PROS & CONS OF STATUE OF UNITY: "A REALITY CHECK"

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Abstract: This paper takes a deep dive into the viability of the tallest statue on the planet, Statue of Unity, built on the banks of River Narmada in Gujarat, built after the great Indian statesman Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. By using this study as a medium for using a Social Cost Benefit Analysis via the United Nations Industrial Development Organization's (UNIDO) prescribed methodology, it explores and lends itself to multiple metrics & qualitative inferences thereby leading to unbiased conclusions regarding the socio-economic feasibility of the Statue of Unity. Construction of the mammoth figure took a great deal of ordeal for the tribals who were forced to leave their indigenous land along with a striking expenditure of Rs. 3,000 Crores for the state. Hence, this research paper illustrates and answers the grappling questions about the fairness and expediency of the statue.

Keywords: Statue of unity, Gujarat, Social Cost Benefit.

1. INTRODUCTION

On 31st of October 2018, current Indian Prime Minister and former Chief Minister of the state of Gujarat, Narendra Modi inaugurated the Statue of Unity on the banks of river Narmada, Gujarat. The 182 meters tall gigantic structure exhibits the former Indian Statesman and the very first Deputy Prime Minister of the Independent India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Since the day of inauguration of the World's Largest Statue, the entire subcontinent of India has been torn apart by two specific narratives of: 'National Pride', 'celebrating agreat leader and a connoisseur of unity' and that of, severe 'Tribal injustice' carried out by the ever-powerful government. This depiction of the "Iron Man" of the country stands tall on Adivasi grounds overlooking Sardar Sarovar Dam, putting 75,000 Adivasis from the eastern belt of Gujarat in major disagreement with the virtues and ideals behind the statue. Acres of Adivasi land was acquired to build this massive cement, steel and bronze structure. Thousands of tribal cattle herders, farmers living in the Kevadia and nearby regions were asked to evacuate and leave their ancestral lands behind in exchange of, (as promised by Government of Gujarat) complete indemnity and rehabilitation for those affected by the construction of statue. Apart from the monetary compensation, they were also promised a rehabilitation package of alternative job opportunities at the statue and other recreational venues nearby. However, in reality many such tribals were in fact only given the monetary compensation and proper rehabilitation wasn't provided for. Tribals from only 32 villages out of a total 72 villages received compensation half way but promises like land for land or land for jobs weren't fulfilled (Desai, 2018). In the Garudeshwar block, six villages weren't even considered as 'project affected' by the government as they weren't directly affected by the construction of Statue on the Sadhu Hill and hencewere completely denied of any materialization of compensation. but the land was acquired for building of Sardar Sarovar Staff Colonies and Tourist Facilities (Bureau Business Line, 2019).

The scope of this paper is to primarily focus on providing an objective review of important Socio Economical aspects around the Statue of Unity vis a vis:

- Denial of Compensation & Rehabilitation
- Economic Potential
- Tribal Injustice/Social Despotism
- Environmental Concerns

Vol. 9, Issue 1, pp: (568-576), Month: April 2021 - September 2021, Available at: www.researchpublish.com

On the basis of these four grounds, this paper utilizes the efficient tool of *Social Cost Benefit Analysis* to determine the statue's social and economic viability. The paper also features two specific sets of hypotheses namely a Null Hypothesis and an Alternative Hypothesis.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the inception of the statue, no acceptable academic studies have been done on it. Hence, much of the literature found on it originates from National Daily's in forms of reports or articles. To systematically review the given literature, the method of *meta-synthesis* was applied to then highlight the four basic themes found across multiple articles from multiple National Daily's.

2.1 Tribal Injustice/Social Despotism/Wrongful Eviction

No food was cooked in 72 'project affected' villages on the day of inauguration of Statue of Unity as a sign of mourning and protest by the tribal population of Narmada, Gujarat. Traditionally, no food is cooked in tribal households when mourning (IANS, 2018). Many tribal leaders like Dr. Praful Vasava claimed that "government is violating the rights of tribals".

Many instances of Social despotism and bigotry by the government officials was noticed during Prime Minister's various visits to the area. Relevant articles cite various accounts of the aforementioned.

A *Down To Earth* article quoted the testimony of a local activist being arrested for taking part in a silent protest on 31st of October 2018 in Kevadiya, Narmada, Gujarat.

