POLITICS OF PARTICIPATORY CONSERVATION: A CASE OF KAILADEVI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, RAJASTHAN, INDIA

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Declaration for PhD thesis

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ABSTRACT

Taking the case of an initiative in participatory conservation in Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan, the thesis focuses on the implementation processes and ideas of participatory conservation in protected area management in India.

Informed by theories of political ecology and anthropology of development, the thesis analyses 'the politicized environment' of biodiversity conservation and protected area management in India. Tracing trends from the colonial era to the present-day preoccupation with conservation, it examines the political and socio-economic roots of the various discourses on conservation and protected areas, their impacts on communities and the manner in which these continue to underpin the current context of protected area management.

The study demonstrates that the terrain of participatory management of protected areas is a complex tapestry of discourses, policies, actions and counter-actions involving multiple actors at the international, national and local levels and which has to be understood in terms of its colonial and post-colonial history. Against this backdrop, the thesis analyses the continuing struggles between and within agencies over knowledge making, meaning and power.

In the main, the study argues that notion of participatory conservation, taken to be 'inherently good' and packaged into formulaic approaches in policy literature, easily lends itself to appropriation and misrepresentations in the politicized environment of protected area management. It demonstrates how the multiple agencies, through sustaining *representations* of the "success" of such initiatives, actually sustain, reinforce and legitimise the hegemonic notions of protected areas and the exclusion of communities. The thesis concludes that participatory approaches in their implementation lead to further entrenchment of state authority and work more decisively against the interests of the communities and are counter-productive to conservation.

ACF	Assistant Conservator of Forests
CAMPFIRE	Communal Area Management Programme for Indigenous Resources
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CCF	Chief Conservator of Forests
CEE	Centre for Environment and Education
CSE	Centre for Science and Environment
CTH	Critical Tiger Habitat
DFO	Divisional Forest Officer
EDC	Eco-development Committee
FD	Forest Department
FoC	Future of Conservation
FRA	Forest Rights Act 2006
FRC	Forest Rights Committee
IEDP	India Ecodevelopment Project
IIPA	Indian Institute of Public Administration
IIPA	Indian Institute of Public Administration
JFM	Joint Forest Management
KBP	*kulhadi bandh panchayat*
KWS	Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary
LPG	Liqufied Petroleum Gas
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NTCA	National Tiger Conservation Authority
PA	Protected Area
pers. comm.	Personal communication
PLA	Participatory Learning and Action
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institutions
PWD	Public Works Department
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
SHG	Self Help Group
SSD	Society for Sustainable Development
TBS	Tarun Bharat Sangh
TTF	Tiger Task Force
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
VDA	Village Development Assembly
VDC	Village Development Committee
WII	Wildlife Institute of India
WLPA	Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act 2006
WPSI	Wildlife Protection Society of India
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

aantri/taradi	plains
adhyaksh	president
agle-bade	ancestors
akal	drought
anth ki duniya	an idea used to convey the complexities and vastness of the world beyond the region of Kailadevi
badi kho	specific *kho* adjacent to Nibhera
bad jots	big land owners
bhook	starvation
bhedwale	Goat-herders and owners
charagha	pasture
chara	fodder
chaumasa	monsoons
cheriwalen	goat herders
chori – chippe	stealth
chowkie	check post
dang	hilly forested area
devi-devta	god and goddess
dhok	Anogiessus pendula
dongar	forested hillocks
dhor-maweshi	livestock
doriwale	'people of the thread' or land surveyors
gameshri	An expression invented by the community connecting 'game reserve' with 'sanctuary' as the identity of a new entity for wildlife conservation.
gaon ki sanstha	organisation of the village
gola barud	explosives
gorelog	white people or foreigners
ghee	clarified butter
haq	right
imarti Lakdi	construction timber
jalau lakdi	fuel wood
janglat	Forest Department
katha	edible substance from the bark of Khair *(Acacia catechu)*
kho	forested river gorges
khoj	Cattle heads
khad	Manure
khirkaries	Cattle camps
khoj	Herd
kohar	Fodder enclosure built by the Forest Department
kulhadi bandh	Ban-axe
kulhadi khusana	Confiscating the axe
kulhadi bandh panchayats	Ban-Axe Councils
log-bag	people
maharaja	king
manhani	defamation
manjuri	permission
naka	check post

padyatra	foot march
patels	head representative of any community groups
patel panchayat	council of patels
patwari	village-level Revenue Department functionary
pesari	measure of grain roughly equivalent to 1 kg
pokhar	pond
pucca	solid
pura	hamlet
rundh	fodder enclosure
rundhiya	Forest Guard under Karauli State
samhu	group
samitis	committee
samaj	society /community
sammelan	meeting gathering
samvat	Times, also the Hindu calendar
sanchuri	An area where strict restrictions on resource use apply
sanstha	organsiation or NGO
sarkar	government
shikargah	hunting reserves of the King
sivaychak	revenue land
taradi	plains area
ujar	wilderness
vanni	forest
Van Suraksha Samitis	Forest Protection Committees
zamindari	system of land ownership

Chapter 1

Introduction

Protected Area Management: The 'New' Paradigm

India is one of 16 mega-diverse countries possessing 60-70% of the world's biodiversity, besides being a significant player in global policy initiatives in biodiversity conservation.[1] The country also has an extensive network of legally declared protected areas (PAs), comprising National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries, established under the provisions of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.[2] In 2004 there were 92 National Parks and 500 Wildlife Sanctuaries covering an area of 15.67 million hectares or 4.5% of the country (MoEF 2004). The PA network in India has been among the most important means of protecting and conserving biodiversity.

In India, like in most other biodiversity 'rich' countries,[3] the PAs inevitably overlap with habitation of communities that are, either significantly dependent on, or are enclosed within, these PAs. It is estimated that in India, almost three million people live within PAs, comprising mostly of tribal and mix-caste communities. According to a national survey done in the 1980s, 69% of the PAs had human population and 64% reported the presence of community rights, leases or concessions over land and forest resources (Kothari *et al*. 1989).

The 'isolationist' approach to the process of establishment of PAs has imposed severe constraints on the livelihood needs of communities besides generating considerable local hostility and conflict with state authorities on the one hand and between communities and wildlife on the other.[4] Jackson and Roy (1993) summed up the situation as follows:

> All of India's protected areas are virtual islands surrounded by villages and
> agricultural land, where people are desperately short of basic resources for life,

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[1] India took over the chairmanship of the group of Mega-diverse Countries in February 2004 (MoEF 2004)
[2] The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 972 has been amended on several occasions since it was promulgated. In 2003 two new categories of PAs have been introduced: Community Reserve and Conservation Reserve.
[3] See Anderson and Grove (eds.) (1987) and Hulme and Murphee (2001) for Africa. See Colchester (1995;2002) for Asia and Southeast Asia. Also see Kemf (ed.) (1993) and Amend and Amend (eds.) (1995).
[4] This is popularly referred as 'people-wildlife conflict'

> such as firewood, building material and grazing areas for their livestock.
> Inevitably, they invade reserves and come into conflict with the authorities.
> Poaching of animals, timber and forest produce is rife and cattle and goats are
> found in most reserves. Resentment at the wildlife authority attempts to control
> the situation has exploded in violence against officials and guards' (as cited in
> Kemf, 1993).

