choices for the fulfillment of their basic needs like food, health, education and shelter. Post-development theory is highly influenced by Michel Foucault. He was a French philosopher, historian of ideas, social theorist, and literary critic. In the 1980s and 1990s, post-development theory emerged as a critique of development projects and philosophy.

Scholars associated with post-development theory are Arturo Escobar, Wolfgang Sachs, Majid Rahnema, James Ferguson, Serge Latouche, and Gilbert Rist. “Development” is criticized as a Western mindset and an abortive attempt to export lifestyles of “developed” nations across the globe(Ziai, 2017). According to Arturo Escobar, the term ‘post-

development' was initially used at an international colloquium held in Geneva in 1991(Escobar, 2019). Arturo Escobar defined post-development as:

“Post-development questions the central premises of development, including economic growth and material progress. Post-development challenges the idea that all countries must develop along Western capitalist lines according to these dictates.”(Escobar, 2019)

Through this passage, Escobar argues that the development theory was questioned by post-development theory, which was more concerned with the old philosophies and traditions that third-world countries possessed for decades than it was with the nation's economic success. Development theory is a Western ideology that controls developing and third-world countries. Its main aim was to modernize the nation by implementing development projects in third-world countries without the permission of the local populace.

Nation-building is the process of rebuilding the institution, infrastructure, and social cohesiveness for a flourishing society. Development projects serve as a cornerstone of nation-building efforts by infrastructural needs, boosting economic growth, advancing human development, encouraging social inclusiveness, and strengthening government institutions. In the article, Alesina and Reich have defined nation-building:

“Nation-building is a process which leads to the formation of countries in which the citizens feel a sufficient amount of commonality of interests, goals, and preferences so that they do not wish to separate from each other.”(Alesina and Reich, 2012)

Through this passage, Alesina and Reich state that nation-building is about creating harmony and peace among people, regardless of caste, creed, or religion. The Soviet Union carried out the first two five-year plans, which were centered on megaprojects, between 1929 and 1939. A nationwide dam construction effort that started in the USSR in the 1950s resulted in the displacement of 1.5 million people (Terminski, 2013). In 1947, Nehru referred to the building of dams as "temples of modern India" 1947 since they improved economic and social conditions.

1.2. Review of Literature

This section addresses the different texts that go into great detail about displacement caused by development. The purpose of this study is to determine the research gap in this particular field, which has not been addressed in Sara Joseph's book *Buddhini*. Several papers, theses, and articles written by several writers, critics, and scholars were used to make the case on this particular subject. Although these works are not directly related to the study, they do provide an idea to fill the gap in this field.

Arasi M J and Dr. S. Rasheeda Salthana (2024) in their article "Beyond Displacement: Gendered Subalternity and the Post-Independence Idea of Development in Sara Joseph's *Buddhini*," examined the issues of power, agency, and socioeconomic development while discussing the themes of displacement, gendered subalternity, and post-independence development. The novel's treatment of the experiences of indigenous tribal communities, such as the Santals, has been examined by the authors about post-independence notions of

progress and societal shifts. The relationship between caste, gender, and indigenous identity has also been covered.

Also, Meera K.S(2021) in her article “Being Outsiders in ‘The Inside’: A Diasporic Evolution Ensued to the Subjects In Sara Joseph’s Novel *Buddhini*”, has talked about the character's experiences and perspectives as they encounter challenges and opportunities in their diaspora journey. Meera has talked about the novel’s diaspora theme and what it’s like to be an outsider. The writer has emphasized how, in the setting of the diaspora, the characters lost their identities, cultural heritage, and sense of belonging. Furthermore, they investigated the function of literature in evaluating development and gender.

Again, Remya P discussed the relationship between women and nature as well as women’s resilience in her article “Sara Joseph’s *Buddhini*: Women, Nature, and Resilience in Post-Independence India's Transformative Landscapes." She has focused on the difficulties brought about by the development projects, especially, the Dam in Damodar River built by DVC. The paper investigates women’s roles in sustainable development.

Similarly, NS Kamalam and Mary Thomas discuss the devastation of the environment brought on by development projects in their article "Ecocriticism in the novels *Buddhini* by Sara Joseph and *Scent of Pepper* by Kaveri Nambisan." this devastation affects the local ecosystem and traditional ways of life. They also show the interdependence between nature and local cultures.

Also, in the article “Development Induced Displacement in India”, Amaravathi Raavalee(2021) discusses the issues and challenges related to development-induced displacement that impacted people. The issues include loss of lands, social networks, cultural practices, access to community services, environmental degradation, and impact on women

and children. Amaravadhi Raavalee has examined the laws about land acquisition, resettlement policies, and environmental restrictions that control displacement brought about by development in India. He has also discussed the community resistance against displacement brought about by development as well as the role of affected people in determining their destiny in the face of development's obstacles.

Similarly, in the thesis "Reconstituting the Role of Law in Development-induced Displacement and Resettlement: lessons from Uganda's Bujagali Hydroelectric Project," Kankave(2011) has discussed the displacement and resettlement in the context of the Bujagali hydroelectric project in Uganda. He has explored the challenges of development faced by the affected people and also has talked about the inclusive laws, policies, and regulations governing the displacement and resettlement process, and protecting the rights of the affected communities.

