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**PARKS, PEOPLE AND PROTEST:  
SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL  
ACTION GROUPS IN GRASSROOTS RESOURCE CONFLICTS**

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**Abstract:** This paper analyses some of the problems and prospects associated with the new trend in the conservation discourse in India. The focus is on a campaign journey organised by a group of environmental NGOs through several national parks and sanctuaries in central and western India. The paper demonstrates that the new trend, despite drawing our attention to the problems of existing conservation strategies, fails to suggest blue print(s) for participatory, bottom up conservation strategies.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

### 1.1 The Context: Of Protected Areas and the Critical Discourse

Beginning with the early seventies, there has been a steady rise in the number and size of protected areas in developing countries, notably - national parks, wildlife sanctuaries. In India, there are about 520 protected areas (PAs), compared to 130 existing in 1975, spread over 148700 sq kms, covering about 4.2% of the state territory. An estimated 3 million people live inside these PAs.<sup>1</sup> Although, in some protected areas limited human interventions are allowed, people living in and around these areas face a systematic curtailment of access rights and usufruct which in turn affects their entitlement portfolio. Not only are access to resources curtailed and denied, people are frequently displaced from their original settlements with or without adequate compensation. The justification of such activities is derived from the official conservation discourse in which local communities are principal threat to the forests and wildlife. Therefore the major pre-occupation of forest authorities has been to limit prevailing levels of human interference. Protected areas thus become arenas of resource struggles.

The Indian government as well as aid agencies have devised a number of measures to accommodate subsistence and natural resource requirements of local people. The creation of the buffer zones in the 1970s, as part of the UNESCO 'Man and Biosphere Programme' between strictly preserved areas and human settlements is one such step<sup>2</sup>. The implementation of such programmes however, have not only been weak but have been structurally biased towards conservation objectives. Attempts made at promoting agricultural and rural developmental programmes along side conservation measures have not yielded sufficient results because of their largely experimental character, designed principally to reduce conflicts at the local level, rather than to generate sustainable livelihood opportunities and alternatives.

The problems of the official policy notwithstanding, state efforts at conservation have enjoyed support from a sizeable number of urban environmentalists who believe that without state intervention, the process of deforestation and wildlife depletion would only occur at a faster pace given the pressures from local community on these resources on the one hand and from industrial, commercial and developmental projects on the other. This group has considerably influenced government policies over the years and its sustained lobbying has informed stringent legislations like the Wild Life Protection Act 1972 & 1991), the Forest Conservation Act (1980) and the Environment Protection Act (1986).

However, in recent years, with the intensification of resource conflicts around protected areas, a new discourse has gained grounds within the conservation movement that is highly critical of both the statist approaches and the environmentalists who lend support to them. The efficiency and effectiveness of existing conservation strategies have been seriously questioned, their top-down, non-participatory character excoriated, while the contribution of early urban environmentalists have been dubbed as elitist for their failure to take cognizance of the social roots of environmental use and abuse. This critical discourse has largely bred on local level demands and struggles over access and use and the mediation of actors such as activist groups and environmental NGOs, in these struggles. It is therefore indicative of a more recent trend in conservation

movement that accords importance to grass roots activism as opposed to macro-level lobby politics and demands attention to human rights along with animal rights in the context of PAs.

## **1.2 Objective and Method:**

This paper analyzes some of the problems and prospects of this trend within the conservation movement in India. Its main objective, is to assess the significance of grassroots activism(s) that mediate and represent resource conflicts generating from PAs. How are resource conflicts understood by the different mediating actors? How are the seemingly contending rights of people and animals handled and represented? What does participation in the conservation process imply to actors at the grass roots and other agencies such as those representing the state? Does this new trend in the conservation movement lead us towards figuring out the blue-print of a more participatory conservation? Some of these questions are addressed in the paper. To an extent, the analysis is informed by the actor-oriented approach. Attempt is made to understand the perceptions and actions of different actors - local communities, grassroots activists, environmental NGOs; their capabilities to influence and transform structural limits acknowledged and assessed.

The method adopted for the purpose is a sustained focus on a collective action programme - a campaign-journey through several national parks and sanctuaries in central and western India. Organised by a conglomerate of environmental NGOs, conservation groups, grass roots organisations and environmentalists, the journey aimed (was undertaken) for a critical assessment of state conservation policies and practices. Simultaneously it attempted (an attempt was made during the journey) to initiate some form of dialogue among a wide range of actors affected by and associated with conservation for purpose of facilitating participatory forms of strategies. This method of approaching the critical discourse through a collective action programme has advantages and limits. Collective action modes embody the movement-in-action and therefore serve as means to understand how movements operate at a micro-level, how resources are mobilised, by whom, for what purposes. Perhaps more importantly, such modes as the one delineated above, manifest an understanding of issues at hand, in the sense that they construct the very discourse within which they lie. Thus, specifically, focusing on the campaign journey also facilitates how conservation is understood, how conflicts are conceptualised and how peoples problems are represented. The major limitation of this approach is that the collective action sets the tone and scope of analysis. The extent to which one can delve into the discourse depends on how critical the event is to the discourse.

A major part of the study is based on participating in the campaign journey. The reliance on some of the techniques of participatory research need to be underscored. The techniques are quasi-anthropological in nature, informal discussions, informal group meetings complimented with participatory observations and follow up discussions with some activists involved in the organisation of the journey. While these techniques enabled collecting information on the nature of resource struggles in the protected areas and the inner dynamics of the journey, the public face of the journey and its perceptions on nature and environment are constructed through documentation of the speeches of journey leaders at different platforms, documentation of the proceedings of some press briefings, publications during the journey by some organisers of the yatra and discussions with environmentalists both lending support to as well as critical of the journey.

The paper consists of three major sections. The first section is an attempt to present the collective action as it was - a moving formation passing through a specific route, for a specific period of time with specific objectives. The journey-people interface structures the narrative in this section. The second section identifies major issues confronting local communities that the journey encountered. The third section analyses the journey as representing the critical discourse and examines its problems and prospects.

## **2. THE JUNGLE JIVAN BACHAO YATRA:<sup>3</sup>**

### **2.1 The Yatra's Objectives:**

In the early months of 1995, the Jungle Jivan Bachao Yatra (JJBY), passed through several national parks and sanctuaries in western and central India with the following objectives - to meet and interact with communities, nature lovers, protected area employees and authorities, NGOs and district officials who live and work around national parks and sanctuaries, with a view to ascertain from them what they believe as the reasons for the continued decline of these areas, and to help form bridges between such persons and groups so as to secure the future of these habitats and the wildlife they contain. The Yatra was the outcome of a national meeting in September 1994 held at the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, where participants, mostly NGO activists, felt that 'local communities around these areas had no regular forum to voice their opinions and very little attempts have been so far made at bringing together these people and officials of the forest and wild-life department.' The meeting highlighted the need to go 'beyond an articulation of the problems into an exploration of alternative strategies at conservation.'

### **2.2 The Constituents:**

The participants of the yatra were members of social action and conservation groups, NGOs and representatives of local communities living in and around protected areas.<sup>4</sup> The local community participation was primarily from the areas of operation of some of the NGOs that organised the yatra. Most of these community representatives were directly or indirectly involved in the activities of their respective local NGOs. Overall, the *yatris*<sup>1</sup> were of a heterogenous composition - urban conservationists, researchers, activists and representatives of affected rural communities on the other.

Four NGOs were assigned the task of organising the journey; the Tarun Bharat Sangh which oversaw arrangements in Rajasthan, while the Centre for Environmental Education, the Maharashtra Arogya Mandal and the Ekta Parishad were in charge of the yatra's agenda in Gujarat, Maharashtra and MP respectively. For sojourn and local travels the help of social action and conservation groups active in the local areas had been mobilised as a consequence of which the yatra was a host to at least twenty five to thirty organisations. In a few places, particularly in Gujarat, the government forest and wildlife department played host to the yatra. The modus operandi of the yatra was to exchange ideas and discuss problems with local NGOs and concerned officials, visit the protected areas, campaign at the village level and discuss problem areas with the local communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Translated as travellers, that is those undertaking the journey.

### 2.3 The Itinerary:

The Yatra covered a distance of about 14000 kms over a period of 50 days and touched eighteen national parks and sanctuaries spread in six states: Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi. It consisted of a convoy of four vehicles - two jeeps, a mini-bus and a car.<sup>5</sup> During local sojourn and travels, the convoy got bigger as local community organisations and activists joined it. On an average the yatra consisted of about 30 people.

Chronologically the following protected areas in Rajasthan were in the yatra's itinerary; Sariska Tiger reserve, the Keoladevo National Park in Bharatpur, Ranthambore National Park in Sawai Madhavpur, Jamwanagar Sanctuary near Jaipur and Phulwari ki Naal near Udaipur. In Gujarat the yatra covered the Gir national park, the Girnar reserve, Hingolgarh sanctuary, Shoolpaneswar sanctuary apart from visits to some Joint Forest Management schemes undertaken by the forest department. In Maharashtra the Borivelli reserve in Bombay, Koyna sanctuary, Radhanagari sanctuary, the Melghat tiger reserve and the Bhimashankar sanctuary were in the yatra's itinerary. In Madhya Pradesh it passed through the Kanha tiger reserve and the Pench reserve while in Uttar Pradesh it covered the Shivpuri and Rajajii National Parks. The Yatra culminated in Delhi after a visit to the Delhi Ridge. A concluding two day convention was held thereafter in Delhi to evaluate the achievements of the yatra and to plan follow-up actions.