The growing conflict between conservation and communities has led to the observation that "…conservation approaches that tended to alienate dependent communities assured neither sustainable environmental conservation nor social gains for local people." (Ghirmire and Pimbert 1997: 16) As a result, in the 1980s and 1990s there has been an attempt to find alternate ways of managing PAs.

Susan Braatz (1992), in a World Bank strategy paper, suggested that there was need for a policy change to consider involving local people in PA management. The need for a more inclusive model of PA management has also resonated at other conservation forums. The IVth World Congress on National Parks and Sanctuaries,[5] held in 1992 in Venezuela, identified 'community participation and equality in the decision making process' as critical in resolving conflict of interests. In 1996 the World Conservation Congress and General Assembly of the IUCN adopted a resolution on 'Collaborative Management', which asked countries to consider adopting 'participatory' approaches in biodiversity conservation (Borrini-Feyerabend, 1996).

A participatory approach to PA management, often referred to as the 'New Paradigm' (Madhusudan and Raman 2003; Kothari *et al.* 2004), has been articulated in policies in different configurations including 'co-management', 'participatory management' or 'collaborative management' (Pimbert and Ghirmire 1997; Kothari *et al.* 1998; 2001; Kothari and Borrini-Feyerabend 2002; Kalpavriksh 2004; Borrini-Feyerabend *et al.* 2004). The paradigm shift emphasises community participation and the need to reconcile the conservation imperative of PAs with the livelihood requirement of resource-dependent communities. The Vth IUCN World Parks Congress held in 2003 in Durban, South Africa saw a shift "towards a much more participatory inclusive model of protected areas, in which indigenous and local communities are seen to be critical participants, their own

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[5] The World Parks Congress (previously the IUCN World Congress on Protected Areas) is a decadal event for setting the agenda for protected areas world-wide. Previous Congress' have had an impact in increasing the protected area network, focusing resources on biodiversity conservation, and viewing community participation in conservation as a part of the solution.

conservation initiatives are given due recognition and various forms of governance (including government, community, private, and collaborative) are given legitimacy" (Kothari *et al.*, 2004: 4).

Over the years, with increasing strength, the co-management advocates have argued for communities to be involved as significant power-sharing stakeholders in PA management. With an emphasis on 'governance' in co-management practices, institutionalising community participation through building of local institutions is seen as indispensable to address issues of social justice, equity, sustainable resource use and strengthening community-based and community-run initiatives (Borrini-Feyerabend *et al.* 2000)[6]

While there had been several suggestions, mostly from conservation and research organisations, to reconsider the approach to PA management in India, the first time it was taken cognisance by the Government of India was under the India Ecodevelopment Project (IEDP) in 1993.[7] The IEDP strategy was to enable the Government to 'begin to address the special issues regarding participatory management of protected areas' (World Bank 1996).

Based on a case study of participatory conservation initiatives in Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary (KWS), a part of the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan, this thesis examines how participatory conservation projects work and the meaning of 'success' at the level of policy and practice.

Participatory Conservation in Kailadevi

Established in 1983, the Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary covers an area of 674 sq. km, and together with Sawai Mansingh Sanctuary, forms the buffer zone of the 1,334 sq. km Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve. The Sanctuary falls in the Vindhya ranges of Rajasthan, a

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[6] Perhaps, the most exhaustive and instructive compilation of debates, issues, and strategies on co-management is to be found in *Sharing Power: Learning by Doing in Co-Management of Natural Resources Throughout the World* (Borrini-Feyerabend *et al.*, 2004).
[7] The India Ecodevelopment Project was supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) of the World Bank for seven Tiger Reserves (including Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve) and two additional National Parks, across the country.

region rich in shale, sandstone and limestone (Das 1997). The rugged terrain, popularly referred to as the *dangs* (a hilly forested area), comprises a mosaic of rocky hills, deep valleys, plateaus and broken ground with an average elevation of 310 msl with the highest point at 923 msl. The Sanctuary is bound by the river Chambal (which separates the Sanctuary from the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh) to the south and river Banas to the west.

The Reserve falls within the semi-arid zone of north-western India (Rodger & Panwar 1988) with mainly scrub and dry-deciduous forest dominated by *dhok* (*Anogeissus pendula*). Other trees found here, include *salar* (*Boswellia serrata*), *gurjan* (*Lannea coromandelica*), *palash* (*Monopserma butea)* and *ronj* (*Acacia leucophloea*). The vegetation is also characterised by a predominance of *ber* (*Ziziphus* sp.) and *Euphorbia* sp. scrub, found mostly in the open areas. Once rich in faunal life, the Kailadevi Sanctuary now nurtures a depleted but important population of sloth bear, leopard, blue bull and hyena, besides other wildlife. Even though Kailadevi is part of the famous Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve, the local population of tigers is negligible compared to the healthier population in Ranthambhore National Park, to the south of the Sanctuary. In 2001, there were unconfirmed reports of sighting of three tigers made by the Forest Department (FD) The main attraction of the Sanctuary are the *khos* (thickly forested valleys) that are considered to be rich reservoirs of floral and faunal diversity and play an important role in sustaining landscape-level biodiversity (FD 2000; Singh 2000; Das 1997).

Until the 1980s, the forests of Kailadevi were subject to considerable pressure and exploitation. The British, and subsequently, the Government of India's, forest policies have allowed the area to be extensively used for revenue (especially, timber extraction and charcoal making). Under the princely state of Karauli, the forests formed the hunting grounds of erstwhile kings, British officers and the royalty. The forest area was mined for shale and sandstone until 1985, an activity that still continues in the protected forests surrounding the Sanctuary. The forests were also home to the Moghiyas – a traditional hunter community. Their activities in the Sanctuary area were completely banned only in 1990. The Moghiyas are known to have actively aided poaching activities in the area (FD 2000, pers comm.). Apart from severely depleted wildlife, tree species like *khair* (*Acacia*

catechu) and *karaya* (*Stericula urens*), that were once common in this region, have now become rare due to commercial exploitation in the past[8].