A local activist Mudita Vidrohi told *Down To Earth*, "My mother and me were pickedup without any reason as though we were hardcore criminals. We were there just to express our solidarity with the Adivasis and there was no public protest programme planned by us or the tribal organisations."

There were also reports of tribals being detained from Dang Forests and Banaskantha region as a punitive measure to prevent any demonstrations from happening.

Six villages in the Kevadiya colony (namely- Limbdi, Kothi, Kevadiya, Navagam, Gora & Vadhadiya) were not identified as 'project affected' by the government which did not allow them to get any piece of compensation however, the land for these six villages was acquired to build a Sardar Sarovar Staff Colony which led to summary eviction of more than 5,000 villagers who are now forced to live in temporary shelters(Patel, 2020).

2.2 Denial of Compensation & Rehabilitation

Apart from complete denial of compensation for the six villages in Kevadiya colony, initially government hadacquired land in the name of bringing development to rural areas and then made promises to adequately rehabilitate and compensate. As stated in several articles, government was only successful in compensating only 32 villages in monetary terms while they failed to provide for other facets of their rehabilitation packagesuch as alternate jobs or passable amount of land, required to raise families. Village leader of the village, Navagam, Punabhai Tadvi accuses the government of "disliking Tribals and not wanting Tribals to be a part of the development." (Bureau Business Line, 2019)

2.3 Public Interest Litigation

For building of Tourist facilities, government evicted 5,000 tribal villagers from six villagers in Kevadiya Colony, against which tribal leaders like Anand Mazgaonkar on the behalf of the evicted filed a PIL in GujaratHigh Court objecting their eviction from their ancestral homes and land. The petition also stated that, "land acquisition started in 1961-62 for the purpose of constructing a colony under the Narmada River Project Scheme. In all, 19 villages were directly affected, including Kevadiya and five other villages, where the tribals are currently facing eviction. The Villagers said 85% of the 19 villages were awarded compensation and haveleft but 15% stayed put. Now, there are 5,000 tribals whose identity cards, voter cards, Aadhar numbers, electricity bills are all proofs of their rights over the land under scrutiny." (Jha, 2019)

Adivasis argued that their eviction was unlawful as summary eviction is a clear violation of Section 24 (2) of the RIGHT TO FAIR COMPENSATION & TRANSPARENCY IN LAND ACQUISATION, REHABILITATION & RESETTLEMENT' ACT (LAAR) which states that if a developer fails to take possession of land acquiredunder the old laws for five years, or if compensation is not paid to the owner, the land acquisition process would lapse. The process would then have to be re-

Vol. 9, Issue 1, pp: (568-576), Month: April 2021 - September 2021, Available at: www.researchpublish.com

initiated under LAAR, which would allow the owner to get better compensation.

The Garudeshwar Weir was created stop the water from damaging the statue from any damage, when it was proposed, it was clear that it could submerge tribal villages in its reservoir. Under the Schedule -V of the Indian Constitution and the PESA Act, government cannot do anything on the sovereign tribal land without the permission of village Gramsabhas. Yet, it was to be seen how callously tribal land was destroyed (Bavadam, 2019).

Recently, Gujarat High Court dismissed the PIL as the right to possession was an individual right. Therefore, it would be for the individual to fight their unpaid compensation and possession of land not the members of civil society (Express News Service, 2020).

2.4 Environmental Concerns

Gujarat government has claimed time and again that the large investment that was put into Statue, it accounts for "Sustainable Development". United Nations says that it will yield increased environmental outcomes and may even promote local culture (Gamble & Davis, 2018).

However, the Indigenous tribals from the area also accuse the government for the World's largest statue for not having an environmental clearance. A report in *Down To Earth* mentioned about a letter written to Environmental Secretary by the activists protesting against the Statue. It states that the Statue of Unity clearly violates the Environment Protection Act of 1986, Environmental impact assessment notification of 2006 and few orders by the National Green Tribunal (Patel, 2020). Furthermore, it seems that according to a Supreme Court order dated 4 December 2006, any project within 10Kms radius of a national park or a wildlife sanctuary, must have the approval from a standing committee of National Board for Wildlife. Tribals allege that the statue doesn't have an approval from a standing committee albeit the fact, that the statue is a mere 3.7 Kms away from the Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary. Statue's inauguration comes only a month after the country closed the first nature reserve (Fresh water Turtle wildlife sanctuary) in India since 1972. (Gamble &Davis, 2018)

It was also observed in 2017, when Prime Minister Modi applauded the finishing of the Sardar Sarovar Dam despite World Bank stopping its funding and condemning the environmental concerns the dam was raising. This is stark proof of Prime Minister Modi and his administration to be more concerned about Economic Development than Conservation of the Environment.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Initially the entire basis of this research paper was a primary data-based study. Due to the lockdowns and restrictions imposed on travel and movement because of the COVID -19 pandemic, a primary data collection became out of bounds hence, research became limited to a secondary data based qualitative research.