Again, Gabriel Essack(2014) in his thesis "Displacement and Power: To what extent is development-induced displacement a consequence of uneven power relationships and how do ABD safeguard policies attempt to redress the negative implications?" discusses how development-induced displacement often results from unequal power dynamics between governments, corporations, financial institutions, and affected communities involved in development projects. Gabriel has highlighted the social, economic, and environmental consequences for affected communities. He has talked about two cases, the Cambodian Railway Rehabilitation Project and the Chashma Right Bank Irrigation Canal Project in Pakistan.

Also, Caitlin S(2014) discusses different displacement processes in his dissertation "Development-Induced Displacement and Resettlement: A Narrative Inquiry into the

Experiences of Community Members Physically Displaced from a Farm to a Town in Mpumalanga, South Africa", which includes challenges, experiences, and narratives of individuals who were compelled to leave their homes because of development projects in Mpumalanga, South Africa. Caitlin has discussed several topics, including loss of land, trauma, cultural practices, socioeconomic impacts, and lack of relocation initiatives.

Next, Himanshu Thakkar(2010) discussed how the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam Vadgam village in Gujarat had an impact on the Adivasis in his article "Displacement and Development: Construction of the Sardar Dam." He has spoken on the case of the Rameshwarpura resettlement site in Gujarat. They received uncultivable land and no resources for firewood facilities. In addition to having to live in filthy conditions for many years before being resettled, they lacked access to healthcare, good food, and clean drinking water. This article critically examines the displacement of local communities, social and economic consequences, environmental impacts, challenges encountered throughout the resettlement process, community resistance, government policies, and recommendations for more environmentally friendly development strategies.

The risks of impoverishment associated with development projects and the various aspects of resettling displaced populations are covered by Cernea (2021) in the book chapter "The Risks and Reconstruction Model for Resettling Displaced Populations," which includes topics like "from landlessness to land-based resettlement, from joblessness to re-employment, from homelessness to house reconstruction, from marginalization to social inclusion, from increased morbidity to improved health care, from food insecurity to adequate nutrition, from loss of access to the restoration of community assets and services, and social disarticulation to networks and community rebuilding."

In the report, "The Mine that Displaced India's indigenous people", Elizabeth Puranam(2016) discusses about the Adivasis who lived close to the Chaal coal mine suffered from the detrimental effects of a coal mine. Both sound pollution and water poisoning drove them from their homeland. She has argued that the government simply listed them on paper for providing "rehabilitation." the affected people did not receive any assistance from the government and are left jobless and living in poverty.

Also, in the article "And red flows the Koina river: Adivasi resistance to the 'loot' of their land and resources in eastern India", Dungdung, Padel and Damodaran had questioned "how will Adivasis survive" and "Development for whom?" In his book *Whose Land Is It Anyway?* Dungdung has highlighted that he has seen people being exploited, alienated and displaced to enable dam building and mining/industrial development. He has shown the other side of the development projects. On 2nd January 2006, atleast 20 Adivasis were killed by police at Kalinganagar in Jajpur district of Odisha because they protested against the building of Tata Steel factory. Most of these families were not compensated, they lost their livelihood resources and became landless.

All these sources have discussed about negative impacts of development projects on indigenous people. No writer or scholar has discussed about negative impacts of development-induced displacement in the novel *Buddhini* related to Santals. These sources will be useful to me in discussing development-induced displacement and its negative impacts on socially, politically, and economically marginalized Santal people.

1.3. Research Methodology

This research is based on qualitative research of close reading techniques and thematic coding. This study was done through secondary research resources. This paper is an attempt to discuss "Development-induced displacement: A Study of Sara Joseph's novel *Buddhini*". The qualitative research is done to demonstrate how the development projects have affected the lives of the native Santal of Dhanbad. Post-development theory is applied here. The use of the theory of post-development has helped to understand the negative impacts of development in Santal's life. This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the displacement caused by development as it is described in Sara Joseph's novel "*Buddhini*" and its relevance to real-world contexts. To analyze my work, sources related to my topic are collected from various books, articles, reports, thesis, and dissertation.

1.4. Aims and objectives

The first objective of this work is to explore the concept of development-induced displacement by using the theory of post-development in Sara Joseph's novel *Buddhini*. This will help me to understand the negative outcome of development projects in tribal peoples' lives till today. The research aims to offer a poignant portrayal of the construction of development projects and Santal's struggles in Sara Joseph's *Buddhini*. This research is to examine the profound changes, challenges, and resilience of an indigenous community navigating the complex terrain of modernization. It shows how each characters of the novel

struggle to cope up with the changes brought about by the construction of the Panchet Dam in Damodar River, and how it affected their lives in all aspects after the completion of the dam building. In the second chapter, the introduction to the novel, and the loss of home and identity of Santals, living in Jharkhand are discussed. The construction of the Panchet Dam across the Damodar River deprived the Santals of their identity, culture, traditions, lifestyle, spirituality and home. In the third chapter, the impacts of displacement on the community, and resistance and coping strategies are discussed. It also shows the lack of political, social, and economic power of the tribals, and the evil politics of the higher class. A reflection on the profound changes that occur when traditional communities face the challenges posed by large-scale development initiatives.