Despite a history of exploitation and depletion, the forests of Kailadevi, continue to be a significant resource base for the communities living in and around the Sanctuary. The exact number of villages in and around the Sanctuary area is not accurately known. While a Project Tiger report[9] stated 15 villages inside and 146 outside the Sanctuary area, in my own research (from 2000-2002) the number of villages inside the Sanctuary was fixed at 36. Most villages are inhabited by multi-caste communities, dominated either by the Meena or the Gujjar communities. Meenas, classified as a Scheduled Tribe (ST) are considered to be mainly agriculturists while the Gujjars are an agro-pastoral community. Although both the communities are Hindus, the Gujjars are not considered within the fold of the Hindu caste system and are officially classified as Other Backward Classes (OBCs). According to a report[10] prepared by the Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) of Kailadevi Sanctuary, the area supported an estimated 987 households with a total population of 11,000 (Singh, 2000).

Agro-pastoral activity is the mainstay of the local economy. The forests of the Sanctuary area are a source of fodder, fuel wood, and construction timber for the local communities. Life for the villagers in the Sanctuary is a harsh struggle for survival. Water is scarce and the region is prone to frequent droughts. Poor soil quality, small land holdings and scarcity of water makes the area unsuitable for agriculture. According to the Forest Department (Singh 2000), only 3.2% of the land area is available for agriculture, of which only 433.17 ha is irrigated. Pastoral activities, once widespread, have significantly declined over the years. In 2001, Project Tiger reported 52,730 heads of cattle dependent on the Sanctuary forests. Until recently, the Rebaries, a migrant sheep-herding community from western Rajasthan, were also dependent on these forests for fodder.

Between 1996 and 1997 Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary became known for a community-initiated forest protection institution, known locally as *kulhadi bandh panchayat* (literally,

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[8] This section is drawn from Das (2007) and (Kothari *et al.* 1997)
[9] http://projecttiger.nic.in/ranthambhore.htm
[10] Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary: People's Participation in Biodiversity Conservation (unpublished)

axe-ban council). This initiative was brought to attention through an action-research undertaken at the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA),[11] New Delhi (Das 1997; Kothari *et al.* 1997). The IIPA research project formed a key component of the ongoing debate on participatory management of PAs in India, aptly called *Towards Participatory Management of Protected Areas*. The main aim of the IIPA project was to explore the scope for collaboration between communities and the state (represented by the Forest Department) for joint management in three selected PAs[12] across the country. At the end of the research project, the IIPA team concluded that "the prospect of participatory or joint management in this PA (Kailadevi Sanctuary) seems very real" (Das, 1997: 85).

Within a short period of the research findings being published, *kulhadi bandh panchayats* (KBP) gained in symbolic import among the advocates of community-based conservation. It was added to the burgeoning evidence of the efficacy of community-based management being documented from other countries (See Ghai and Vivan 1992). This was followed by citation of *kulhadi bandh panchayats* as an example of effective successful community-based conservation (Wadhwa 1996; Kothari *et al.* 2000; Fabricus 2001; Baviskar, 2003; Saberwal 2003).

Equally significant, but with far greater consequences for the Government policy, was the selection of Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve as one of the sites for India Ecodevelopment Project (IEDP) in 1996. India Ecodevelopment Project became a part of the conservation debate in India at about the same time that Kailadevi Sanctuary and its unique *kulhadi bandh panchayats* were gaining in prominence. Although IEDP was not primarily a community-based conservation project, it had a mandate for engaging people's participation in conservation. It aimed to foster biodiversity conservation by addressing both, 'the impact of local people on the Protected Area and the impact of the Protected Area on local people' (World Bank 1996).

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[11] IIPA is an autonomous institution focussing on capacity building for good governance and civil society. It provides for the study of public administration, strengthening policy making, and for service delivery (http://www.iipa.ernet.in).
[12] Besides Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary, the other PAs were Dalma Sanctuary in Bihar and Rajaji National Park in Uttarakhand.

At the time of initiating field work for this thesis, two non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were also operating in the Sanctuary: Society for Sustainable Development (SSD), based in Karauli adjacent to Kailadevi Sanctuary and Tarun Bharat Sangh (TBS) adjacent to Sariska Tiger Reserve.[13] Both the agencies profess a mandate for 'sustainable development' and have undertaken government and donor-supported resource management projects with the local communities inside Kailadevi Sanctuary. The growth and expansion of these organisations in the area was simultaneous to the implementation of the India Ecodevelopment Project.

Despite the presence of a thriving local institution like *kulhadi bandh panchayats*, the IEDP as well as the two NGOs, preferred to establish their own mandate for people's participation by setting up new village-level institutions. The Forest Department (FD) set up Ecodevelopment Committees (EDCs) under IEDP while SSD and TBS set up Village Development Committees (VDC). In time, both the Forest Department and the NGOs staked claim on the institution of *kulhadi bandh panchayat*, as an example of the 'success' of their own initiatives at collaborative management.

Unpacking the 'Success' of Participatory Conservation

My association with Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary began in 1996-97 as a researcher working for the IIPA research project. At the time, when I started my field research and spent about a week in the village of Nibhera (among other villages), the area had not witnessed a single development project and the local NGOs were yet to make their presence felt. The animosity between the people and the Forest Department was fairly high. Under the IIPA project an attempt was made to hold a first-ever face-to-face meeting of the FD staff and a representative body of the villagers. However, the officials failed to put in an appearance despite agreeing to do so.

In 2000 I revisited the area to commence my field work for this thesis, focusing primarily on Nibhera village. Having observed the possibility of participatory management in my

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[13] Sarisak Tiger Reserve in Alwar District is about 126 km from Karauli, to the north of Kailadevi Sanctuary.

earlier association, I was keen to see whether the idea could actually be implemented. Especially enthused by the claim of 'success', I focused on how the processes of institutional building synergised with the people's own attempt at protecting the forests through KBPs. I was particularly interested to know how institutionalised participation had affected the issues of access to resources that were at the heart of 'people-wildlife' conflict recorded by the IIPA project (Kothari *et al.* 1997).

I soon became aware of the co-existence of contradictory and conflicting narratives regarding the activities and institutions set up by the NGOs and the FD in the village of Nibhera. Much of this narrative was expressed in the form of clarifications the villagers sought from me, which conveyed a sense of mistrust and uncertainty in the very institutions they were expected to be part of. Alongside the narrative of 'success' being articulated at different levels there were also murmurs of discontent. While on one hand 'people's participation' in the protection of forests through the ban-axe movement was being highlighted at academic and practitioners' forums and in the media, on the other hand there were regular instances of clashes between the villagers and the FD over the cutting of trees.

The contrast was even more keenly felt because between 2000 September and 2001 January I was constantly moving between the villages in the Sanctuary and conferences and seminars on IEDP being held in Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan and Delhi. My Delhi visits also provided a chance for meeting and holding interviews with key functionaries associated with IEDP. I was simultaneously also meeting with staff of the NGOs operating in the Kailadevi Sanctuary area.