## 3. FROM SARISKA TO BHIMASHANKAR<sup>6</sup>: A NARRATIVE

### 3.1 The Beginning at Sariska:

The Yatra began from village Mallana, district Alwar in Rajasthan in the Sariska Tiger Reserve. The day long inauguration ceremony was attended by several hundred villagers gathered from nearby villages. Sacred rituals like the chanting from the *Ramayana* and the offering to *Nahardeo* - the local tiger deity were complimented with profane ones: community meetings, feasts and street theatre.

The byline in the inaugural festivities in Sariska was its success story. The local pastoral community had faced serious problems when Sariska was declared a tiger reserve basically with regards to their grazing rights. Further a chain of limestone and marble mines operating in the park region also had seriously affected the forest, land and water regimes of the Gujjar community living in the park. Significantly the forest department had been unable to counter the powerful forces which were behind the sanction and promotion of mining in that area. It was through the mobilisation of the Tarun Bharat Sangh, a local NGO that local community took the struggle right up to the level of the Supreme Court of India culminating in the closure of all mining activities in the national park area. Also a number of villages continue to exist even in the core area of the park having grazing rights. The activities of the Tarun Bharat Sangh, have prevented park officials from executing a plan of resettlement for these villages.

The Sangh based in village Bikampura, is large with about 80 staff members. Its operations - advertised in the walls of the Sangh's headquarters - spread over 200 surrounding villages. The founder and secretary general of the Sangh, Rajinder Singh - incidently the defacto leader of the Yatra - is a extremely popular in the area. Known as *BhaiSahab* to the local population, Singh, an original inhabitant of Meerut



district in Uttar Pradesh<sup>7</sup> exercises tremendous hold over the activities of the organisation as well as the villages in the area. To his credit goes the construction and renovation of about 500 in-setu water conservation projects in the Sariska region. The *yatris* were taken to one such structure constructed with the financial resources mobilised by the Sangh and labour contributed by the local community. People stated that the water conservation measures have recharged their wells, regenerated their forests and made their lands more productive.<sup>8</sup>

The congregation at Mallana was thus suggestive of the Sangh's success in mobilising community action. It also served as an ideal beginning for the yatra infusing optimism and hope.<sup>9</sup>

### **3.2 Keoladeo National Park:**

The yatra's next destination was the Bharatpur National Park, a world-famous wet-land reserve. The hosts to the yatra - the Keoladeo Research Foundation and the local chapter of the Bombay Natural History Society - briefed the *yatris* on the major problem areas and the nature of their intervention. The *yatris* visited several villages in the area to interact with local communities and get a first hand report of the current situation. A general opinion voiced unanimously across villages was that the ban on grazing has contributed to their deteriorating economic position. In fact, a decade ago seven local villagers were shot dead by the police during a protest over the ban on grazing in the park. Since the ban per capita holding of cattle in the villages has dramatically declined. While there has been a trend to shift to agriculture among the well-off households, some owning up to 90 acres of land it is largely the poorer households which have been worst affected by the ban. Many have taken to rickshaw pulling which has become a major source of income in the park as it is a major tourist attraction.

As per the local version, the ban on grazing was also directly and adversely affecting the national park itself. As proof, villagers asked why the Siberian Cranes who were a major attraction in the Park had not been spotted for the last couple of years. The explanation offered by them was that buffalo grazing has always been a part of the wet-land ecosystem as grazing loosens the soil on the one hand and the dung from the cattle contain food for the birds on the other. This folk logic is somewhat corroborated by scientific studies. According to one study<sup>10</sup> the *Paspalum* grass in the park has overgrown, due to the ban on buffalo grazing, choking out the shallow bodies of water, which has particularly affected the habitat of winter geese and ducks.

The *yatris* also had a meeting with the local chapter of the Khadi Gram Udyog, a Gandhian outfit popularising cottage industries in the area. The meeting was attended by several social workers and activists in and around Bharatpur. The possibilities of undertaking employment and income generation activities in the area were explored to provide subsistence as well as to reduce human pressure on the national park. The importance of this was felt as industrial activity in Bharatpur is discouraged because of its potential to affect the fragile eco-system of the park.<sup>11</sup>

### **3.3 Ranthambore National Park:**

The Tiger Reserve at Ranthambore was the next destination. The host NGO here was the local chapter of Centre for Environment Education, Ahmedabad which has been working in some villages around the park. The itinerary in Ranthambore included village level meetings, a meeting with local officials of the park and a night's sojourn in households in villages. At Bodhal near Sawai Madhavpur the *yatris* addressed a

village gathering after which informal discussions were held with the villagers. The discussions with villagers generally were around the problems they faced in their every-day life. While access rights to grazing and fuel wood were mentioned, the periodical crop damage by wild animals was considered to be the most important problem facing the villagers. In fact latter, the yatris had a first hand experience of crop raiding, when they spend the night in village Moldongri situated in the park area. Almost the entire population of the village - women and children included - took turns to guard their fields from wild pigs, Neelgais and wild ducks. While the village was divided on the issue of resettlement with some villagers wanting to move out and others preferring to stay put, it appealed to the yatris to discuss the problem of crop raiding at the meeting with the local park officials.

While the concerned forest and wildlife officials had largely ignored the yatra at Sariska and Bharatpur, at Ranthambore they sat down to discuss and debate issues with the yatris. At an open forum which included some local journalists and activists, officials dealt at length on the current situation in the park, the resource needs of the local population and the ways and plans by which these needs are to be met in the near future. It was in this meeting that one got a clear signal from the officials that they recognised the need to involve the local communities in forest protection. The officials mentioned the formation of forest protection committees in few villages (16 to be precise) including village Bodhal. However, given the magnitude of the area -the total area of the tiger project in Ranthambore is of 1300 sq km and within the radius of 10 kms there are about 270 villages with a population of about four hundred thousand (4 lakhs) people - the officials admitted that efforts made so far are only confidence building measures.

The officials also spelt out the adoption of park management strategies under the Global Environment Fund (GEF), an aid package of the World Bank created after the Rio Summit. The total tiger project area of 1300 sqkm consists of a national park and two sanctuaries. This continuous stretch is divided into three zones: the core zone which remains untouched, the buffer zone and the multiple use zone. The buffer zone caters to the fodder needs of the local communities; some soil conservation measures are also undertaken periodically that employ local labour and serve as income generation activities. The multiple use zone is now being created for fuel wood plantation to cater to the needs of the local people. The focus of implementing what is now called eco-development projects under the GEF is to lessen the dependence of people on forests and foster bio-diversity conservation.

### **3.4 Phulwari Ki Naal:**

The convoy reached the Phulwari ki Naal after about two days of travelling after the yatra had addressed its first press conference in Jaipur earlier. The area around the park is largely inhabited by Bhils and Kathkaris. As was evident in village Ambavadi - situated close to the buffer area of the sanctuary - these people survived on some of the harshest living conditions. The access road to Ambavadi was barely motorable. While forest department vehicles and private trucks ply on them, no public transport facilities exist within a radius of 20 kms. The upper reaches of the forests were largely inhabited by the Bhils cultivating some forest land. The Kathkari households living in the lower reaches owned some revenue cultivation plots. But for most part of the year, the population migrated to Surat and Ahmedabad in search of wage employment as the produce from the land lasted them less than two months.

A village meeting at Ambavadi was held in the courtyard of a local organisation - Action India where the local communities Bhils and Kathodias spelt out their dependence on forest resources. A detailed

discussion on the plight of forest wage labourers followed with the representative of a labour union in Vijaynagar tehsil in Gujarat<sup>12</sup>. The employment generation schemes - digging, stone fencing, check dams, transportation of seedlings and road side plantations - undertaken by the forest department under different programmes were violative of labour laws of the state, including the violation of the Minimum Wages Act.<sup>13</sup> It is only after unionization of workers that contentious issues now are taken to the Labour Tribunal. Mistry also pointed out the anomalies in the functioning of the Forest Development Corporation (FDC) in Gujarat. The corporation was formed with the aim to prevent the private monopoly trading of minor forest products and it was made the sole agent for grading, harvesting, drying, transporting, marketing and auctioning any of the Minor Forest Products - gum, lacs, kendu leaves, mahua etc. However erstwhile monopoly traders were made sub-agents of the corporation and as a consequence while the technical monopoly is now vested on the FDC, the traders have retained their stronghold over the operations as before. More importantly the labour regimes they had set forth continue unchanged and are as exploitative as before.<sup>14</sup>

In informal discussions, later on, the Kathkari people spoke on a wide range of issues : their first coming to the Naal forests from the Khandesh region in Maharashtra in the late 60s, the consequent breaking of kinship ties, their acquiring land deeds and later on homestead land, the migration cycle in search of wage, their food habits and their dependence on forests.

### **3.5 Hingolgarh Sanctuary:**

Early on its second week, the Yatra entered Gujarat its first destination the Hingolgarh sanctuary. This sanctuary has the unique distinction of being managed by a private institution, the GEER Foundation<sup>15</sup> since 1982. The sanctuary earlier was the fodder growing area of the erstwhile Maharaja Rajkumar Thatcher, himself an eminent ornithologist. The forest department had taken it over in 1972, and declared it a sanctuary under the Wildlife (Protection) Act passed that year. However ten years later the GEER Foundation inherited a degraded "protected" area, almost on the verge of being denotified and converted it into a nature education sanctuary. And today the management proudly proclaims that successful protection has resulted in considerable regeneration of the forests in the last decade and some species of the wildlife population have so multiplied that villagers have complained about damages to crops. Under the fodder development programme adopted two years ago, about 3,00,000 kgs of grass is made available every year to the local Maldhari communities living around the sanctuary with a total cattle population of over 7000.