1.5 Research Questions

1. Where did the local people go? What happened to their lives?
2. Why did the government fail to recognize the destruction of the local people of Dhanbad?
3. Did the development projects change the lives of the locals?
4. What happened to Buddhini after the inauguration of the Panchet Dam?
5. Why did the government not take any action when Buddhini was being accused of Nehru's wife?

CHAPTER 2: THE ASPECTS OF DISPLACEMENT IN *BUDDHINI*

CHAPTER 2.1: INTRODUCTION TO NOVEL

The novel *Buddhini* portrays the story of Buddhini Mehjan, Jagdip Murmu, and also other Santals who live in Jharkhand and are impacted by the Panchet dam on the Damodar River. The story was narrated through the modern perspective of Rupi Murmu, a young journalist, and was excavated by a distant relative, Sucharita.

The protagonist, Buddhini Mehjan is a 15-year-old girl who lives in Dhanbad, district of Jharkhand. She lived with her mother and father in the village named Korbona, which was rich in community life, religious and cultural practices, and the splendor of nature. During her childhood, she used to take care of the goats in the meadow, climb up on tree branches, play her trio, grind rice, and ragi with a millstone, light the wood-burning stove, and make gruel, and spinach. She woven bamboo leaves to make containers and mats, and she made dishes, baskets, and spoons out of sal leaves. She labored in the fields, delighted by the smell of the freshly sown patches of earth filled with water, and she polished the walls by plastering them with powdered mud. She used to go get wood from the forest with her companion, Chotroi Soren. Her life was blissful until the Panchet Dam across the Damodar River was built by the Damodar Valley Corporation.

To support her family after the government took their lands for the construction of the Panchet Dam, Buddhini started working as a construction worker in DVC. Her hands were wounded and were “flushed with blister” as a result of breaking stones in DVC. From morning to evening, there were only stones, her hands, and a hammer. The wind, sky, trees, flowers, and birds, all turned gloomy. All Buddhini could hear were the loud ‘thump-thump-

thump' rocks, and hammers striking stones. When the Panchet Dam cleared the forest she stopped going to the forest to collect wood. On 6th December 1959, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru arrived in Dhanbad to officially open the Panchet Dam. The DVC choose Buddhini to greet him with a garland and a tikka on his forehead. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru stated that the Panchet dam should be opened by a person who worked on it, thus he urged Buddhini to inaugurate it. She even dedicated the dam to the nation during a brief speech in Santali, her native tongue. She had worn the traditional dress *Panchi-Parhan* and mud (*hasa*) bangles.

Following the inaugural event, Buddhini went back to her hometown of Karbona. A bunch of youngsters stopped her from getting water from the well and called her “*setta*” to make fun of her. As they approached Buddhini's residence, Chotroi and Buddhini could hear the beating of *dhak* and *dhamak*. The village men approached Buddhini's house in their underwear, dancing and cursing, intending to desecrate (*Bitlaha*) Buddhini's home. Because the Prime Minister was not part of the Santal Community, the villagers made an issue out of it. Thus, she was no longer a part of the community. They entered every room and ruined it all. They went inside every room and ruined it all. Four or five men hauled her violently out into the courtyard. The villagers accused her of breaking their custom by placing a garland around the Prime Minister's neck, leading them to assume that she was now wed to (*dikku*) a stranger from outside her tribe. As a punishment, Buddhini was ostracized from her village. The village elder issued an order" nobody should talk to her or help her in any way." Buddhini was sent from her village as a punishment. "Nobody should talk to her or help her in any way," issued an order from the town elder. The guys in the village warned her that she would be stoned to death if she returned to their village. In an attempt to escape her assailants, she fled into the forest. Because it was her monthly cycle, her physical state was

dreadful. She had on the identical lungi-panchi that she had worn to the Panchet Dam's opening ceremony. She returned home the following morning to gather clothing for her menstrual cycle. She met Phulmone there and discovered that even her parents had left her behind, moving to her mother's village out of fear of being shunned by their society.

She plucked herself the confidence to go to DVC the following day, but because nobody wanted to work with her, she was fired from her position. Other *dikku* harassed her, calling her a low-class individual and threatening to kill her if she said Jawaharlal Nehru was her spouse. Some tried to undress her, some kicked her, and one person hanged her with a pair of old sandals and a broom. Pandit Radharam squeezed her nipples in anger. Buddhini stayed on the ground because she was exhausted. They dragged her across the bridge and tied her to the pillar. A man spat in her her. She was released by a man who was on his way to his place of employment, a small coal mine near Sanctoria. He fed her two large pieces of bread and dropped her at the gates of the DVC. When Buddhini was working in the DVC guest house, she learned that Suman and Kumar were looking for her to kill her. The watchman of DVC, Kalicharan Chowdari dragged her by the arms and hid her in a storeroom. An hour later, Kalicharan came back and told Buddhini to run to save her life. Despite being afraid of ghostly sounds in the forest, she kept running the entire night. Tired, she collapsed between two big coal mounds.