In unravelling the contradictory practices and narratives on the participatory conservation in Kailadevi Sanctuary, the principal aim of this thesis is to analyse *how* participatory conservation initiatives work in a hitherto exclusionist context of Protected Area management; why are narratives of 'success' sustained despite the different agencies being aware of the contradicting realities; and what are the outcomes of such conservation projects for communities and conservation.

With an actor-oriented approach this thesis looks at how each agency – the communities, Forest Department, NGOs, and the World Bank – engages with participatory conservation,

including in this particular case, *kulhadi bandh panchayats*. Through oral histories and ethnography of their organisational cultures, the processes of project implementation, inter and intra-agency interactions and the multiple domains of interaction outside of the project design, the thesis identifies various interests, stakes, compulsions and interpretations that inform the engagement of different agencies.

The thesis aims to make a case for contextualising participatory conservation discourses, operations and outcomes within the broader political dynamics of Indian wildlife conservation as embodied in Kailadevi Sanctuary. The thesis argues that new paradigms and practices around participatory conservation in protected area management in India are built on foundations that remain deeply entrenched in past ideologies of conservation and power-relations between and within agencies. It shows how current global concerns with biodiversity conservation and participatory approaches, that involve international aid agencies and NGOs, offer a politically opportune platform for a renewed articulation of these conflicts.

More importantly, arguing from the highly politicised context of environment and development embodied in the PA context in India, the thesis focuses on discourses of participatory conservation and their local level institutionalization, showing how these serve as an instrument of political opportunism working to the detriment of both, communities and conservation.

Analytical Framework

Political Ecology and the Politicized Environment

Political ecology as a discipline is better defined by its distinct analytical approach rather than as a specific theory. Over the years, political ecologists have borrowed from an eclectic range of critical social theories to focus on politics in an effort to understand

environmental problems,[14] as Bryant and Bailey (1997) argue, the need for political analysis is paramount in the measure that environment is politicised.

The field of political ecology and anthropology are not necessarily distinct. In fact, the roots of political ecology emerged as a critical response to cultural ecology, a branch of anthropology popular in the 1960s and 1970s.[15] Subsequent anthropological research and critical theory around development and environment, have significantly contributed to developing analytical complexities and depth of the field. Reflecting the umbilical links to anthropology, Bryant and Bailey (1997) observe that third world political ecology can be characterised as being geography based research field that nonetheless maintains strong links to anthropology and sociology. Many of the critical work in this field have come from anthropologists or sociologists (Colchester 1997; 1994; 2002; 2003; Moore 1996; Horowitz 1987; 1990; Peluso 1992; 1993; Guha 1992; 1989; 1997; 2000; and Redclift 1984; 1987; 1992).

For Blakie and Brookfield (1987) whose book *Land Degradation and Society* had a definitive influence in the development of the field and set the trend for much of the research that followed, the idea of political ecology combined "ecology with a broadly defined political economy" (Blaikie and Brookfield, 1987: 17). However, as many authors (Bryant and Bailey 1997; Peet and Watts 1996) have argued that much of the political-ecology research in the 1970s and 1980s, predicated on political economy, was characterised by economic determinism. According to Moore (1996) the political ecology of this period, influenced by neo-Marxism, was characterised by a "structural legacy"[16] and had insufficient *politics*.

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[14] See Robbins (2004), Watts and Peet (1996) and Bryant and Bailey (1997) for an overview of how the discipline has evolved over the years and the range of research it has covered.

[15] Cultural ecology, also known as ecological anthropology, sought to explain the links between cultural form and environmental management practices in terms of adaptive behaviour within a closed ecosystem. As Robbins put it, within this field humans would be seen as a part of larger system, controlled by universal forces, energy, nutrient flows, calories and the material struggle for subsistence. Notable in this area are the works of Steward (1955), Vayda and Rappaport (1968), Rappaport (1968).

[16] See Peet and Watts (1996) for a more detailed analysis and criticism of this landmark research by Blakie and Brookfield.

From the 1990s, however, political-ecology research has been driven by an engagement with the larger intellectual environment, drawing on a wide range of critical theories like post-structuralism, discourse theory, gender theory, environmental history, peasant studies, green materialism, and as Peet and Watts (1996: 9) add, "…the realities of a panoply of post-socialist transitional states".

The research in this field, in engaging more explicitly with politics, has varied from re-theorising of political ecology in terms of Marxism, to relating politics in the domestic sphere (focusing on households and gender relations), to environmental conflicts. The studies have varied from what Peet and Watts (1996: 10) state are "…efforts at integrating political action – whether everyday resistance, civic movements, or organised party politics – into questions of resource access and control", to "…the much needed re-interrogation of the term ecology in terms of, not stability, but, chaotic fluctuations, disequilibria and instability". Included within this ambit, is the field's predominant focus on analysis and deconstruction of the discursive practices and discourse making around environmental concepts and issues, as well as, the institutional spaces of negotiation and contestations engaged in environmental conflicts.

This thesis, focussing on the 'politics' of participatory conservation, draws on political ecology's analysis of environmental problems as 'politicised environments'. As Bailey and Bryant (1997: 28) state, "…central to the idea of politicised environment is the recognition that environmental problems cannot be understood in isolation from the political and economic contexts within which they are created". This thesis, in locating the discourse on wildlife conservation, particularly participatory conservation, attempts to locate it in the historical perspective of the environmental regimes that have affected Kailadevi Sanctuary as well as in the current perspectives of international policies and politics of biodiversity conservation.

In analysing a 'politicised environment' Bryant (1998) argues for an actor-oriented approach to understanding the politics of ecological conditions and crisis. In a politicised environment, statuesque is seen as an outcome of political struggles and interests; the emphasis is on the multiplicity of actors and interest that characterise these contexts. Arguing that environmental conflicts are conditioned as much by the micro-politics at the local level as by their 'contextual sources' involving broader actors – the state,

international institutions, etc. Moore (1996) is of the opinion that political ecologists focus on both, situated local-level proximate actors and the non-placed actors operating at the regional, national or global level. Recognising the sheer variety of the stakes that may be involved in a context, Robbins (2004) argues that political ecologists would benefit from a '…broader examination of all producers of nature, including ministry chiefs, SUV drivers, forestry professionals as well as herders, farmers and wood cutters to traditional concerns'.

In a politicised terrain of contesting actors, interpretations and agendas, what really defines the *politics* are the relations of power. Bryant (1998) suggests that power, for a political ecologist, is a key concept in the effort to specify the topography of a politicised environment; and analysing unequal power relations between the actors is central to the research of the Third World political ecology. Power dynamics in a politicised environment manifest in various ways – in attempting to control the access of other actors to diversity of environmental resource; in attempting to marginalise the weaker groups; in attempting to regulate ideas of environment; and in how environment problems are framed, prioritised, solutions proposed and resources allocated.