At a community meeting, organised by the Foundation, villagers complained about the inadequate responses of both the district administration as well as the park management on the issue of crop damage. The yatris were also asked if they had concrete plans of addressing this issue. Suggestions to tackle the problem also came from different quarters. Some suggested large scale transfer of the animals into other protected areas. The converse alternative of bringing in some carnivorous animals like panthers from other protected areas was proposed but not favoured although it was generally acknowledged the presence of these animals is essential to regulate the population of the herbivorous. Others suggested 'family planning' measures for the animals. The possibilities of generating resources for a protective wall around some villages were also discussed.

Representatives of the park management were more concerned about the bio-mass pressure that the local communities put on the sanctuary. As per their argument, the bulk of the cattle population in the villages was unproductive, the total milk output from about 7000 cattle was an abysmally low 1000 litres. In a scenario

where the average cattle holding is reduced from the present 25 to about 3 productive cattle per household not only would the total milk production substantially go up, but the bio-mass in the area will be more than enough for all the animals. Further to this issue, the management argued that the stall-feeding programme undertaken by them was not popular with the villagers, as it involved substantial labour. The Maldharis, they stated, operated on a 'zero cost economy' and always preferred to let the cattle graze on their own.

The visit to the Hingolgarh sanctuary clearly established one thing. Despite a more receptive management, human pressures on the protected areas continue to be exerted, as the lifestyles of the local communities remain unchanged. While the management targets to alter these practices, the efforts have met with either lukewarm response or even at times, resistance.

### **3.6 Girnar Reserve:**

The yatra's next destination was the Lion Reserve at Gir. On its way to Gir the yatra made a stopover at Junagadh. It joined a local organisation, The National Nature Education Foundation, in honouring a Divisional Commissioner of Forests who had done exemplary work in protecting and regenerating the Girnar protected forest. The Foundation was also active in mobilising the citizenry in Junagadh against a proposed 'Ramakatha recital', an interpretative narration of the Hindu epic Ramayana - by Morari Babu<sup>16</sup> in the Girnar Forests, fearing serious damage to the eco-setting that could be caused by the large mass of devotees who would gather to hear the recitation.

The honour bestowed on the Divisional Commissioner by a local environmental organisation led one to respond to a new set of issues. So far in all the national parks that the yatra had visited, the response of the government officials to the yatra in particular and to the grievances of the local communities had not been particularly encouraging except at Ranthambore. And here was an instance in Junagadh where local people were felicitating a forest official for his contribution to conservation. It needs reiteration that those involved in the Junagadh felicitation were from the town itself, themselves well educated, government employees and middle-class nature lovers. Surely their perspective on forest resources would be qualitatively different from those rural communities that the yatra had communicated with so far. Yet this should not undermine the fact that government agents do possess potentialities of making conservation successful and sustainable.

In his acceptance address the DCF spelt out the managerial strategies necessary for successful conservation important of which were, motivating lower staff, improving the living conditions of forest guards on duty inside the forests and improving communication systems. While acknowledging the NGO efforts at consciousness raising of people (particularly that of school children) regarding environment and nature, he belittled their sapling planting activities by stating that such efforts are too minuscule, first, when compared to the state efforts and secondly to have any overall impact on eco-system restoration.

### **3.7 The Gir National Park and Sanctuary:**

Home to the Asiatic Lion, the Gir National Park was in the centre of controversy when the yatra reached there. The state government had by then allotted about 20 hectares of forest land to a temple trust in the heart of the sanctuary. Ironically, in earlier decades the government had displaced several hundred Maldhari families - pastoral communities residing inside the forests, so as to minimise human interventions.

The yatra's itinerary included a visit to a resettled village and to the park. This time the yatra was host to the Wildlife Warden at Gir. A briefing on the two above mentioned problems - land allotment to the temple trust and the grievances of displaced communities was given by the Warden to the Yatris. During discussions with the local Maldhari community at Jullender, a resettlement village outside the sanctuary area, villagers claimed that, contrary to the claims of the park management, the lion population has dwindled drastically over the years. As per their version, in early years the frequency with which they confronted herd of lions was higher and the average size of each herd was much larger (about 20 to 25) when compared to the present size of about 5 to 8.

As with pastoral communities in other parks, at Gir, the contentious issue was the denial of grazing rights few years after the formation of the park. Till such time of their inhabitation inside the forests, the community had easy access to forest resources. In the initial years the forest department had adopted, what was known as the 'coop system' where upon the local communities' fodder requirements were met from specific enclosures inside the forests. After a coop was used, subsequent coops were made available while the first one was let to regenerate. Once the local community was displaced from the forests in 1978, this facility was withdrawn. At present, even the grass periodically cut from the forests are no longer offered to them but are auctioned off to contractors from outside.

The curtailment of their traditional access, villagers claimed, has not only affected their economic condition but has also directly resulted in the degradation of the forests. According to them, a high incidence of illegal cutting is now prevalent in the forests, facilitated by the absence of any human settlement inside, which acted as a strong deterrent. The felling has resulted in the dwindling of herbivorous animals like cheetals and neelgais, the main prey for the lions, which brings them out into more open areas and has resulted in more frequent attacks on human beings.

Contrary to common understanding, the risk of losing buffaloes to lion attacks was considered to be minimal compared to the benefits they derived from the forests. Explaining such loss as a part and parcel of Maldhari existential problems most villagers claimed that till such time as the lions had cattle to prey on, human life remain unaffected. However, such attacks were not frequent as the community being more or less acquainted with lion movements often took precautionary measures. And in the event of accruing losses, they received compensation under a scheme offered by the department of forest and wildlife.

After being displaced from the core area, the 28 households resettled in village Jullender were recipients of compensation package that included about 8 acres of cultivable land per family. However, the displacement was forceful with frequent threats from officials that their dwellings inside would be burnt down if they don't accept the compensation. The promise of 2 acres of grazing land per household as part of the compensation package was never fulfilled after they were displaced, thereby affecting cattle holding of the community. Most in the community then tried their hands at agriculture, an occupation that was completely alien; being a pastoral community, the shift to agriculture was an arduous process with no technical know how of cultivation and without any extension services offered by the government. This factor was compounded by the fact that the cultivable land allotted to them under the compensation package was of extremely poor quality.

The Maldharis were extremely agitated over their displacement and their subsequent resettlement. When asked if they wanted to go back to the forests, they responded by stating that they may consider the offer

provided their cattle holdings are restored to the previous sizes and grazing rights allotted as before. The community's grievances and its agitated mode of communication notwithstanding, in many ways, the resettlement package has made them relatively better off compared to the Kathkaris in Phulwari ki Naal or other ethnic communities that the yatra was to meet in Shoolpaneswar and Bhimashankar.

### **3.8 Shoolpaneswar Sanctuary:**

The Shoolpaneswar sanctuary has been in the limelight ever since the government of Gujarat decided to rename the Dhomkal Sloth Bear Sanctuary and extend its boundary from 150 sqkm area to 600 sqkm, up to the reservoir shore line of the Sardar Sarovar Dam. The governmental resolution to extend the existing boundary of the sanctuary was primarily in response to the critical remarks made in environmental studies on the adverse effects that the Sardar Sarovar Project could have on the wildlife habitat in the region. The formation of the sanctuary has however created fresh problems for the government.

There has been sizeable opposition to the notification of the sanctuary by the Vasava community, the local inhabitants of the region. Fearing curtailment of usufruct, the community - spread over a hundred villages - has organised itself under the banner of Gujarat Vanvasi Sangathan and has petitioned the government to withdraw the notification. The Arch Vahini, a local NGO based in Mangrol and a critical actor in the Narmada movement, has mobilised support within and for the community in this regard.

The Vahini was the host to the Yatra at Shoolpaneswar. Its founder Anil Patel delineated the logic of opposing the formation of the sanctuary. For Patel, the decision to create the Shoolpaneswar sanctuary has been a shortsighted, unrealistic and arbitrary remedy, to cushion off criticisms of the Sardar Sarovar Project's potential environmental impacts. The sanctuary now covering an area of 45000 hectares would deprive the tribals of the forest land that they have been cultivating. Further it would also curtail the rights of the tribals to access minor forest produce and timber from the forests. Amidst a general degradation of the forests in the Vindhya and Satpura range owing to large scale felling of trees since the last 30 years, to create a sanctuary that would affect the survival portfolio of the tribal community, for Patel, was an arbitrary move, against the interests of the tribals. Patel also wondered how many sloth bears and other wild animals existed in the area given the relentless attacks on their habitat and what purpose a sanctuary of such magnitude can serve except severely affecting the interests of the local community.

Views expressed by the local *Vasava* community were along similar lines, in a village meeting in Sakri, situated at the heart of the sanctuary. The turn out was by far the largest compared to what the yatra had witnessed; more than half of those gathered were women. The rationale of forming a sanctuary there was questioned. According to local claims, no significant forest cover comes under submergence due to the Narmada Dam, as forest in that area was already degraded. What ever was left is now being systematically cut by people who face displacement with the connivance of the forest department. The community claimed that this operation was being carried out by a powerful syndicate with strong connections in the forest bureaucracy and is gradually spreading its tentacles to forests beyond the submergence zone. Further it was mentioned that as there were no significant wildlife in the region, the government in order to stand by its decision, has resorted to importing them from elsewhere. The local population fears that such decisions pose a threat to both human and cattle life.