The following morning, she was awakened by the coal mine employees. A man named Datta took her to a tea stall. Datta brought her to his residence so he could examine her appalling state. The Kayasthas and the minor Brahmin inhabited the street where Datta lived. The presence of Buddhini started to cause issues for the people living there. The Kayasthas and the minor Brahmin forewarned Datta to remove Buddhini from his home or face social exclusion for having a low-caste girl with him. Datta disregarded their warning and gave her, his mother's sari to change because she was drenched in blood and mud. When

Datta's mother and sister found out what he had done, they became upset with him. He brought a lower-caste girl into their house, which offended his mother and sister, and they requested him to leave the house. The Brahmin people harassed and kicked Buddhini. He then brought her to Janbhari, a widow. She took care of Janbhari for a few days but things got worse as soon as the news of Buddhini being accused as a Nehru's wife spread everywhere. To kill Buddhini for referring to herself as Nehru's wife, people started to assemble to kill her. To save her, Datta accompanied her on her run to Purulia.

In an effort to protect her from others, Datta chose to wed her, and together they started a coal mine laborer family. Ratni is the name they gave to their newborn child. They were relocating in an attempt to get employment so they could support themselves. They were destitute and without land. Working in the coal mine makes their lives even more wretched. Datta's health started to decline because of the mine-related pollution. Since DVC was the one who had made her life so miserable, they decided to return to DVC and demand the work. When they arrived at Korbona, it was difficult for them to find a home to stay for the night. People were still looking at her with the same old dirty look when she was being accused of being Nehru's wife till today. They were still thinking about this previous encounter. Because she was the original employee of DVC, Buddhini had the right to return to the company and obtain a permanent position. DVC was the one who asked her to greet Jawaharlal Nehru, but when she faced rejection from her village, he did not stand up for her. She fought for twenty-three years until regaining her position at DVC. A few years later, Datta passed away, leaving Buddhini with her daughter, Ratni.

Another story starts with Jagdip Murmu, who lives in Delhi with his granddaughter, Rupi Murmu as well as his son and daughter-in-law, Jobon Murmu and Salini. They were not

adhering to any traditions or practices, nor were they living a Santal lifestyle. Salani and Jagdip continued to speak Santali, while Jobon insisted on speaking English. Jagdip is often asked by Salani about his upbringing in his village. Jagdip reflected on his life, which had been both happy and sad. In the village of Bharatpur, he was leading a typical life with his wife, Somni, and his five boys, Surjan, Barka, Kanha, Jola, and Jobon. Bharatpur was not far from Telkupi, 'a village with one hundred and twenty homes.' There was *manjithan* where *Manji Haram Bonga* dwelled. They believed that *Bonga* dwells on trees. The Santal women used raw mud to create images on the walls of their homes. They used to sing and dance in a dancing ground.

Everything was changed with the construction of the Panchet Dam by DVC in Dhanbad. Jagdip Murmu's village, Bharatpur, and his wife, Somni's village, Baliyad, as well as the neighboring settlements, were submerged by the Damodar Dam, rendering them homeless. The Bharatpur village's inhabitants were ordered to vacate the area since the Panchet Dam will soon engulf their village in water. The people were told that the dam was being built for the betterment of the Nation and they would be given free electricity because their village was in the dark. The villagers show that within a night, water had already reached their field and was up to their knees. So, they decided to leave the village along with their sheep and cattle to the hilltop. They lived on a hilltop for a few days until they ran out of food. Men began to go out and work to make money since women were becoming weaker and children and the elderly were dying. When Jobon and Jolo, Jagdip's sons, became sick as well, he started to ask for money, but no one would give it to him. Instead, they were driven out and accused of stealing. They were without clothing, food, or a place to live.

Jagdip's family decided to relocate to Chhattisgarh, where labor was required in the fertilizer production plants of Sindhri. Although Jagdip Murmu and his family were living in a small apartment where trash had been thrown, he was having trouble paying monthly rent to Kedharnath Gupta, the landlord, each month. Kedharnath Gupta assists Jagdip's wife, Somni in finding employment. She started to work for Thakur Gopichand as a domestic assistant. Jagdip's eldest son, Surjan left to look for work at the iron mine, but he never came back. The twins, Kanha and Barka went out in search of their lost brother, Surjan but they too failed to return. Subsequently, the whole family resolved to search for them. Jagdip's wife, Somni too passed away while looking for them in towns. Jagdip had no village, no farm, or no house to return to. For the whole day, Jagdip and his children were aimlessly wandering around the Bilaspur railway station. They had nowhere to go, so they boarded the train and got off at the last station. He met Sudarsan and followed him to Jharia.

On reaching Jharia, Jagdip notices a large coalfield and mistook it to be a crematorium due to the constant burning of coal. To this, Sudarsan replied that the coalfield has been burning for the past hundred years. Jagdip decided to remain there because his sons were starving and they had no place to live. Sudarsan's family was dependent on stealing and sailing coal. It was difficult for him to make even 5 rupees, so he asked his sons for assistance in gathering the coals. There, with nothing but scorching, boiling lava beneath them, his sons were fighting to survive. Even though Jagdip could not bear to see his son's miserable condition, he was yet helpless. One day, Jola was collecting coals, and he stumbled onto a scalding crimson lava that burst and engulfed him. Jagdip just kept looking at the red lava. He lost his son in front of his eyes and he could do nothing to save him. Heartbroken, Jagdip lost consciousness. When he opened his eyes he saw a nun sitting by his side and singing a song. Later, he came to know that they were saved by the missionary's nuns and slowly, their lives

began to change. They asked him to accept Christianity but he refused it. Jobon received an education as a reward for his labors of "tilling their land, cleaning their gardens, and farming in their fields." and they provided them with modest home to live in.