However, to ensure maximum objectivity from the already scarce data sources, a **Social Cost Benefit Analysis** was prepared. A Cost Benefit Analysis compares the direct costs and direct benefits involved in a project to objectively define the financial benefits that may follow the project.

Benefit \geq Cost

A Social Cost Benefit Analysis enables a researcher to understand the Socio-Economic viability of a project as it includes all the indirect costs and benefits alongside all the direct costs and benefits. It is really difficult to quantify these indirect costs and benefits. Therefore, we follow certain models to minimize variations between Actual costs & benefits and Expected costs & benefits.

In this research, UNIDO Approach is put to use.

3.1 UNIDO APPROACH

This approach is prescribed by United Nations' Industrial Development Organization. It is one of the most widely accepted approaches for evaluating Social Cost Benefit Analysis' of projects.

UNIDO Approach talks about Aggregate Consumption, i.e. Consumer's Surplus & Consumer's willingness to pay. To understand impact of aggregate consumption on the society we must use opportunity costs or *Shadow Prices* instead of regular prices to judge the real impact on society.

Vol. 9, Issue 1, pp: (568-576), Month: April 2021 - September 2021, Available at: www.researchpublish.com

UNIDO Approach is a five-stage methodology:

- 1. Calculation of financial profitability measured at market prices.
- 2. Obtaining the net benefit of the project measured in terms of economic prices.
- 3. Adjustment for the impact of the project on savings and investment.
- 4. Adjustment for the impact of the project on income distribution.
- 5. Adjustment for the impact of the project on merit goods and demerit goods.

4. SOCIAL COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS

The UNIDO Approach is applied to in a simplified manner to understand the Socio – Economic viability of Statue of Unity.

Main focus of the Social Cost benefit Analysis (SCBA) in its widest sense is to maximize aggregate utility in the society. Objectives of SCBA are:

- 1. Economic benefits in terms of Shadow Prices
- 2. Impact on Saving and Income distribution
- 3. Benefits incurred in the society
- 4. Costs incurred in the society

4.1 Economic Benefits in terms of Shadow Prices

STATUE OF UNITY ECONOMIC BENEFIT (SCBA)			
TIME PERIOD	(Oct '18)	(Nov'18 - Oct '19)	(Nov '19 - Feb '20)
YEAR	0	1	1.3333333
NET CASH FLOW (IN CRORES)	-2989	38.71	1064.6
BALANCE	-2989	-2950.29	-1885.69
DISCOUNT RATE @5%			
DISCOUNTED CASH FLOW (PV) - IN CRORES	-2989	₹ 36.87	₹ 997.55
NEW BALANCE (DISCOUNTED) - IN CRORES	-2989	₹ -2,952.13	₹ -1,954.58

DISCOUNTED PAYBACK PERIOD (IN YEARS)	51.31 YEARS
INTERNAL RATE OF RETURN	-40%
NPV @5% DR (CSR ALLOW.) - IN CRORES	₹ -1,891.91

Here, 3 different metrics were calculated to determine whether the Statue holds any economic benefits.

Net Present Value (Statue of Unity) at 5% Discount Rate = Rs. -1891.91 Crores

Discount Rate can also be termed as Expected Rate of Returns. Since, a statue doesn't have financial targets to maximize profitability, it doesn't necessarily have a Discount Rate. But it's widely established that PSUs and Private firms are supposed to donate their 5% allowance of CSR towards maintenance of the Statue. Hence, this 5% allowance was kept as the threshold value of minimum expected rate of return.