The local community is heavily reliant on forest resources. Apart from cultivation of open patches within the forest where the predominant monsoon crops are Jowar, Maize and Tuwar, the survival portfolio of the community includes collection of minor forest produces (MFPs) - gum, honey, bidi leaves, saal seeds, vegetables and roots. While the Forest Development Corporation holds monopoly right over the MFPs, the local community has been demanding the abolition of the exploitative monopoly and fair prices on the one hand and free market for their minor produce on the other. The issue of leasing out bamboo from the forests to the Central Pulp Mills located in Bharuch was also raised. Argued Manga Bhai, an activist of the Vanvasi Sangathan,

When we bring something from the forests it becomes a crime, whereas when outsiders come and take tonnes of timber and bamboo it is not a crime. Why? When the government is asked about this, it says things are being done as per the law.

The resentment of the local community was summed up by Buddi Bahen, a young woman activist of the Sangathan;

This place has been declared as a sanctuary in lieu of the forest coming under submergence because of the SSP. But we have seen that there was never any forests in the submergence area of the SSP.<sup>17</sup> The people coming under submergence lost agricultural land and have received compensation.<sup>18</sup> So why have they declared a sanctuary here? Because of the fact that we have a sanctuary now the government states that there can be no roads, water or electricity. All development work stops because of the law.

The local peoples total opposition to the declaration of a sanctuary and their demand for denotification posed a classic problem for the yatra. At one level, supporting the demand for denotification countered the very objectives of conservation that the yatra espoused. Whereas arbitrary impositions like the one at Shoolpaneswar could only succeed at the cost of depriving and alienating the population living in and around them. This problem was to be debated later at the concluding convention at Delhi.

Shoolpaneswar was the last protected area visited in Gujarat. Before entering Maharashtra the yatriis visited sites where Joint Forest Management schemes of the forest department have been executed in cooperation of the local communities living around it. The contents and prospects of such schemes have been discussed later in the paper.

### **3.9 A Discussion on the Dangs:**

The Yatra on its way to Borivelli National Park had a night's sojourn at the Sampoorna Kranti Vidyalaya situated in the Dang Bharuch border, at Bedchi. A delegation of the Dangi Lok Adhikar Samiti, an organisation active on the land question in the Dang Forests in South Gujarat met the Yatriis to explain the specific problems of the local communities - particularly Bhils and Warlis - living in the Dang forest reserves. The major demand of the organisation has been for the regularisation of 'encroached' forest land that the Bhils - constituting about 40% of the population - have been cultivating for years. The demand for land regularisation has been an age old one and has been met occasionally under different regimes - colonial and postcolonial -with the last regularisation taking place in 1980. Of the 306 villages falling in the reserve forest

area only about 15 are revenue villages, the rest are classified as forest villages with some regularisation of deeds in them. The bulk of the private revenue land in the reserve are owned by rich Konkans, outsiders to the region, who came into the Dangs from around Nasik in Maharashtra in the aftermath of the Deccan riots in Ahmednagar and Poona districts in 1870s. Even within the forest villages where land has been regularised and privatised it is largely in the hands of the Konkans.

Even when demands for land regularisation have come up for consideration, it has become difficult for those encroaching to forward proof of encroachment due to the arbitrary modalities adopted by the forest department. The preference of the forest officials to collect unofficial fines for encroached land through kind rather than in cash, leaves the cultivator with no official document to prove that s/he has been cultivating a particular patch of land (of course illegally) for a given period. Although, the Sarpanch of a village can give evidence that a patch is being cultivated for generations, this is not considered evident enough; those calling the shots in the region are the bureaucrats led by the District Forest Officer and the District Collector.

The activists of the Samiti dispelled doubts on the impact of human activities, particularly cultivation practices, on the forest eco-system. Where cultivation is undertaken there is no felling of trees and therefore the argument that cultivation affects forests is a misconstrued one. Further the fear of further possible encroachment were also ruled out. It was stated that if land holdings are regularised then respective village organisations would be the right institutions to offer guarantee against further encroachment.

The Dang struggle has so far got very little support from the peoples movements and organisations in Gujarat. Like the Sardar Sarovar Project in Navagam and the Nuclear Power Plant at Kakrapar which are forbidden terrain for peoples organisation, the Dang struggle has been fought in virtual isolation. Local activists thus expressed concern that the yatra had not included the Dang Reserve Forests in its itinerary.

### **3.10 Borivelli National Park:**

The yatra's agenda in Borivelli had a metropolitan flavour to it, and understandably so, as the park is situated in North Bombay amidst urban setting.<sup>19</sup> It included an early morning 'nature trail' in the park, which was to be followed with meeting representatives of local organisations, the press and senior forest officials of the state including the Chief Wildlife Warden of Maharashtra. Later on in the afternoon the yatri were to be guests at a painting competition of school children in Borivelli.

The condition of the park is extremely fragile and this fact was more than revealed during and after the nature trail. There is intense pressure on it from tourists, particularly the local population of Bombay who find it an ideal location from the hustles of metropolitan living. A large section of the park area has been encroached upon, thanks to the operations of powerful slum lords of the city. These slum lords in tandem with builders and land developers get immigrant workers to settle in unauthorised plots in and around Borivelli. Once these plots are registered in the names of the actual inhabitants they are evicted by force and the plots are then sold for a high price.

It was none other than the Chief Warden of the park who stated that 'conservation will increasingly become difficult given the extent of commercial and industrial pressures on the protected areas and therefore it is very necessary that other social actors take up active role in making the endeavour a successful one.' He



however admitted that the management had no immediate action plan to counter the degradation the park was faced with.

### **3.11 Bhimashankar Sanctuary:**

The Bhimashankar sanctuary is famous for its many sacred groves, called '*Deorai*' in the local language. The *Deorais* are large tracts of forests left untouched by the local population as they are believed to be the abode of the forest gods. Widely acknowledged by environmentalists, as efficient conservation methods, these traditional practices are said to have emerged from the cultural fabric of the local communities.<sup>20</sup> Environmentalists argue that such practices and knowledge systems need to be retrieved and made an integral part of any modern conservation measures.

The Maharashtra Arogya Mandal, one of the organisers of the yatra, has done pioneering work in and around the sanctuary. With the help of the local community activists it has identified all major local flora species in Bhimashankar and documented their traditional uses. The Mandal has also taken up soil conservation measures in some of the *Deorais* in the area.

Quite expectantly the agenda for the yatris included a visit to one of the sacred groves in the area. Spread over 7 to 8 acres of thick forest tracts, the sacred grove was clearly identifiable from the rest of the forests because of its dense growth. At one side of the grove there exists a small temple. And quite ironically the recently laid unmetalled road to Bhimashankar has been constructed right through the heart of the grove. When asked how this was allowed to be undertaken by the local community if the grove meant so much to them, a local inhabitant expressed the community's helplessness before the wishes of the "Sarkar".

At a village meeting in the Mandal headquarters the local people mentioned crop raiding by wild boars as their major problem. However, forest officials and some yatris expressed concern that an exclusive focus on human problems should be discarded in favour of a position that is sensitive to animal rights. It was for the first time in the yatra that animal rights as an issue was addressed in an open forum.<sup>21</sup>

## **4. THE CONTOUR OF RESOURCE CONFLICTS:**

In summary, the following issues critically reflect the nature of resource conflicts in some of the protected areas covered during the journey.

### **4.1 Pastoral rights:**

One of the most frequently voiced demands, the yatra documented and lent support to, was the traditional grazing rights of the local pastoral communities. In many of the park sites, the ban on grazing has been overtly resisted as in Bharatpur, Ranthambore and in the Rajajii National Park in Uttar Pradesh where the local Gujjar community has carried out a protracted agitation against the curtailment on grazing rights. Resistance is also hidden, existing in routine every day forms, subversive of official regulations and sanctions. Bribing forest guards are common practices. Very often the cattle are just allowed to stray inside the parks. The

explanation offered was that it was difficult to keep the cattle tied to their poles especially during the monsoon seasons as the cattle inevitably ran towards the forests with the coming of the first rains.

The ban on grazing has indeed affected the pastoral community. While in areas like Melghat, the has led to thick growth of grass that have periodically caused intense forest fire, in other areas such as Gir where grass is harvested periodically it is auctioned out to private bidders. In few parks, however officials have sanctioned allotments for fodder development programmes in the buffer zones. While this effort has had its benefits in terms of making fodder available for the local cattle population, it has failed to alter the traditional practices of pastoral communities. 'Why should one carry head loads when the cattle can just walk in and eat?', they ask. Villagers of Merhat in the Melghat Sanctuary took pains to explain that it was not possible to carry grass in large quantities from the forests and bring it to the cattle especially for households with large cattle holding of 20-25 animals. The resistance to head loading, however, has earned the pastoral community the epithet 'lazy people' who function within a 'zero cost economy'.

#### **4.2 Fuel wood crisis:**

What constitutes the problem of rural communities living in and adjacent to sanctuaries and parks is not so much a problem of availability of fuel wood as experienced by their rural counterparts elsewhere but a problem of access to it because of the stringent regulations governing the protected areas. In many of these areas, people meet their fuel wood requirements, illegally by bribing forest guards. In many places bribe rates are fixed for each head -load.<sup>22</sup> Apart from domestic consumption, the sale of head-loads in nearby villages and towns is a major source of income for poorer households. This entire operation of collection and sale of fuel wood is carried out by women and children.