CHAPTER 2.2: LOSS OF HOME AND IDENTITY

Globally, indigenous people have suffered greatly as a result of development projects. Before the beginning of constructing development projects, the government promised indigenous people to give them free electricity and also convinced them that it was for the welfare of their country. But the seed showed after the completion of development projects is the displacement of millions of people. The loss of home and identity due to development projects is a common problem worldwide. It not only involves physical displacement alone but also disruption of community relations, social networks, and cultural and religious heritage. This situation led to a sense of grief and loss and destroyed their future. The first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru initiated the construction of development projects like dams and mining because he believed that the dams would increase earnings for farmers, gain higher economic development, and modernize the nation. Nehru's vision for independent India included the progress of the nation as well as business development and agricultural progress. Sara Joseph's novel *Buddhini* illustrates the negative effects of the construction of development projects. The novel portrays the theme of loss of home, rootlessness, and identity through the characters of Buddhini Mehjan, Rupi Murmu, Jagdip Murmu, and Joseph Jobon Murmu. The Report of the World Commission on Dams mentions-

“Women have suffered more than men have from the disruption of their social life resulting from involuntary displacement from their ancestral land”(114-115).

These lines discuss that displacement is gendered-based. Women were impacted by development projects but received no compensation. Only men were allowed to own land, and women were supposed to take care of the home. They suffer more than male because they lack land, which also disrupts their social lives. They are entirely dependent on men for survival. And if a male member is dead in the family then they cannot reclaim back their land during the resettlement programs. The lives of tribal women, who relied on selling goods from their farms, have been profoundly impacted by the development initiatives. The novel *Buddhini* demonstrates how the dam becomes a symbol of the displacement of indigenous people, particularly Santals. They lost their home, roots, and identity. Sara Joseph has stated the conversation of village men of Karbona in her novel *Buddhini*,

‘A Santal girl has defiled her clan. She has married a diku by putting a garland of flowers upon his neck.’

‘A Santal girl is not supposed to marry a diku, is she?’

‘No, she is not. It's a custom since the beginning of the seven Santal tribes. That's the law and justice.’

‘And what are the law and justice?’

‘A Santal girl is to be joined only by a Santal. Be it a man or a woman, the one who marries a diku should go out of the clan.’

‘what’s the penalty for breaking the law?’

‘nothing less than bitlaha.’(123)

These passages have highlighted the customs of the Santal society which date back to the formation of the seven Santal tribes. In the Santal community, the village headmen (*more hor*) are the court. They make the law and justice in their society. Both girls and boys should not marry outside of their clan and those who do so will be ostracized from their village and community. The penalty for breaking the law is that their family and house will be *Bitlaha*. The writer is referring to Buddhini Mehjan, who was famously ostracized by her community for greeting Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru with a garland and tikka, seen as a symbolic matrimonial ritual during the inauguration of the Panchet dam in 1959 organized by DVC. She was excommunicated from her home and village for she has defiled the Santal clan. Buddhini lost her home, community, and her identity and DVC is responsible for making Buddhini's life miserable. Louis Althusser in his essay, ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus’ points out that individuals become subjects of the society’s ideology the moment they are born. Similarly in the novel, for breaking the society's law, Buddhini's house was polluted (*Bitlaha*). Even her parents abandoned her in fear of being ostracized from the Santal community. Buddhini was just fifteen years old innocent girl child. Even though she was ignorant of their traditions, she was nonetheless punished for her actions. Buddhini can no longer identify herself as Santal because her community, her people, her parents, and even her culture disowned her. Despite her community’s belief that she was Nehru's wife since she showered him with flowers, she was unable to become *dikku*. The *dikku* too were against her. They instead held Buddhini responsible for ruining Nehru's reputation and wanted to kill her.

Rupi Murmu and Suchitra went to Buddhini's house to meet her. They felt sorry and

said that the Nation had wronged her for not considering her issue because it had taken away her identity and roots. They have come to make it right by sharing her story with the public. When Buddhini heard this she became furious and replied, ‘Nation! What nation? Which is my nation?’(266). When the Panchet Dam was built, the government said that it was for the betterment of the nation. However, the nation did not speak out to support Buddhini when she was mistreated and ridiculed. In contrast to the goal of nation-building, which was to develop people in all aspects, Buddhini was subjected to torture and forced to flee from her native place. The government knew that DVC was responsible for the terrible condition of Buddhini's life but still, they did not take any action because she was just a lower-caste girl. In the article "Loss of City Identities in the Process of Change: The City of Konya-Turkey", Yaldiz et al mentioned-

"In recent days, we often come across the problem of cities entering a new architectural and urban formation process in a dimension of losing their original identities.”(Yaldiz et al 2014)

In these passages, the city of Konya is discussed as having lost its original identity due to ongoing development and changes. Konya was filled with 'cultural level, architectural character, tradition, customs and lifestyle'(222). But lost everything because of the modernization of the cities and lifestyle. Konya lost their individuality as a result of this modern mindset. Buildings constructed during the Seignior, Seljuks, Ottoman, and Republic eras contributed to the creation of the city's distinct identity, which gradually lost its significance and worth. Sara Joseph has described in her novel *Buddhini* as,

"The daily wages remodeled the lifestyle of the villagers. They no longer needed to forage in the woods or toil in the farms for food. Money could buy anything."(43)