Drawing on these analytical strands of political ecology, the thesis analyses the constituents of 'politics' in the working of the participatory conservation initiative in Kailadevi Sanctuary. Perhaps, seminal in this analysis is how environmental problems are framed; whose environmental narratives prevails; and what instruments of power and negotiation are operational in asserting these narratives. Notions like 'conservation' and 'participation' in the context of PAs bear different meanings for different actors; politics lies in the process through which these disjunctive narratives are force-fitted into project frameworks, contested and imposed.

'Ethnography of Development'

In analysing how participatory conservation projects work in a politicised environment, I have drawn specifically on the critical literature of anthropology of development. From the early 1990s the focus of anthropology of development, broadly defined as 'socio-scientific analysis of development as a cultural economic and political process' (Grillo, 1997: 2), has been to recognise the multiplicity of voices present in development – to

recognise that the development process that spans international organisations, nation-states, civil society organisations and local communities is thought, spoken about and acted upon differently by different actors (Croll and Parkin 1992; Hobart 1993; Pottier 1993)[17]

The more dynamic understanding of this perspective, however, remained shadowed by according discourses a hegemonic and decisive role in development outcomes. This was influenced principally by the works of Escobar (1991; 1995) and Ferguson (1994) who borrowed on Foucault's (1972), analysis of discourse i.e. statements and practices through which truth and legitimacy is created about certain referents, in order to bolster the interests of those participating in its making. Within this perspective, development is viewed as an efficient apparatus for producing knowledge about, and the exercise of power over, the Third World (Escobar, 1991). For Escobar (ibid.), development is a 'discursive formation', an instrument of neo-colonialism and thinking of its terms of discourse makes it possible to maintain the focus on domination. Thus, studies based on discourse theory considered development as a powerful and hegemonic process dominated by western ideologies, making victims of those on whom they are imposed; a means of extending state control.

These perspectives of development studies have however been increasingly critiqued as a 'development myth' (Grillo 1997) that sees development as a monolithic enterprise, heavily controlled from the top, all powerful and 'beyond influence.' Critics of the discourse theorists have analysed development not just as a policy but also as actors, organisations, cultures and processes. Within this framework, development enterprises are seen as being multi-vocal, multi-sited, and as interfaces between various actors and agencies where actors and agencies exert significant influence on outcomes (Long and Long 1992; Grillo and Stirrat 1997; Crewe and Harrison 1998; Long 2001; Mosse 1996; 1998; 2001). The understanding on location and exercise of power is also more dynamic i.e. power positions are seen as relative and contextual.

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[17] The idea of differential experiences and discourses of environment and management, that forms one of the core arguments of political ecology, largely owes its basis to anthropological research of Croll and Parkin (1992) that not only probed the existence of the multiple discourses of environment, but also talked of it in relation to the 'power' and 'knowledge', perspectives that were to dominate environment and development studies.

Much of these studies, influenced by an 'actor-oriented 'approach (Long and Long, 1992; Long, 2001) have, as Mosse (2004: 666) puts it, a focus on 'project interfaces', or 'frontlines', the life worlds of workers and the inter-locking of intentionality of the developers and the 'to-be-developed.' An actor oriented approach as argued by Long (1992: 5) enables one to study the multiple and co-existent realities of World Bank officials, technical experts, ministers, civil servants, councillors and functionaries, NGOs (from the North and South), local people (women and men), and even of a radical peasant leader.

One of the principal advantages of these genres of research is the focus on everyday processes and practices of development initiatives, breaking down monotheistic representation of agency or power. Not only are there multiple ways of envisioning and analysing development problems and solutions (like most discourse theorists and other anthropological critiques), but also that the process of development itself is influenced and shaped by its multiple actors and agencies, besides by its most powerful actors and their policies (Long and Long, 1992; Crewe and Harrison, 1998), This also rejects the notion that development is guided by any single set of ideas or discourse (Grillo 1997). Within this perspective, development processes are not given *a priori*, but as they occur through the complex web of networks and relationships, as 'complicated interactions', and through the multiplicity of voices within it.

The analytical framework of this thesis draws substantially from Mosse's (2004; 2005) most recent and relevant contribution to the anthropology of development. Through detailing his observation of a donor-funded project in India, with which he had been associated for over twelve years, Mosse's main aim is to show *how* development works.

Mosse (2005: 3, citing works of Li 1999; Latour 2000 and Quarles van Ufford 1988a; 1988b; 1993; 2003)) argues for a 'new ethnography of development' that "blurs the bold contours drawn by both rational planning and domination /resistance frameworks." As Mosse (2004:644) states- "in a variety of ways the new ethnography of development is distinctly uncomfortable with monolithic notions of dominance, resistance, hegemonic relations and the implications of false consciousness among the developed (or developers)". The new ethnographers, as Mosse argues, look not for the relations between

project prescription and its implementation but, at what the multiple agencies make of the 'authorised script' or the 'public transcript' which are usually 'something quite different' (the hidden transcript). Ethnographer's interests according Mosse should be in the relationship between the 'monotheistic privilege' of dominant policy models and the 'polytheism of scattered practices surviving below.'

An ethnographic approach to development practice in essence enables one to present more effectively the agency and perspective of the actors themselves. It therefore allows an understanding of the varying interests, the contests over them and the negotiation and collaboration involved between the multiple actors in securing their respective interests. The analytical framework of this thesis is very much in keeping with this new ethnographic approach to development. Taking an actor oriented approach, this thesis examines the rhetoric of policy, its success and the practices as 'social processes' – it looks at the who, how, what and why in analysing the practices and processes through which a community-initiative becomes the rallying point and a 'success' story.

In analysing the narratives of success (by the different agencies) of *kKulhadi bandh panchayat* in Kailadevi, despite the existing contradictions, the thesis as a whole reinstates Mosse's principal argument (2004:639)

> …although development practice is driven by a multi-layered complex of relationships, and the culture of organisations rather than policy, development actors work hardest of all to maintain coherent representations of their actions as instances of authorized policy, because it is always in their interest to do so.

In analysing policy in practice, in unpacking how integrated conservation and development work, an ethnographic approach enables to focus more clearly on the key role that the development bureaucracy plays in shaping the outcomes. Equally examining state-led projects and the NGO initiatives, the thesis draws on Quarles van Ufford's (1988a; 1988b) work, and the more recent work of Mosse (2005; 2004; Bebbington *et al.* 2007), to accord a centrality to the politics engendered by the multi-agent and multi-layered development bureaucracies on project formulations and its ground-level operations. In analysing why and how representations of 'success' serve the different actors, the thesis focuses specifically on the role and the compulsions of organisational culture, inter-organisational partnerships and the multiple levels of interface between the agents.