Local communities also have difficulties in procuring fuel wood for special occasions when the quantity required is more than what is consumed on a daily basis. Ceremonies like funerals and marriages often require fuel wood in larger quantity. Often these are procured by bribing the forest guards. Representatives of local communities argue that although the wood brought for funeral is cultural tabooed from being used for domestic consumption, nowadays they use such occasions to get a very large quantity on such occasions, as a bribe is paid.<sup>23</sup> During the yatra, local activists not only lent support to such arguments but went to the extent of suggesting that free access to such resources could have a less damaging impact on them as people would only take what they require. The implication was that free access would put in place a natural system of control in operation. These arguments are however contended by the official discourse on local resource use. In this discourse, represented by forest and park officials, free access causes inefficient use of resources and could cause a crisis of availability faced by people in other parts of the country where it now takes as much as four times longer both in time and distance to access fuel wood than only a few years before.

The middle ground between these contending discourses is now being explored under the Joint Forest Management schemes (JFM) being implemented by some state governments. Under the JFM scheme, the forest department takes up protection, regeneration and plantation of forests with the help of the local communities so as to primarily cater to the fuel wood and fodder needs of the communities. There are direct economic benefits as well. When dense patches are periodically loomed, cleaned and the timber sold, the local community gets 25% of the sale. After 25 years, when the forest would mature for harvesting, 50% of the proceeds from the sale of timber would accrue to the local community.

In village Mandvi, where this scheme was in operation the panchayat leader explained its mechanisms. As per his account, the area had dense forests fifty years ago, but pressures largely from the local communities led to the depletion and degradation. The communities facing severe crisis of fuel wood, fodder and logs for house repair agreed to the JFM scheme which was initiated with 65 members in 25 hectares of land. Today, there is 100% representation in the village and the entire forest area in the region, of about 500 hectares has been brought under the JFM scheme. The villagers have access to fodder and fuel wood from these areas and their requirements are regulated by the JFM village committee. However only members of this committee are entitled to the benefits of the scheme.

Despite its innovative features and its success in catering to the fuel and fodder needs of the people, the scheme has been viewed with suspicion for reasons more than one; three need to be mentioned here. First, with the initiation of JFM schemes on pasture land under the forest department, their character as village commons with open access, has changed to controlled access only for members of JFM committee in the village.<sup>24</sup> Often the poorer inhabitants and backward tribal communities of the villages are left out of such committees.<sup>25</sup> The implication of such a trend is that the rural elite who till now owned and controlled the use of agricultural land would now extend its control to forests and forest produces as well. Secondly, these schemes reflect a clear preference for exotic species and their monoculture primarily for their market value. From an environmental perspective such regeneration and plantation activities with strong market orientation would only be unsustainable. The proposed harvest of the forest two decades from now implies that nothing of the 'forest' would remain after the harvest. Thirdly, the participatory element of the scheme is very much restricted to protection of the forests and is in no way demonstrative of any joint 'management'. Villagers only perform the role of watch persons; a group of 4 in the morning and 8 in the night keep vigil. All major decisions are undertaken by the officials of the forest department. The initial plan to hand over the entire forest for local management after the first five years, has not been implemented even after eight years have passed. The local range officer at Mandvi explained the cause of the delay. According to him the village committees that have been formed still need to be registered with the government and this bureaucratic process is time-consuming. The nature of devolution of decision making power to the village communities and the way such power is exercised at the local level remains to be seen.

#### **4.3 Minor Forest Produces:**

The access to and control of minor forest produces (MFP) coexist as major problem areas along with the crisis of fuel wood and fodder. Although government resolutions and legislations on the collection, harvesting and trading of MFPs differ from state to state, it is quite well known that most states prefer to retain monopoly rights over profitable MFPs. Usually *kendu/bidi* leaves<sup>26</sup> have a maximum share - of about 45% - in the returns from MFPs. In the financial year 1993-94, the Madhya Pradesh government's annual turnover from this sector was Rs 200 crores (Rs 2000 million). Other MFPs yield less attractive revenue compared to the *bidi* leaves. But their contribution is nevertheless substantial. In the Balaram Sanctuary in Banaskantha district in Gujarat the turn over from gum is roughly estimated to be Rs 15 lakh per week during peak season. Where states have allowed private trading of MFPs the business has become the virtual monopoly of few big traders. For instance in Gujarat, the *bidi* business is controlled by three traders, one of whom alone controls the *bidi* trade in 40 units of the total 120 units that constitute the Gujarat forests. This is despite the fact that the technical monopoly over MFPs lies with the Gujarat Forest Development Corporation.

However, the collection and petty trading of MFPs are crucial for survival needs and income augmentation particularly in the tribal areas. Fruits, roots and berries are added to the survival portfolio in the most vulnerable months from the beginning of April till the monsoon rains; vegetables are collected usually after two months of rain. Gum, Mahua, Lac, Honey and Saag seeds are other major MFPs that provide additional income to the local forest communities. The collection cycle of MFPs suggest that income from them are extremely crucial for survival during the dry months up until the agriculture season after the rains. The demand for access to and control over MFPs was clearly articulated in the Vasava villages in Shoolpaneswar where the Gujarat Vanavasi Sangathan has been demanding the abolition of the monopoly of the FDC and free market and fair prices for the minor produces. At least in two other parks, representatives of the local communities have demanded access to MFPs and expected the yatra to take this issue with concerned officials at Delhi.

#### **4.4 Commercial and Industrial Pressures:**

While local communities have systematically experienced curtailment of their access rights and usufructuary regarding forest resources and at many places have been displaced from their traditional habitat, all in the name of conservation, in the majority of the parks, commercial and industrial activities have been allowed that are detrimental to the cause of conservation. As these areas get gradually degraded, pressures from powerful interest groups lead to their denotification. Many national parks and sanctuaries such as the Melghat and Radhanagari in Maharashtra, the Narayan Sarovar in Gujarat, Bhitarkanika and Balukhand in Orissa have either been denotified or face denotification. While the Narayan Sarovar Sanctuary in Kutch has recently been denotified to make way for a cement factory, the Gulf of Kutch Marine national park faces denotification because of a proposed oil refinery by the Reliance industries.

The yatra came across several commercial activities on going in the PAs. From the Shoolpaneswar Sanctuary, large scale bamboo extraction by the Central Pulp Mills situated nearby has been allowed while at the same time forest officials have harassed local villagers wanting fuel wood or small timber for house repairs. Open cast marble mining are carried out in and around the Jamva Ramgarh Sanctuary in Rajasthan. In Ranthambore, the Geological Survey of India, is now carrying out survey for prospective minerals sites adjacent to the park.

These activities are however justified by conservation officials. For instance, bamboo extraction was justified for allowing sunlight into the park which the herbivorous animals liked! Minerals exploration and mining were justified for their economic benefits and for providing employment opportunities to the local population. And when the issue of general corruption was taken up for discussion in the context of illegal logging in the park areas, the response was that the entire system is corrupt and it was unfair to isolate the forest department for criticism. As one official put it, 'So long as a sleeping berth in a railway train is available for (a bribe of) Rs 100 the problem of corruption will continue to exist.

#### **4.5 Crop-damage from wild-life:**

Community grievances regarding crop-damage from wildlife implied a direct clash of interests between local communities and the causes of conservation. The economic loss to the local economy due to crop damage was significant, at places computed to be 50% of the total crop output. In 1987 the Maharashtra Arogya Mandal attempted to quantify the extent of crop damage by wild boars. The findings from a survey in

25 hamlets that year revealed that about 96000 kgs of grain were destroyed by wild animals resulting in a monetary loss of Rs 2,32,000. In 1993, the survey was repeated and the damage computed at 90820 kgs valued at Rs 4,53,000.

While state governments offer compensation for the cattle and human loss due to wildlife, crop damages which are more rampant have been kept out of the purview of compensation. In fact, officials claim that compensation schemes for crop damages are non-existent because of the difficulties in devising and implementing them.<sup>27</sup> Preventive measures such as translocation of wild animals, fencing of parks and sanctuaries, financial allocations for watch-men and (as one local group suggested) even castration of male species that can be taken up to minimise the damage suffer from financial paucity and a lack of interest of the concerned officials.

Extensive crop damage occur largely due to over populated herbivores. Ofcourse, park officials attribute the growth in their population to successful conservation strategies. An eco-sensitive perspective would take into account the disruption of the food chain in the protected areas; with carnivorous animals fast dwindling, the herbivores are bound to multiply. Consider the following: a panther requires to prey on one neelgai a month. Assuming that there are only five panthers in a park, sixty neelgais are annually consumed in the food chain thereby lessening the potential crop damage. It was not just coincidental that in protected areas where poaching of leopards and tigers have been reported, crop damage from herbivores have become a serious problem for the local communities.

#### **4.6 Forest land and forest wage labour:**

The 'encroachment' on forest land and the demands for regularisation of such land demonstrate have been contentious issues for the conservation movement at large. Cultivation of forest land has been an age-old and wide spread practice primarily though not exclusively in adivasi areas. In some areas in western India, the forest department itself has leased out land for specific tenure for cultivation. Even then, the major part of forest land under cultivation is deemed to be 'encroached' by the definition of state agencies, notwithstanding the fact that tribal communities, pressed between a growing population and severe shortage of means of livelihood, depend on these practices for survival.