These lines highlight the lifestyle of the Santal people after the arrival of the Panchet Dam across the Damodar River constructed by DVC. People began to go for daily work in DVC because the forest and farm were destroyed. Money became their source of earning and they began to buy goods from far away shops. They bought what they had never used before. Steel glass substituted brass lottas, bottle liquid from Chirkunda substituted *hadiya* (rural wine), *jalpitas* were substituted by samosas, "soft saris with polka dots and floral prints substituted the traditional costumes (*panchi* and *parhan*) with checks and borders"(Joseph 44). Joseph has mentioned that Shopon's wife stopped wearing mud bangles(*hasa-sakam*) wore glass bangles and used soap instead of *nakra hasa*. Slowly people began to forget their culture and were much influenced by other cultures. They began to live others' style and did not give much importance to preserving it for future generations. With the development of the Nation, the Santals of Jharkhand lost their identity, roots, language, culture, traditions, and customs. Sara Joseph has described that Joseph Jobon Murmu prohibited Rupi Murmu from speaking in Santali in his home. Being a Santal, Rupi Murmu did not know their language, culture, tradition, and customs because she grew up as a Christian child speaking only Hindi and English. Rupi Murmu lost her identity just because her grandfather, Jagdip Murmu, and her father, Jobon Murmu were forced to leave their homeland due to the construction of the Panchet Dam across the Damodar River. She was not living the life of Santal because she was born and brought up in Delhi. She was living a hybrid life with mixed cultures, traditions, and

identities. The Report of the World Commission on Dams, "Dams and Development: A New Framework for Decision-Making," states-

“Large dams have had significant adverse effects on this heritage through the loss of local cultural resources such as temples, shrines, and sacred elements of the landscape, artifacts, and buildings.”(116)

These lines present the loss of a cultural and spiritual site, which was a holy place for the indigenous people. However, with the coming of development projects, these sites were submerged under the water or destroyed by the organizing agency. The indigenous people have experienced forced relocation, losing their ancestral lands, and disruption of the foundations of their traditional way of life. The report highlights how the cultural richness and traditions of indigenous people have eroded in the face of modernization. The World Commission on Dams has reported the Grand Coulee Case Study which 'records the submergence of Native American burial sites by the dam waters.' Many temples, shrines, and ancient buildings were subsided under the water and lost forever. These sites were their root and identity, which took many years to establish but it was destroyed within a day. In the novel, Sara Joseph has mentioned,

“The villagers still mourned the losses of the submerged forest temples.”(260)

This line talks about the submerging of temples of Telkupi, and Bairavastan under the water of the Panchet Dam. The novel explores how the community copes up with the pressures of assimilating into a rapidly changing society, potentially leading to a loss of cultural identity and practices. These sacred places like *Manjithan and Jaherthan* were submerged under the water. They could no longer celebrate their festivals and worship *Marang Buru Bonga, Jaher Era Bonga*, and *Gosae Era* because they were landless and homeless. People are losing their cultural identities and changing their lifestyles 'as a direct consequence of land acquisition'(Singh 2020).

CHAPTER 3: BEING AN OUTSIDER IN ONE'S OWN LAND

CHAPTER 3.1: IMPACTS OF DISPLACEMENT ON COMMUNITIES.

Wherever there is the work of development projects, their displacement is bound to take place. In many countries, development projects are direct or indirect tools for the oppression of indigenous people(Terminski 2013). The second largest category of displacement in the world is development-induced displacement. The result of the resettlement of the affected people is homelessness, unemployment, social marginalization, and health problems. Land was their only source of living but it was snatched away from them in the name of developing the nation. Jalia Kangave in his thesis, "Reconstituting the role of law in development-induced displacement and resettlement: lessons from Uganda's Bujagali hydroelectric project" states-

"Imagine that one day you wake up and learn that the place you have called home for generations is no longer going to be home. Your house will be demolished and in its place, the government or a private developer will construct a dam or put up a residential complex"(kangave, ii).

These lines explain the fact that development projects have evicted people from their land. The land belonged to *Sarkar*, which they considered their own till now. Despite being their own, the land no longer belongs to them. In the name of developing the nation, the government snatched the land from the poor people because they had no social, political, or economic power. They had no right to question the government's decision. They are expected to agree with whatever decision is taken for developing the nation though it brings misery to their lives. In the beginning of the novel, Sara Joseph writes:

Rhythm! Drums! Drums!

Rhythm! Rhythm! Drums! Dance!

All but the dancing ground! (1)

These lines of folk song suggests that there are bands, songs, and dancers but there is no dancing ground where they can be performed. Here Sara Joseph wants to convey that the land which was prosperous with folk songs and dance of Santals is now dull, empty, and lifeless because of the construction of the Panchet dam on the Damodar River. Its construction forced the Santals to leave their village without their consent. They were told by the government that they could no longer farm on their lands, dance on their grounds, or worship their Bongas in

Jaherthan. They were no longer allowed to freely practice their religion and cultural duties. They had to live isolated lives because they had no land or house of their own. The government snatched away everything. In the article, "The Social Framework for Projects: A Conceptual but Practical Model to Assist in Assessing, planning and Managing the Social Impacts of Projects," Smyth and Vanclay mention,

"some people enjoy the gains of development while others bear its pains"(Smyth and Vanclay,).