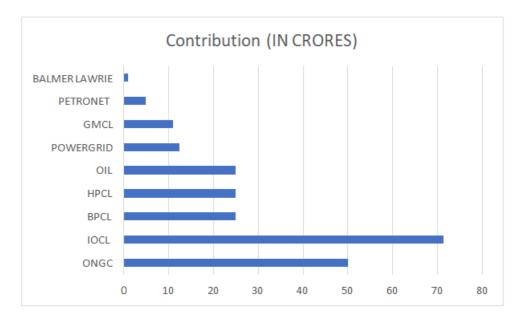
Internal Rate of Return = -40%

This showcases the fact that the initial investment in the project will give loses as high as 40%.

Discounted Payback Period = 51.31 Years

This shows how at a DR of 5% and calculated over Present Values, the investment of Rs. 2989 Crores will becompletely recovered within 51.31 years.

Vol. 9, Issue 1, pp: (568-576), Month: April 2021 - September 2021, Available at: www.researchpublish.com



[CSR CONTRIBUTIONS TO STATUE OF UNITY BY PSUs & PVT FIRMS]

4.2 Impact on Savings & Investments in the society

a. Statue instills a great sense of National Pride within the citizens of India which in turn lures multitudes of tourists from India and due to it being the World's Tallest Statue, travelers from throughout the globe come in, therefore benefitting the local economies and increasing foreign investment.

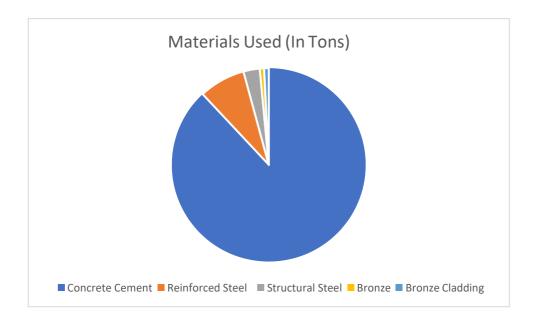
4.3 Benefits to the Society

- a. Apart from compensating the displaced tribals, the government will also be building new 6 lane roadsand new railway routes.
- b. Loha Campaign: Farmers from across the length and breadth of India were asked to bring soil samples, these soil samples from 169,078 locations across the country were then used to extract iron which wasthen used in the making of the statue.
- c. Great source of generating employment for out of work (due to land acquisition) tribals.
- d. Responsible for many new "theme-based" gardens which contain a variety of flora and fauna.
- e. Urbanization of an extremely under developed rural area. May increase the standard of living of the tribals in the area.

4.4 Cost to the Society

- a. Kachua Sanctuary closed one month prior inauguration of Statue of Unity
- b. Thousands of indigenous tribal lives affected.
- c. Statue of Unity lacks appropriate Environmental checks.
- d. Quality of life for the displaced tribals decreased as they struggle to get basic amenities from the government as a part of their Rehabilitation package.
- e. Only 7.5% was the contribution from PSUs & Private firms in the total cost of 2989 Crores. Rest of which was payed (mostly) using Taxpayer's money.
- f. Natural Ecology was disturbed to create an artificial scene of a valley of flowers, animal safari, butterfly park etc.
- g. The world's tallest statue consists of 210,000 cubic meters of concrete cement, 18,500 tons of reinforced steel, 6,500 tons of structural steel, 1,700 tons of bronze and 1,850 tons of bronze cladding.

Vol. 9, Issue 1, pp: (568-576), Month: April 2021 - September 2021, Available at: www.researchpublish.com



h. Considering the materials used and their gigantic amounts, the construction of the statue did not exactly follow a model of environmental conservation or sustainability.

5. HYPOTHESES TESTING

To empirically examine the ordeal of the tribals and to understand whether Statue of Unity has had a positive or a negative consequence towards the society in general we must assume a hypothesis to either of the results. A <u>Null Hypothesis</u> advocates for a negative overall impact of the Statue on the society wherein, the <u>Alternate Hypothesis</u> showcases positives of the statue outperforming it's negatives.

The Null hypothesis which would advocate for:

- a.) Non-fulfilment of materialized compensation and rehabilitation for the evicted tribals.b.) Statue lacking the promised economical potential.
- c.) Natural ecosystem of the area getting affected by the statue. d.) Eviction of the Adivasis was unlawful and done in bad faith.

Whilst, the Alternate hypothesis describes an ideal scenario of:

- a.) Complete fulfilment of compensation and rehabilitation for the evicted tribals.
- b.) Statue containing the potential to create a giant economic ecosystem that brings development in the area.c.) Statue has all relevant environmental clearances.
- d.) Eviction of Adivasis was lawful and done in absolute goodwill

6. CONCLUSION

This extensive study allowed for a scrutiny of the Statue of Unity. Using the literature review as a back bone for further judgements, the analytical scrutiny showed some positive arguments and some negative arguments against the statue.