Within the conservation movement itself, such demands do not find much support and are treated with suspect. The yatra reveals the uneasiness of conservationists when confronted with such demands. The struggles in the Dangs and in Shoolpaneswar over 'encroachment' received almost no attention compared to the other factors of conflicts that the yatra highlighted in the latter course. The issue of exploitative labour regimes in the forests was also set aside from the yatra's discourse. Given the fact that these regimes are hidden from the public gaze the yatra could have at least brought to light the high handedness of the forest officials in interpreting labour legislations.

## **5. OPENING THE PANDORA'S BOX:**

### **5.1 The Yatra: Form and Content:**

The use of the yatra mode as a strategy for mobilisation dates back to the early days of Indian freedom struggle. The several journeys that Gandhi undertook during the independence struggle had purposes of protest and learning, mobilising and campaign. Ever since, the yatra has often served as a campaign strategy for various actors in the country.<sup>28</sup> In the environment movement the use of this mode is frequent and marked. The Jungle Jivan Bachao Yatra bears legacy to a series of similar journeys, the Save the Western Ghat March, the Sangharsh Yatra in the Narmada Valley to protest against the Sardar Sarovar Project, and the Save the Aravalli Padyatra<sup>2</sup> undertaken by different actors of the environmental movement in India.

Evident as it is from its name, the Jungle Jivan Bachao Yatra was journey undertaken to save the forests and the lives dependent on them. In so far as the purposes of the Yatra were to ascertain the conditions of wild life and human habitat in protected areas and to learn about the perceptions of different social actors and their experiences with these areas it was a 'journey of discovery'. But this learning process was part of a wider mobilisation strategy geared towards bringing together hitherto isolated and localised organisations, groups and grassroots activists, into a wider network, for synthesising shared experiences as well as formulating strategies. Therefore the yatra was also a protest campaign over existing conservation thinking and management, documenting and voicing evidences of their non-participatory, elitist and ineffective character. Representing as it was, various social actors articulating and mediating resource conflicts emerging from state conservation practices, the yatra was to 'help form bridges between such persons and groups so as to secure the future of these habitats (sanctuaries and national parks) and the wildlife they contain.'<sup>29</sup>

The idea of a journey, originating as it was from the proceedings of a national meeting held at Delhi, was basically those of a group of NGOs and individuals active on the conservation question in different ways and levels: grass roots mobilisation, training and education, policy consultancy, documentation and information dissemination at the local, regional and national level. In this sense, the Yatra was endowed with an *apriori* understanding of the causes of the continuous decline of the protected areas. This understanding was meant to be sharpened with the marshalling of concrete experiences and evidence across states, so as to build up a strong demand for more effective and participatory conservation.

### **5.2 The Standard Environmental Narrative:**

The common understanding on the conditions of wildlife habitat notwithstanding, the Yatra represented several organisations and conservation action groups with differing perspectives on and approaches to conservation. But what prevailed as the minimalist consensual understanding with regards to the conservation question was the resource conflicts between urban/industrial and local needs. Throughout the yatra this was expressed by taking periodical recourse in populist rhetoric, evoking the rural urban divide, highlighting the rising consumption demands of the urban industrial enclaves and condemning the urban way of life, while eulogising rural living and its customary bond with nature and environment. Explaining the rationale of the yatra to a village gathering Rajinder Singh stated:

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<sup>2</sup> Padyatra literally means journey by foot.

When governments talk of forest destruction they state that people living in villages are irresponsible and they destroy forests. They keep attaching this stigma on us, whereas actually they are the ones who have played a major role in the destruction process. We want to bring this truth to light before the world, before the nation and the people that those who have been hitherto accused (by the government) of destroying forests do not actually do so... In this yatra we ... want to erase this stigma attached to villagers as destroyers of forests. Villagers do not cut forests, for they know that their lives are dependent on it.

For Singh, the local population was too dependent on forests to be able to cause harm and affect the wildlife therein. In an encounter with some forest officials Singh claimed; 'I do not for once believe that people for whom forests are an integral part of their lives, a base for their livelihoods are not worried about them. There is no evidence whatsoever to prove that something that gives the people air, food, medicines and milk is being ignored by them.' Kusum Karnik of the Maharashtra Arogya Mandal, one of the leaders in the Yatra, argued along similar lines. An excerpt from her many speeches is elucidating:

We (people living in villages around forests) are poor people, we only bring minor produces and other such items from the forests. We never destroy the forests. Is it possible for us to cut those huge trees and carry them to our homes? Small twigs and branches are enough for us... The forest is our mother. We have lived with it. It is an age old bond... If the government wants us to break this relationship, we will not do so. The fact is that these wood from the forests are required by the rich, the urbanites, because they need huge cots, tables and chairs. They even need their handkerchieves to be made out of paper... They care little about our forests getting depleted. We the people who live in the forest know it like we know our mothers... We live by drinking its milk and not its blood.

Such a projection of the local rural community was not just a strategy of consciousness raising nor was it a confidence winning measure. It reflected the yatra's understanding of the problems and prospects of conservation. The standard narrative of the Yatra was as follows:

- a) People living in and around forests are critically dependent on them for livelihood. Because of this dependency they have shared an integral bond with the forests and have lived in harmony with them. The resources derived from forests by the local communities have been guided by age-old traditions and customs which are neither extractive nor exploitative.
- b) Conservation policies have resulted in the alienation of the local people from their traditional resource base while privileging urban industrial needs. This has resulted in the wanton destruction of wildlife habitat.
- c) Despite the alienation process noticeable in some communities, majority of the people want to protect forests. Given peoples knowledge of and inclination towards conservation, existing policies to this effect must address the question of participation, making use, in the process of traditional conservation methods and practices as critical inputs.
- d) Participation also implies sharing in the benefits of conservation by granting local communities access to and control of forest resources so that their livelihood needs are met.

### 5.3 The Yatra's Public Face:

The Yatra's understanding on conservation apart, it was important for it to define the interests that it represented in the process. And with a fair share of urban nature lovers and environmentalists participating,<sup>30</sup> it was almost a compulsion to magnify the rural configurations of the yatra if its character had to match the understanding that it carried.

The yatra therefore was projected as consisting of primarily representatives of the village communities that have experienced the fall out of the official conservation practices and who have come to share and exchange experiences with other communities living in and around protected areas. Oddly then, the yatra's construction was that of a journey of self-discovery. In several platforms, the yatra leaders who were themselves NGO activists, projected the yatra as being those of rural community representatives hailing from different parts of the country. The names of these yatris - Nanak Ram, Sedu Ram, Prabhu Gujjar, Mohammad Khan and Bechain Das - were repeatedly mentioned particularly in village level meetings and press conferences. The fact that the yatra had a sizeable (more than 2/3) contingent of urban environmentalists and 'rurban' NGO activists - interacting with but certainly not belonging to the grassroots, explained the careful, deliberate projection of the Yatra's public face.

Towards this end, Nanak Ram Gujjar, a community leader of village Haripura in Sariska played a significant role and served as a symbol par excellence for the yatra's public face.<sup>31</sup> He has been in the forefront of the Sariska struggle against mining along with the Tarun Bharat Sangh and has also participated in the Save the Aravalli March from Sariska to Delhi held a couple of years ago. These experiences have made Nanak Ram conversant with the prevailing critical discourse on conservation. During the yatra this was amply demonstrated when he spoke:

We have a bond, a relationship with the forests and we have to work towards their protection. Nothing can be left to the government. (If so) it will only result in the depletion of the forests. Forests and tigers are fast dwindling. The local communities need to get united and organised to save their forests.

In Nanak Ram's representation, the yatra had the voice and perception of the rural subaltern, essentially nature loving and wanting to protect forests and lives therein, despite all odds and the destructive designs of the state. His dramatic rendition of the 'Sariska story' only reiterated this fact:

During early days there were a lot of tigers and wolves in the forests and they would eat a lot of our cattle. But we never bothered about such loss. For we know that the tiger is the king of the forests (sic!) and is also a predator... When the tiger project in Sariska was initiated the government first formed the sanctuary and then later on converted it into a national park and occupied it. The laws enabled them to kill the tigers, skin them, bury their flesh and sell the skin in the big cities. All this while, we were deprived systematically of our customary rights. While initially the government said that nothing would happen to us, in about two years it cut our throat with such force that we did not even get a place to urinate.

Notwithstanding the fact that his story was well told, its by-line was an acknowledgment of the predominant role of Rajinder Singh 'Bhaisahab' and his Tarun Bharat Sangh in the struggle at Sariska. Thus not only was he making the yatra's claim of rural representation legitimate, he was also effectively endorsing the activities of conservation groups and NGOs at the grassroots.



The ruralization of the yatra's face was in many ways a necessary one. For how else could it seek an identity of difference for its proponents, compared to the nature lovers among the middle class urban elite, the early actors of the conservation movement in India? The contribution of this section in the movement for nature preservation notwithstanding, the emergence and articulation of new social actors with strong grassroots base have strongly influenced the conservation discourse. These new actors have exposed the limitations of conservation policies and strategies and the elitist, top-down approach that govern such policies. Following this, however, one cannot argue that the difference in perceptions between the old and the new actors have come to bear on their relationship. In fact, the relationship has been one of reciprocity. The yatra, was a testimony of this reciprocity; its conception, objectives and participants reflected the growing bond between the two sets of actors. Yet the new actors of the conservation movement have staked claims to a new constituency of rural forces and interests. A rural face of the yatra was therefore a prerequisite if this claim to speak on behalf of the rural subaltern had to be justified. Nanak Ram's services were to render this claim as legitimate.