An ethnographic approach to development also enables a more nuanced and sophisticated analysis the agency of communities in the practice and outcome of projects. As Mosse (2005: 7) observes, fundamental to the new ethnography of development approach is that "governance brought by development schemes cannot be imposed; it requires collaborations and compromise" primarily because "success is fragile and failure a political problem." Li (1999) argues that the need for enrolment of communities in the sustaining the representations of "success" affords them a certain political leverage. In the case of Kailadevi, while there is collaboration, it affords no direct political leverage. It is better interpreted within Scott's (1985; 1990) framework of 'everyday forms of resistance'. The thesis attempts to make a case for the complex realities and responses of 'conserving' communities, who amidst their discursive categorisation and representation by donors, NGOs and the Forest Department, continue to strategise for survival; they have to find their negotiating spaces through choosing where and whose representation to endorse.

In the context of participatory conservation in a PA, the thesis warrants a more complex understanding of policy discourse and its impact on practice. In the case of Kailadevi, it is argued that policy discourse and its disjuncture with existing field realities *necessitate* contradictions or make policy models un-implementable at the level of practice. By not taking into account the institutional culture and constraints of an organisation like the Forest Department, IEDP prescriptions end up having unrealistic expectations from it.

Also while policy may not necessarily shape the practice, policy discourse itself is implicated in the politics of conservation. The discourse of policy (or policy ideas and the alliances it brings with it) have significant implications in foreclosing debates and possibilities on issues by not accounting for them in the very definition of the problem. In the case of IEDP, even as the idea of participation revolved around meeting livelihood needs, the issues of peoples right on land and resources were never a part of the project framework. It is as Mosse (2004: 663) notes "…policy discourse generates 'mobilizing metaphors' (in this case participation) whose vagueness, ambiguity and lack of conceptual precision is *required* to conceal ideological differences, allow compromise and the enrolment of different interests." (Emphasis in original)

Thus, if practice ultimately produces policy, i.e. interprets events to reinstate policy ideas, then the power of policy discourse to undermine the interest of the weak or allow the more powerful to retain their position is retained. For example, IEDP in its success story projected that people were willing to give up use of Sanctuary resources in return for development benefits from the project and thus meeting the clause of 'reciprocal commitment' as prescribed in project design. This 'success' of the policy model legitimizes similar measures for future policies on wildlife conservation and people's access to resources. It reinforces the conservationist's agenda to exclude people from the use of forest resources *in lieu* of petty infrastructural development benefits. Thus, as we shall see, although conservation policy ideas are negotiated through its practices, the 'public transcripts' sustained by the powerful and subordinate, finally reinforce the function of policy as a dominant and legitimate discourse that enable expansion of state and bureaucratic control. Despite the participatory rhetoric and involvement of NGOs, the isolationist-conservation ideologies embodied in projects remain unchallenged. In my understanding, in this sense, while policy ideas may not directly drive implementation, they definitely underpin the direction in which the world of project-driven practice is moving.

Fieldwork

The fieldwork for this study was conducted in intermittent phases between September 2000 and February 2002. The fieldwork in Kailadevi Sanctuary in general, and Nibhera village in particular, was conducted over three phases starting 2000 December – 2001 March; 2001 May – July; 2001 December - 2002 February. The field work also included extensive interviews with the Rajasthan Forest Department, NGO representatives and other informants. Travel was also required to Jaipur and Bharatpur to access Forest Division Working Plans and other records. Archival research was done in the State Archives in Bikaner in October 2001. In the time away from fieldwork in Nibhera and Kailadevi Sanctuary, I also interviewed several policy makers, activists, Project Tiger officials and World Bank staff located mostly in New Delhi.

This ethnographic study at the village level was conducted primarily in the village of Nibhera, considered an appropriate village to live in and study since it represented a

mosaic of interventions from the Forest Department, District Administration and NGO, besides the peoples own initiative in natural resource management. Both the NGO and the FD had a strong presence in the village. Nibhera was taken to be an example of a village where the implementation of the Ecodevelopment Committee (EDC) component of the IEDP was most successful, and as a result in all formal occasions conducted by the FD, the members of Nibhera EDC were invited to participate. The Society for Sustainable Development (SSD), the Karauli-based NGO had opened its field office in Nibhera, staffed by a Community Worker and a Project Coordinator, in order to implement one of its first development projects. This also enabled a level of acceptance for SSD in the Kailadevi area, which has since claimed to have implemented several activities related to empowerment of women, micro-finance, soil and water conservation and improving agricultural practices.

Although the initial intention was to cover more than one village, given the nature of my study that required oral histories, understanding of the nuanced interaction between the communities, the conduct of FD and NGO work at the village level and an understanding of the 'hidden script' of village response and action, the long-term stay and study of a single village was preferable. Following incidents and events connected to Nibhera's resource management and issues related to the FD, I also spent several days in the villages of Chauria Khata, Lakhruki, Rahar and Morechi.

It is important to mention the multiple positionalities that evolved during the course of research spanning multiple sites and agencies. The politics of position was intrinsic to framing of my research as well as practice. My association with the area in general and the village Nibhera in particular, as part of the IIPA research in 1996-1997 had a significant impact on the initial fieldwork and responses. My role during the IIPA research was both that of a researcher as well as of advocate of participatory management of natural resources.

So far as the Rajasthan Forest Department was concerned, I was seen as an actor 'on the side of the people'. This was largely due to the fact that during the course of my IIPA research, that entailed short periods of stay in the villages, I had intervened in several conflicts between the Department and the people and had been in a position to influence outcomes in the favour of the villagers. One of the fallout was that it was made

mandatory that I seek formal approval from the highest authority, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF), Rajasthan Forest Department, Government of Rajasthan, to conduct my research. This delayed my village stay almost by three months in 2000-2001. As part of the permission subsequently granted, it was required that I be accompanied by a Forest Guard at all times and submit a quarterly report to the Department. This need was, however, dispensed with by default, although it did significantly affect my research with the local Forest Department at Karauli. Accessing data and information from the Department was a long negotiated process. Certain documents like the India Ecodevelopment Project registers were not made available to me even to the very end of my research in 2002. The fact that I had access to the Ranthambhore National Park headquarter in Sawai Madhopur, threatened the local officials of Kailadevi who feared that I would report the discrepancies in implementation of Project activities to their superiors.