Moreover performing a Social Cost Benefit Analysis, we can now evaluate and list in points in favor of and against the statue.

Results from Social Cost Benefit Analysis:

6.1 Economic Benefit/Loss to society -

• <u>SCBA analyzes more economic losses than Economic benefits</u> that may lean into the society. Net Present Value was Rs. -1891.91 crores. Which tells that the present value of costs exceeds the present value of returns and that the Statue of Unity will be bearing losses of Rs. -1891.91 crores on the initialinvestment/expenditure of Rs. 2989 crores

Vol. 9, Issue 1, pp: (568-576), Month: April 2021 - September 2021, Available at: www.researchpublish.com

- Discounted IRR stood at -40% which showed that, at present value, the statue will be bearing losses up to 40%. It suggests the unviability of the statue since, -40% is way lower than the minimum expected rate of return, 5%.
- A Discounted Payback Period was calculated to be 51.31 years. Hence, great losses in the short term will be endured by the statue.

6.2 Overall Benefit/Costs to society -

6.2.1 Benefits to society:

- Kevadiya (where the Statue of Unity is located) was a very rural area with barely any signs of development until the statue was built. Therefore, it was observed that Statue of Unity became an avenue for development in this area. Hotels, 6 lane roads, Multiple rail routes being planned directly as a result of the statue.
- In India, Travel and Tourism is the largest service industry with a contribution of 6.23% to the GDP and 8.78% of total employment of the country. With inclusion of Statue of Unity, these numbers are bound to increase and promote not the just the local economies but also help the economy at a countrywide level. ("Enhance Growth through Statue of Unity as a Channel of Economic Prosperity by Secured Governance The Policy Times", 2020)
- Increased travel from foreign tourists to see the World's Tallest Statue will also bring a great flow of foreign currency and investments in future.
- New employment opportunities in Hospitality sector in Kevadiya.

6.2.2 Costs to society:

- Land from 72 villages was acquired after making false promises of healthy compensation & rehabilitation by the Government of Gujarat. Lives of thousands of tribals was affected by construction of the statue and other attractions.
- Monetary compensation was received by 32 villages out of 72 villages yet, rehabilitation did not reach most Adivasi population which disabled them to live a life of normalcy.
- Six villages in Kevadiya region were acquired for building Tourist facilities. The tribal villagers got denied of compensation as their villages weren't identified as 'project affected' while they also got summary evicted from their ancestral lands. Now, these poor adivasis are living under temporary shelters.
- Tribals protested against the government's decisions to introduce development in their area while also alienating the Tribals from the development on their own soil by displacing them.
- A major portion of Rs. 2989 crore was paid by the government largely using taxpayer's money.
- Statue of Unity can be cumulatively concluded to say that it lacks Environmental sustainability. Theintrinsic model of the statue on its own fails to be of a more sustainable nature.
- Kachua Sanctuary was closed a month prior to opening of the statue.
- Statue of Unity did not have permission from a standing committee of National Board for Wildlife.
- Natural ecology was destroyed (farmlands, trees, plantations) to create "Themed Gardens".
- Garudeshwar Weir was proposed to be created to save water from damaging the statue but Garudeshwar weir posed threat to tribal land as it could submerge entire villages under water. It was unveiled shortly after inauguration of the Statue of Unity and as a result 7 villages got submerged underwater causing damage to tribal property.

Comparing the positives with the negatives, derived from the results of the Social Cost Benefit Analysis, it becomes strikingly clear that the negatives outweigh the positives on all four previously mentioned grounds

i.e., Compensation & Rehabilitation, Tribal Injustice, Economic Potential & Environmental Concerns.

Hence, The Null Hypothesis will be the most acceptable hypothesis among the two hypotheses. On the basis of available evidence in form of articles & reports from National Daily's along with the findings from the detailed Social Cost Benefit Analysis, this study puts the narrative of Tribal Injustice above the insensitive sentiment of National Pride.

Vol. 9, Issue 1, pp: (568-576), Month: April 2021 - September 2021, Available at: www.researchpublish.com

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Vol. 9, Issue 1, pp: (568-576), Month: April 2021 - September 2021, Available at: www.researchpublish.com

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