This trend is characteristic of almost all major environmental movements in India. As grassroots problems begin to dominate the environmental agenda, a struggle over representation of rural interests ensues in which different social actors, including the state, claim to be working in the interest of this new constituency. In the public arena, these claims are symbolically presented through the likes of Nanak Ram. The example of the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), the most renowned movement in India against the SSP is elucidating. In Narayan Bhai Tadvi, the Sarpanch of Manibeli, the first village facing submergence in Maharashtra, the NBA has found a spokesperson well conversant with its lexicon. In most public episodes involving the NBA, Narayan Bhai Tadvi constitutes the subaltern. Like Rajinder Singh and Nanak Ram, Medha Patkar, the leader of the NBA and Narayan Bhai are inseparable entities, while one claims representation, the other ratifies it.

It is important to underscore the fact that the state agencies, on their part, have also begun to adopt similar strategies in order to gain legitimacy for their actions at the level of the grassroots. The Joint Forest Management sites in Gujarat serve to highlight this point well, where forest officials presented the local panchayat leaders to speak about the success of the scheme in their areas and the benefits they have derived from these projects. Needless to say, of all the meetings that the Yatra had attended, the ones over JFM between the forest officials and the yatri became the most vociferous and unpleasant. The point that is being made here is that the clash of the yatra leadership and the forest officials was as much over the functioning of the JFM scheme as over the claims of the state agencies of representing the interests of the grassroots.

#### **5.4 The Private is Political:**

While significant efforts were directed at ruralising the public face of the yatra, the rural participants had very little role to play in the organisation and decision making during the yatra. The majority of them - relatively well off and old in age with less familial responsibilities - were just happy to be a part of it. For them, it was sort of a pilgrimage, an opportunity to visit different places.<sup>32</sup> Rural participants were like precious cargo, whose comfort was to be ensured. The inputs from them were however deemed unnecessary.

The decision-making, of course, was the leadership's responsibility. But often unanimous decisions were difficult to arrive at. And disagreements over the yatra's public dealings and posture at times posed

serious problems. In fact at one point the yatra was to split into two; one faction led by Kusum Karnik wanting to go to Narayan Sarovar Marine Park and the other to Gir Forests. Timely interventions prevented this from happening. While these incidents could be dismissed as insignificant - dissent being integral to democratic practice - they are indicative of the character of the yatra leadership.

For any protest movement, a leadership endowed with charisma is a strong asset and the environmental movement is no exception. In case of the latter there is a heavy reliance on such leaders whose charisma serve as resources for mobilisation and struggle. But this tendency loses its strategic importance when not backed by efforts to look for democratic institutional mechanisms of protest. The consequences of this lag have two major implications. First, in these movements personalities always have precedence over institutions. The split the yatra was faced with, was the outcome of a clash of personalities rather than over issues at hand. And with each leader having his or her own band of followers the theoretical possibility of having two yatras, each going its own way appeared at one point real. Second, in the absence of democratic mechanisms of decision-making, the leadership comes to bear dictatorial overtones with the rank and file expected only to carry out the command of the leader. Nanak Ram and Narayan Bhai Tadvi are no exceptions among the rank and file. Although being community leaders themselves, ironically they become the most faithful among the rank and file, voicing what they have been asked to, which then passes off as the voice of the grassroots.

### **5.5 Empowerment as Practised: Class and Gender**

Despite reflecting few disturbing trends within the environmental movement, the Yatra established the fact that social actors working in the grass roots have achieved significant success in mobilisation and organisation. If Sariska and Shoolpaneswar are any indication of this fact, then it needs to be stated that the Tarun Bharat Sangh and the Arch Vahini respectively have made the local population conscious of their rights, organised them to articulate their demands and intervened through socio-economic projects to alter pre-existing conditions and perceptions in these areas. Thus if Sariska can boast of a '*Sonchuri*', a sanctuary declared and maintained by the local people, with locally set rules and sanctions, the mobilisation at Shoolpaneswar has resulted in a strong peoples movement, not just seeking the denotification of the sanctuary but also demanding infrastructure facilities: irrigation, power and access to markets.

The limitations, however, have been in the conceptualisation of rural people as homogenous entities. In making the rural-urban divide the central problematic the differences that exist within the rural population is neglected or ignored. While this may not be a major problem in tribal areas where land holding and other means of livelihood are more evenly dispersed across the population, in most other regions the rural population is sharply divided along class lines. For instance in the villages around the Sariska reserve land distribution is very uneven. Among those gathered at Mallena to send off the Yatra were people who owned as little as 3 bighas of land while others owned more than 150 bighas of land. For the marginal farmers and the landless in this area, small cattle holding and non-farm occupations is heavily relied upon for sustenance. During visits to some mine sites, local people largely landless, confessed that the closure of mines in the area have severely affected their economic conditions, and requested some of us to ensure their resumption.<sup>33</sup> The assumption therefore that the interests of all sections of the community are served in a *Sonchuri* or that the benefits from local access and control will accrue equally to all sections is an erroneous one.

The gender divide within the rural population was also glossed over though the Yatra revealed more sensitivity to it as a problem. In the sites that the yatra visited, the collection and sale of fuel wood and minor forest produces were women's jobs. Women also worked as forest wage labourers with private contractors or government schemes. The specific nature of their problems necessitated not just a degree of sensitivity but a well formulated strategy to be able to document their perceptions. But except in Shoolpaneswar where women turned up in large numbers and spoke about their problems, in most other places the yatra heard and discussed with only men. In village meetings and discussions with local organisations, while women were encouraged to speak, the few that turned up rarely did. During dialogues with forest officials, government schemes under the eco-development projects were scrutinised if they were sensitive to the problems of women. In fact in one such encounter the yatra had to account for its own under-representation of women. During a meeting with the forest officials and beneficiaries of the JFM schemes at Jara village in Gujarat, Kusum Karnik was critical of the fact that there were hardly any women representatives from the villages in the meeting and wanted to know if the scheme benefitted them at all. The District Forest Officer while explaining the difficulties in mobilising women wondered why there were so few women in the yatra!

What needs to be stressed here is the fact that the yatra had no specific agenda or action plan to document problems specific to women, a fact that can be attributed to the lack of an informed women's perspective on conservation related resource conflict. But unlike the class question that it deliberately ignored, it did demonstrate a general awareness on the women's question and a felt need to incorporate it in the agenda of the conservation movement.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS:**

### **6.1 New Politics and Populism:**

It needs to be stated that the yatra reflected the general political trend of the conservation movement. To summarise, conservation politics has witnessed a shift in agency from urban environmentalists to grass roots activists. The central focus of agitation has moved from conservation of wilderness to integrating human needs into conservation. And the agitational mode/form no longer relies predominantly on lobbying but on grass roots activism. These shifts have decisively redefined the boundaries of conservation politics. While it would only be apt to welcome such shifts that focus on community rights of access and control, one needs to exercise caution particularly in lending support to the simultaneous coming into being of a mobilising discourse that is populist in form and content. The discursive elements of the populist mobilising discourse of the yatra can be summarised as follows (a) the centrality accorded to rural communities whose interests are opposed to industry and the state, (b) articulating the need for local self sufficiency and (c) the thesis on the village unity in which rural differentiation is ignored.

Such a mobilising discourse ideologically sustains economic contradictions and is also essentialist in conceiving rural formations. In the particular context of the yatra, rural communities were projected not just as having a unified set of interests but also as essentially conservationists in their approach to nature and environment. Activities of the rural community that militated against this essentialist construct - activities detrimental to the cause of conservation - were considered as proof of their alienation from their productive resources, a process unleashed by the imposition of an essentially 'non-participatory, elitist' conservation

agenda. The existential realities amidst which rural communities live and within which they demand access roads, water and irrigation facilities and employment opportunities apart grievances over deprivation of forest resources, were suppressed to focus on a seemingly broader set of contradictions between local usufruct and access on the one hand and state-led conservation strategies on the other.

## **6.2 The End as The Beginning:**

In the concluding convention of the yatra, some of the above mentioned tenets that the yatra bore were critically viewed by an invited group of environmentalists, movement activists, intellectuals and researchers. The use of the 'rural-urban divide' was singled out for its erroneous implications. As one of the participants in the convention pointed out: 'To understand that all is well in urban areas is naive, for about 70% population in these area are in acute poverty, struggling for sustenance.'<sup>34</sup> The yatra's lack of understanding of the industrialisation process was also debated with some participants expressing dissatisfaction with the piecemeal approach of attempting to tackle each problem in each sanctuary - be it mining or bamboo extraction - in isolation from the others and without considering wider trends and ramifications.

The self evaluation of the yatra was however much more positive. It was considered to be an important event, full of experiences, which needed to be followed up with devising strategies to bring together different grassroots organisations and radical platforms 'under one roof, with unity and common principles'. The need felt was to work towards ensuring a people's movement on conservation and to have 'links with similar other movements on water, forests and land' with the final objectives of 'forming a strong people's organisation in the country and a composite people's plan on water, forests and land'. The end of the yatra, therefore, was considered to be the beginning of a long, difficult, road ahead.