This line shows the inequality in getting the benefits of development. The rich people living in cities are enjoying the advantages of development projects while the indigenous people have to struggle because their land is snatched away, and forests are destroyed which was their only livelihood. They had no jobs, income, food, or house. They were left with nothing. They were given compensation but their past happiness, oneness, community life, and way of earning were long gone and lost. They had to struggle to come back to normal life. In the novel *Buddhini*, Jagdip Murmu said,

"But with the coming of dams, things changed. The water forced us out forever"(12).

Here, the writer talks about the government had promised that the construction of Panchet Dam would save them from flood and it would help them in the agricultural sectors. However, these development strategies left the Santals homeless because their land was submerged under the water. Building of Dams and Coal mines benefited the urban residents and middle

class people and it destroyed the peace of the rural people living near the construction areas. The rich people live in luxurious mansions and their houses are never situated near the water areas but the houses of the poor become the toys of the water. Joseph talks about the superficiality of the government which promised to give free electricity to the people of Korbona but they were still in the dark. As Sara Joseph has mentioned in the conversation between Robon Manjhi and Rupī Murmu,

"Please remind Nehru that it's dark in here. He had promised us free electricity. We got nothing"(242).

Here, Sara Joseph has talked about the evil politics of the government. At the advent of the construction of the Panchet Dam, they convinced the Santal people to support the construction to help the nation grow. They also gave them a false promise that they would be provided free electricity, but later, the government forgot their promise. They took the price for the electricity and they were forced to leave their villages because of the flood caused by the dam. The writer has stated, "This land belongs to the *sarkar*. Planting trees here is transgression"(29). Here, Sara Joseph discusses the belief of the Santal society that *Bongas* dwell on each tree and offshoot. The people of Korbona had *jaher* where their *Bongas* dwell but now it is under the water. So they decided to plant new saplings for the *Bongas* to live. But the government stopped them from doing so because now this land belongs to the *sarkar* which was theirs till now. Here, the writer shows the evil politics of the government. Even though they can see that the construction of development projects is affecting the lives of rural people still they ignore their condition to develop the nation. Even the police beat the

tribal people for protesting against the construction of dams. Sara Joseph talks about how the construction of the Panchet Dam affected the religious life of the Santal people. The dam destroyed the trees where the *Bongas* dwells as the Santals believe. In the novel, Sara Joseph states,

“Flood was familiar to us, for it followed every year. The Damodar would race into the houses and settlements and recede just the way it came. But she deposited in our land whatever she brought with her. Between one flood and another, we would far our areas, grow rice, and prepare for the succeeding wave. But with the coming of dams, things changed. The water forced us out forever.”(12)

These lines present the plight of Jagdip's life after the construction of the Panchet dam in the Damodar River. Jagdip's life was full of tragedy. He lost his land, house, and his loved ones except for his youngest son, Jobon. Sara Joseph has portrayed Jagdip's village as a lustrous landscape with its rivers, mountains, fields, and forests. People shared their lives with the dead ones, the *Bongas*. The streets cherish its paintings, music, art, and dance which is their cultural heritage. But now everything is taken away by the dams. Their villages were underwater. He suffered to live his life in Jharia where there was only burning red lava from coal mine. His happy life was destroyed by the coming of the dam building. He lost his land, his family, and most importantly his identity. In the the article, “Development-induced displacement in India” Amaravadhi Raavalee says,

“In Indian patriarchal society, women have not given their due rights in the form of compensation on the resettlement package.”

These passages talk about gender relationships and power structures which are often prejudicial to women. Numerous research has described gender inequalities in access to control of economic and natural resources. In tribal communities in India, women do not have land rights and therefore they have not been compensated for the land they have lost as users. Instead, women's interests are seen as linked to household work, and only men and sons are given land according to the local government's resettlement policy. The Kariba Dam and the Sardar Sarovar Dam recognized only men or sons as land owners and women lost their land without compensation during displacement and resettlement. Forests, fisheries, and other common property resources that support subsistence livelihoods are often replaced during resettlement and women are bearing the consequences of it. In the novel, Sara Joseph has mentioned,

"I felt Buddhini had to be revived from the criminal forgetfulness of the country; she wasn't just a mud block that was broken during the great nation-building process. I felt that she should rise again in the nation's memory along with the hundreds of villages, vast farmlands, forests, and temple complexes that were drowned in the Panchet reservoir" (Joseph, 2019).

These passages highlight Buddhini, a female character is inferior to men. She moved from one place to another because she was homeless and landless. She was punished for no mistake done by her. She did not know that garlanding Nehru would cost her life and even the villagers were dumb when Buddhini was chosen to welcome Nehru. The writer wants to show that the villagers and DVC are both equally responsible for bringing Buddhini into this terrible situation. She was treated as an 'object' and they did not even give her one chance to prove herself right. In the novel, Nirmala says assertively, “Muddy will not lay his hands on another woman again”(p.232). Here the writer talks about how the upper caste people (dikku) treated the Santals of Dhanbad when they were forced to leave their village because of the Panchet Dam. The Zamindars had bad eyes for Santal women who went to work in their houses. Women are always the prime victims of displacement caused by development projects. In the article “Development-induced displacement in India”, Amaravadhi Raavalee states,