It is for this reason that although the local officials were cordial, they were often guarded in what they said in my presence. It was almost after six months from the start of my research that I was able to establish an informal relationship with some of the officials, when they felt assured that I posed no threat to them and the information they shared would be confidential and not shared with higher officials. Also, in time I was able to establish a good rapport with local level Forest Department staff. This was primarily because I had earned their respect, as a single woman staying under difficult conditions in the field. The responses from the officials at Sawai Madhopur were conditioned by their position on the Project and their perception of my previous role as an advocate of people's participation. Consequently, officials who were against the ecodevelopment approach and its implementation in the Sanctuary were more forthcoming in giving me information and documentation of the actual process of implementation. In the interpretation and representation of the Departments perspectives, every effort was made to corroborate these with documentary evidence. I have also allowed, as far as possible, to bring the voices of the officials and allow the narrative to speak for itself.

So far as the villagers were concerned, the research was affected by other positionalities. To begin with I was perceived as a person with some influence and position. Associating me with my previous visits to the area (during my IIPA related research), not only was I seen as someone who had both access and ability to talk to the Department officials but

also a person with 'means', including the ability to pay for hiring vehicles (in which I travelled for the fieldwork) and organise large meetings which included paying for meals. It was difficult to explain that my presence and activities were not funded by me but by the organisation on whose behalf I had conducted the research. I was also credited with enabling the growth of the local NGO. As explained in Chapter 5, the head of the local NGO had initially facilitated my field visits during the IIPA research. In 1996 he was an independent researcher and a journalist. Subsequent to the IIPA work he established his own organisation[18]. Since the activities of the NGO followed the IIPA project, the villagers had assumed that I was somehow associated with setting it up. Thus, at the initial stage in 2001, despite explaining my purpose for the stay in the village, the villagers had already made several assumptions and also had several expectations. It was almost after two months of staying in the village continuously, was I able to effectively explain the purpose of my visit and was accepted as a person who was interested in their social history and forest dependency. However, till the end of my stay in the area, I remained their reliable source of knowledge for the activities of the NGO and the FD in the village, as well as a confidante and advisor of their own strategies and responses to the external agencies. I saw this as a useful service to render for the largesse and hospitality of the village communities. Given the gross misinformation and misconception about the India Ecodevelopment Project and its impacts on the lives of the villagers, I was inadvertently both a researcher and an activist.

My gender also played a significant influence on the process and outcome of the research. As mentioned in the later chapters, women in this area have no acceptance in public spaces and forums. As a woman researcher, who was willing to stay in a remote village unaccompanied by any man, was not easily accepted by the men of the village. For almost two months most men would not even make eye contact with me nor speak to me directly. It was the women of the village who allowed me to be a part of their social context. I was extremely, and sometimes painfully, cautious of how I negotiated my role between being a woman of acceptable social probity and one who nonetheless had to move beyond that to be able to part of other forums and contexts. These included those from which women were barred such as gatherings of men and their local panchayats. After the second month of my stay, an evening meeting was called comprising the village

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[18] See Chapter 5 for details.

elders and it was declared that I was a person of "good character" and therefore acceptable to village. Things changed dramatically thereafter. It was accepted that I would meet with men and be a part of their meetings. In fact the elderly and influential men of the village would facilitate my participation in the various forums. For example, although women are not allowed on the dais on which the informal panchayats are conducted, they would arrange for a chair for me to sit close to it so that I could be a part of the meeting.

Aware of my multiple positions, the process of research and its interpretation was a continuous process of triangulation and corroboration. It was also a process of being alert for who was saying what to me and why. So far as possible, in the production of knowledge in this thesis, I have tried to let the narratives speak for themselves and not arrive at pre-conceived conclusions and judgements. Also I made every effort during the course of the research to translate my core findings, as well as important official documents, and share it with the researched communities. But it also needs to be stated, that while discussions on the findings with the communities, NGO and Forest Department were debated, challenged and agreed on, not much of the written material was ever read.

Perhaps the perspective on the NGOs in chapter five can be accused of being harsh and biased. This however was inadvertent as findings and evidence lent themselves to such interpretations. In many ways I was both an insider and an outsider so far the local NGO was concerned. The local NGO, SSD and TBS were both known to me through the IIPA research. At that point in time they were perceived by us (the IIPA team) as ideal organisations that were working on issues of social justice and development of the village communities. Thus, during my doctoral research, both organisations continued to present themselves to me in the same vein. I was asked to represent the NGO in their presentation to mission teams of donors and other visitors. I also helped them with their documentation of case studies that I have discussed in Chapter 5. I, however also shared a home with the other staff of the NGOs and who, in time, became my friends. Consequently, and inadvertently, I was made aware of the discrepancies between the public stance and the private stance of the NGOs as well as of the outright malpractices of the NGO in terms of expenditure and implementation of the programmes. I also became a confidante of the villagers for their grievances against the NGOs functioning at the

village level meetings and their private negotiations with influential individuals outside of the meetings.

The findings of the research, especially the position I have taken vis-à-vis the Department and the NGOs, was shared with agencies as well as made available in the public domain through a publication (Das 2007). Both organisations have not challenged the emerging perspectives; they have instead chosen to ignore it as misinformed views and therefore unimportant.

Nibhera - The 'Sanctuary Village'

Nibhera spread over 6,190 ha, is among the larger villages in the Sanctuary. Owing to the presence of vast stretches of forest enclosed within its boundaries and because of its size, the FD considers Nibhera as an important 'sanctuary village' from a conservation perspective. It represents an area which has high ecological value on one hand and a high level of human dependence on the other. Sanctuary villages also lack facilities like road, transport and electricity. A single metalled road (all others are seasonal) runs through the Sanctuary connecting Kailadevi and Karanpur, the two famous 'temple towns'[19] of the region. These are also the nearest and the most important trade centres, markets and health centres for the villages in and around the Kailadevi Sanctuary. A 3 km dirt track connects Nibhera to the metalled road from where Kailadevi is 22 km and Karauli about 45 km away. The nearest railhead is at Gangapur about 120 km from the Kailadevi Sanctuary. The only means of transport in the areas are public and private buses and jeeps that ply on the metalled and provide erratic and limited services.

In Nibhera a primary level school has existed for over 30 years but began functioning properly only in 1990. In 1997 a middle school was introduced, but until 2001 only seven boys were enrolled, despite the fact that the school was meant to cater to eight neighbouring villages. Students are reported to have dropped out after middle school because of the absence of senior schools in the area. Very few families send their wards

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[19] These are not proper townships. However because they have become important as religious and pilgrim sites, they attract several hundreds of thousands of devotees every year and they have a lot of infrastructure.

to complete schooling in towns further away. There was no comprehensive data available on the literacy rates in this area. According to 2001 census information, less than 30% of men and 15% of women in Nibhera were literate.