## **6.3 Revisiting the Critical Discourse:**

The optimistic note on which the Yatra ended raises few relevant questions regarding the future of conservation in India and the scope for resolutions of natural resources conflicts around national parks. It is now widely accepted that existing conservation policies cause resource conflicts. At one end they have failed to yield the desire objectives - wild life habitat over the years have systematically dwindled and got degraded both due to inefficient forest management and a failure to keep industrial and commercial pressures at bay. At the other, they have alienated the local communities depriving them of resources and therefore generating resource conflicts. Derivatively, then what is required of the conservation movement is to attempt to reverse both the degradation process and the alienation of local communities if conservation needs as well as resource needs are to be met and the conflicts minimised. What have been the contributions of the new actors in the conservation movement? What are the strategies that they have adopted? What understandings guide these strategies and what are these strategies capable of? If the Yatra is any indicator, its optimism notwithstanding, what becomes evident from the study is the fact that the conservation movement indeed has a long, difficult road to tread. While it is to the credit of the new actors that the community needs find a place in the conservation discourse, yet the tensions between animal rights and human rights or those between industrial needs and local community needs are neither seriously understood nor their boundaries delineated for successful interventions. On the contrary a myopic understanding within which rural local communities are framed as ecologists or conservationists, tends to guide the activities of the new actors. Perhaps no one else realises more the rhetorical content of such understanding than the leaders of the conservation movement themselves. The very fact that Yatra concluded with a series of policy recommendations<sup>35</sup> in which the state was assigned a crucial role

underscores the fact that neither the local communities nor their representative NGOs are in a position to undertake conservation operations successfully and independently. While the policy recommendations may serve as important starting points what is required of the new actors is to consolidate on their major advantage - their grassroots moorings. A well thoughtout strategy of community empowerment guided by a more realistic understanding of the economic bases of community demands and concomitantly resource conflicts will be more meaningful engagement. To begin with what is needed of the new actors is to shed their populist rhetoric and to engage in community awareness and empowerment projects. One however hastens to add that as of now, the new actors have only demonstrated their capabilities of raising community awareness. Given the undemocratic relationships between them and the local communities, amply evident during the yatra, the empowerment project could well be a pipe dream.

In conclusion, it can be said that the yatra in representing the recent trends within the conservation movement exhibited both hope and concern. While it brought into focus opportunities and hurdles towards resolution of conflicts over conservation, it is a cause of concern in the ways in which interests of the grassroots are understood and mediated by its agents. Unless the tendency to reify the grassroots is overcome, the new agents of conservation movement are unlikely to become agents of change and empowerment, no matter how optimistic the beginning of the road may seem.



## Notes and References:

1. A national survey conducted in 1989 showed that about 70% of the surveyed PAs had human population living inside and about 65% had leases, concessions and community rights inside them. See for more details, A. Kothari et al (1989), *Management of National Parks and Sanctuaries in India: A Status Report*, New Delhi: Indian Institute of Public Administration.

2. More recently, a task force set up by the Indian Government in 1982 recommended a multiple use zone in the PAs in which eco-development measures, such as land and water conservation could be promoted.

<sup>3</sup> The rather awkward translation in English is 'Journey to save forests and forest lives'

4. The groups represented were Tarun Bharat Sangh based in Alwar district in Rajasthan, Maharashtra Arogya Mandal based in Pune district in Maharashtra, Ekta Parishad from Madhya Pradesh, The Adivasi Ekta Vikas Mandal and the Centre for Environment Education in Gujarat, Kalpavriksha from Delhi, the Bombay Natural History Society, and the Keoladeo Research Foundation from Bharatpur, Rajasthan.

5. The convoy also consisted of a film crew that recorded the entire journey - proceedings of meetings, press briefings - as well as the conditions of the protected sites, the wildlife therein and the ongoing activities inside the parks pertaining to conservation and deforestation. The crew also interviewed government officials, NGO activists and local community representatives. In many ways, it was a reconstruction of the Yatra.

6. For purpose of this research the yatra was covered till the convoy reached Bhimashankar. The participation in its proceedings were again resumed at Delhi, after the yatri left the Rajaji National Park in UP.

7. Most of the Sangh staff hail from Meerut district in U.P.

8. The yatri also visited a few villages where the Sangh is active. Almost every house in the villages had slogans painted on the walls on issues related to women's education, community health and forest conservation. The yatri were introduced to a school teacher who was herself a product of the system now in place.

9. It needs to be mentioned that the narration of the Sariska 'success story' generated fair amount of comments and questions. Some environmentalists considered the preference for cash crops like mustard in the command of the water harvesting structures rather than food crops to be 'environmentally unfriendly'. Those familiar with government activities wanted to know if the government departments, particularly that of soil and water conservation, had not been active in the area and if not for what reasons. Also the cost-effectiveness of the water conservation projects was briefly discussed. The water retention of a project that the yatri visited was unimpressively low although it was reasoned that the project is new and hence the initial retention is in the ground water regime and therefore surface retention appears to be low for the first few seasons of rain.

10. See V.S Vijayan (1987) *Keoldeo National Park Ecological Study*, Bombay, Bombay Natural History Society.

11. The meeting also symbolised the Gandhian perspectives of activists and environmentalists in the yatra and their belief in a system of self-sufficient village units.

12. Phoolwari Ki Naal is situated only a few kilometres away from the Gujarat border.
13. The minimum wage rate is Rs34 per day in Gujarat.
14. According to M.D Mistry of the labour union, about one lakh women are involved as labourers in the bidi sector. For collecting and plucking leaves they go early in the morning at 4 AM and wait till late in the night at collection centres to deliver their collect.
15. Gujarat Environment Education and Research Foundation.
16. Morari Bapu is a famous Ramakatha reciter and hails from the Saurashtra region in Gujarat. He has the distinction of reciting the katha in unusual settings that include aircrafts and ships. The Girnar forests would be yet another unique setting for him.
17. Sakri is situated 12 kms from the SSP Dam site on the left bank of the river. On both banks, on the hilly terrain is a contiguous stretch of tribal habitat with a large Vasava population.
18. The reference was to the rehabilitation of the displaced population of Gujarat. Patel's organisation had been actively involved in the resettlement process assisting the Gujarat government in executing its R&R policy. Patel also claims that due to the intervention of the Arch Vahini, the resettlement of the Gujarat oustees has been largely a successful one.
19. At Borivelli the yatra was joined by representatives of social action groups from the Karnataka - notable among which was Vikasana from Dharwad - who had wanted to organise similar journeys to the protected areas of the south. This group was with the yatra till it completed the Maharashtra leg.
20. The pioneering work on sacred groves in India is by Madhav Gadgil. See M. Gadgil and M.D.S. Chandran (1992) 'Sacred Groves' in G.Sen (ed) *Indigenous Vision: People of India*, Delhi: India International Centre.
21. From Bhimashankar the yatra went on to cover seven more national parks and sanctuaries till it reached Delhi on the 28th of February 1995.
22. For instance the amount paid for a head-load in Ranthambore was Rs 60.
23. A testimony to this effect was given in Ranthambore where an educated young man claimed to have brought wood worth Rs 500 after having paid a bribe of Rs 50 in order to burn a corpse.
24. The JFM schemes are also being undertaken in private revenue land.
25. In fact forest department officials openly admitted that they have made no attempt whatsoever to accommodate these sections in the village committees. The DFO of the eastern division of the Bharuch-Dang Circle, in village Jara, clearly mentioned that to attempt to integrate all the communities in the village is a futile exercise and one would only "burn one's fingers" if attempts in this regard were made.
26. The kendu leaves are dried and used to roll tobacco for smoking.
27. In Ranthambore, the yatri were asked by government officials to suggest ways in which the department can put in place a compensation scheme for crop damages.
28. The range of actors who use this mode of campaign is quite wide. At one level main stream political parties have used this mode to mobilise support for their politics. The Rath Yatra of the Bharatiya Janata Party for mobilising support for building the Ram Temple in Ayodhya is a good example. On the other hand, individual



actors - politicians, philanthropists and social workers have also undertaken journeys for learning, consciousness raising and campaign. The Bharat Jodo Yatra of the noted social worker Baba Amte was undertaken to raise awareness on nation-building and national integrity.

29. See A Kothari, S. Suri and N. Singh 'Conservation in India: A New Direction', *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 28, 1995, Pp2755-66.

30. The urban representation was also symbolically manifested in the materials that the urban yatri made use of: still cameras, video cameras, tape recorders etc.

31. Several newspapers, reporting on the yatra quoted Nanak Ram Gujjar extensively.

32. The simple vegetarian meals, the early morning prayers, the preference for politically correct music actually served to create the atmosphere of a pilgrimage.

33. At one place, where some of the yatri had gathered for tea a small group complained about the closure of mines in the area and requested us if we could do something. Others were quick to warn those who were complaining that we were the people instrumental in actually closing the mines. Immediately there after, we were told how justified we were in closing the mines and how it has benefited the local people!

34. This was stated emphatically by Dunu Roy, a noted environmentalist invited to the convention.

35. The following policy recommendations were made at the end of the Yatra:

- a) A clear and strict national policy not to allow industrial, urban and commercial pressures to impinge on protected areas, including a ban on denotifying protected areas for such purposes.
- b) An official recognition of the legitimate resource rights and needs of local traditional communities and measures to meet these needs.
- c) A central role for local communities in the planning, protection and monitoring of protected areas, including in the determination and enforcement of inviolate core zones and sustainable use buffer zones.
- d) Planning the management of protected areas based on a healthy interaction between formal ecological science and traditional knowledge, learning especially from traditional practices which have helped to conserve and sustainably use natural resources.
- e) Greater sharing of the benefits of the protected areas, including biomass rights, tourism income, employment in wild-life/forest related work and alternative livelihood opportunities (*JPM Update* No.3 Indian Institute of Public Administration, March 1995).