“The deprivation of income pushes the children to take up either household jobs or become child labor, to supplement to the family.”(Raavalee, 12)

Here, Raavalee presents the pitiable condition of the children who lost their innocence and childhood due to the development projects. With the coming of the development projects, the children were forced to work to help their parents earn a livelihood. It was the time for the children to play, enjoy, eat, and sleep but the destruction of the forest, farm, and homes changed their lives. In the novel, Sara Joseph states,

“Sitting in rows with their heads down, many people, like Buddhini, particularly children, pounded away at the rocks, reducing them into gravel-sized chunks.”(24)

This passage has presented the sad reality of the children during the construction of the Panchet Dam. Buddhini and many other children of Dhanbad were sent to work at the DVC. It was just stones and a hammer the whole day. The contractors were very strict. The children were not allowed to rest or even lift their heads. Before the coming of the Panchet Dam, Buddhini often used to go to the forest to collect wood, tend goats, play flute, and help her mother while doing household work. But the Panchet Dam took away all the innocence and childhood memories from the children's lives. The children were busy working in DVC from morning to evening to earn money which would help their family because the dam took away all the resources, they were living on. The dam destroyed the forest, fisheries, and farms from which they were earning their livelihood. The writer shows the dark picture of the development projects. She also talks about the irresponsibility of the government because they destroyed the innocence of the children in the process of developing the nation. It shows the carelessness of the nation in not preserving the lives of the children who were the upcoming generation of the nation.

CHAPTER 3.2: RESISTANCE AND COPING STRATEGIES

“Crores of people have been uprooted from their soil for mega development projects before and after Independence. It is sad to learn that their stories had gone unrecorded. According to

data from the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees, people have been displaced for development projects on a large scale in India. Since 1947, 60-65 million people have been uprooted, including 40 percent tribals, 40 percent Dalits, and marginal farmers, and activist Meha Patkar had sought UN invention”(xi-xii). In such cases, affected people should get fair compensation, and their cultural and religious heritage should be preserved. Those people who survived the flood caused by the Panchet Dam had to live by moving from one place to another. The government was unconcern about their condition and did not take responsibility to recompense them with land and sustainability. In the article “And Red Flows the Koina River: Adivasi Resistance to the 'Loot' of their Land and Resources in Eastern India”, Dungdung, Padel, and Damodaran(2022) have discussed the resistance of the Adivasi communities to the exploitation and displacement caused by land acquisition and resource extraction in the Koina river region. He discussed the government policies, laws, regulations, and the role of society organizations, and activists who supported the Adivasi resistance movements. But in the novel, Sara Joseph has presented that the local people were not given any land for recompense or financial support. They had to live the life of a beggar and searched for new places to resettle themselves. Some even lost their family members in the process of resettling themselves in different places.

Buddhini is the representative of all those locals who were uprooted since 1947 for the construction of development projects. Her picture with Jawaharlal Nehru was published in the newspaper. Later, she just disappeared from the news. She was just the star for one day and after that, there was no news of her and similarly, there was no news of the others who built the Panchet Dam. Those locals were separated and settled in different regions of the country. The government did not take the initiative to go through their problems and also the resettlement policies did not pay any interest on the loss of the indigenous people of

Jharkhand. Buddhini indeed resists the pressure of society by coming back to demand her job in DVC. In the novel, many characters like, Bikram Soren, Dihru Soren, Somnath Hembrom, and many others tried to revolt against the construction of Dams but they had to bear the consequences by giving up their lives i.e. death. The police arrested Massi for writing slogans against the government for their involvement in the construction of the Panchet Dam. There was revolt between the policemen and the local people. Because they were the slaves of the government, the police were on the side of the country. In response to disobeying the government orders, the locals were executed and imprisoned.

By telling the story of Buddhini and other people, Sara Joseph creates a space for resistance and raises awareness about the systematic issues the local people of Jharkhand faced. Buddhini's hope for a better future and her belief in the possibility of change keep her motivated and provide her with a source of strength. She finds support and strength in her relationship with Datta and Jhanbari who shares her struggles. She resists the roles and labels imposed on her by society and defines herself on her terms. She ignores the judgement of the people of Dhanbad and reclaimed her job in DVC.

CHAPTER 4: THE CONCLUSION

The novel *Buddhini* is loaded with the presence of dislocation everywhere. In *Buddhini*, Sara Joseph offers a nuanced exploration of development-related displacement. Through its rich characters, cultural specificity, and ethical reflections, the novel invites readers to empathize with the human stories affected by progress, prompting a deeper understanding of the

complexities of displacement caused by development. Sara Joseph has shown the reality of development projects other than the advancement of the nation and economic growth. It includes the snatching of land, identity, cultures and spirituality of the Santal people by the government for implementing various development projects. The novel also illustrates the recklessness of the government towards the displacement of the native people. Through characters who stand against the tide of displacement, Joseph celebrates the strength of communities in the face of adversity, emphasizing the importance of resilience, and collective action. Sara Joseph has talked about how the characters coped up with the passing of the time, though the government did not take their issues in action. Displacement is a widespread problem in many places. Many authors have dealt with the issue of Internal and Forced Displacement. The setting of the novel is post-independence, Jharkhand. The paper was discussed from the development-induced displacement point of view along with a view from a subaltern and feminist perspective which could have been explored further.

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