Being a part of the *dang* and characterized by semi-arid climatic conditions, Nibhera suffers from acute shortage of water. Water is intricately tied to their main sources of livelihood - agriculture and pastoralism. Scarcity of water affects crop production, fodder production and availability of drinking water for both human and cattle population. Drinking water is accessed from seven hand pumps in the village, of which only two were functional in 2001. The absence of these infrastructural facilities has been used as an index of 'under-development' of the *dang,* and a way to define the area and its people in a negative perspective both by the people and by external agencies (See Chapters 3).

The multi-jati community of Nibhera

Nibhera comprises of several *jati* (caste) communities. Of the 127 households in Nibhera 65 are of Gujjars. The other caste groups include: Brahmans (priests) 14 households; Nai (barber) 6 households; Teli (oil makers) 8 households; Dom (drum beaters) 4 households; Chamar or Bairva (shoe makers) 23 households; Lohar or Badai (carpenters & blacksmiths) 2 households; and Bhangi (untouchables) 5 households.

Nibhera comprises six hamlets (*pura* of *dhani*).[20] Between these hamlets there are also two *bastis* (settlements that come up between hamlets). Two of the hamlets, Mulla and Beech Ka, are at a distance of 100 m from each other while Jheelan and Bhattin are located about 500 meters from the main village.

The settlement pattern of these hamlets and the village as a whole is clearly divided along caste lines. Jheelan ka Pura and Bhattin ka Pura comprise only of Gujjar households. Mulla and Beech ka are larger and more scattered as compared to the above two hamlets and are mixed caste settlements. However, within these hamlets the houses of any

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[20] The inaccessibility of the hamlets of Bandhan ka Pura and Macchin Ki determined that much of the fieldwork undertaken as part of the study was restricted to four hamlets and two *bastis* that were within walking distances of each other. Also, although counted as the revenue village of Nibhera, these two hamlets functioned as two separate villages. Their socio-political system was independent of Nibhera.

particular caste group are located in clusters, close to each other. Most of the houses of Brahmans, Nais, Telis, Badai and some houses of the Gujjars are located in Beech ka Pura. Mulla has a more predominant population of the Gujjars. Only towards the outer limits of the *pura* the Doms and a few families of the Brahmans have set up their clusters.[21] The Bairva *basti* is located between Beech ka and Mula, and makes the two hamlets contiguous. The Bhangi *basti* is located at considerable distance from the Bairva *basti*, towards the southern limits of the habitation area.

The clustering of a community takes place around kinship ties. As put by the villagers, the clans (*kutumb pariwar*) are constituted of brothers related through their *kaka-baba* (father's younger and older brother respectively). These ties are referred to as *bhai bandi* (brotherhood ties). Within a hamlet or a *basti*, the immediate family ties are marked out from the extended kinship ties by a clear physical space. The houses of the male sibling are always enclosed within the same compound. This unit of settlement is known as a *bakher*. In a hamlet a villager often communicate kin ties to an outsider by referring to the *bakher,* he or she belongs to.

Consistent with the anthropological scholarship on the contemporary understanding of, caste, relations in the village reflect both a sense of continuity and change (Beteille 1991; Fuller 1996). Evidence of existence of 'traditional'[22] caste values is found in the adherence to the commensal restriction between the *jatis*. These restrictions pertaining mainly to eating of *kaccha* (uncooked or cooked in water, not oil) food, water and sharing of *bidi* (tobacco), formed the basis of a hierarchical ranking in which the villagers place the various *jati*s.[23] According to this ranking, Brahmans are the highest, followed by the Gujjars. Badai, Lohar, Teli and Nai are in the middle level, followed by Doms and

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[21] The village has moved to its current location only in the last forty years. Earlier it was located closer to the valley and overlooked the Kho. In the old settlement, the village was smaller and fortified stone walls with a few opening, much in the style of cities built by the erstwhile rulers of Karauli. People claim that in that settlement, the caste groups were never scattered. Each group had a definite cluster. It is in the process of moving over a period of 40 years that the houses have got scattered

[22] 'Traditional' is often used to refer to the caste ranking and values embodied in the Brahmanical ideology of caste as hierarchical system based on the principles of purity and pollution, elaborated in Dumont's (1980) work.

[23] This ranking is acknowledged in conformation to the village polity in public forums but not necessarily accepted. The Bhangis, Chamars and Doms consider the adherence to this ranking and the commensal restrictions as an attribute of the illiterate and uneducated aging population of the upper castes; a part of their 'village mentality.' The Gujjars, on the other hand, while asserting the superiority to the castes lower to them, also contest the superiority of the Brahmans.

Bairvas. Bhangis are the lowest. Marriages take place only between the same castes; there is both village exogamy as well as sub-caste (*gotra*) exogamy.

In Nibhera, the local narratives on the past culture do allude to the existence of a *jajmani* system, with the Gujjars as the principal *jajmans*. However it seems the system served well in the barter economy where most *jati*s were committed to their caste occupation. In the current scenario however, most *jati*s have given up their caste occupations and have gained access to other forms of livelihood and wage earning opportunities. The most prominent patron client relationship that continues is between the Brahmans and the Gujjars. The Brahmans serve as family priests to the Gujjars. On auspicious occasions in the household, the patrons Gujjars symbolically worship their family priests, feed them and give them gifts of clothes, money and grain.[24] The sanctity of this relationship is reflected in the significance it has acquired in the current conflict in the village. The other *jajmani* relations are tenuous and inconsistent, evoked mainly during marriage and death ceremonies.

Bayly (1999: 324) in analyzing the changing nature of caste relations in recent times, concludes that irrespective of the variability and fluidity in the 'pecking order', a distinction between high and low or 'clean' from 'unclean' caste continue to operate among several caste communities. The caste relations in Nibhera are consistent with this analysis. Conformation to the local ranking, though not so apparent in the everyday social interaction between the *jati*s, is evident mainly in the village ritual life. The logic of commensal restriction hinging on issues of purity and pollution is often hinted at rather than asserted.[25] But the most visible pollution barriers continue to be maintained against

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[24] See Raheja (1988; 1989) for a complete discussion on the *jajmani* relationship and its political and ritual significance in structuring caste relations. Raheja analyses the jajmani relations of the Gujjars of Pahansu village in UP to counter Dumont's (1980) understanding of caste-relations as being strictly hierarchical; an aspect purely of the religious domain and one that accorded Brahman all ritual supremacy.

[25] The distinction between 'clean' and 'unclean' caste became apparent through an incident in which I became implicated in a caste-row in the village. Because of the availability of separate room to house myself, I had opted to stay with a Brahman family. In the initial days of my field work, I was keen not to be identified with the Brahmans alone, and made it a point to visit all the communities and spend time introducing myself and establishing a rapport. On one such occasion I had accepted tea in the Chamar settlement. Nothing was told to me but the Brahman and Gujjar took offence that the Chamars, taking advantage of an outsider, had dared to breach the commensal restrictions of their community. I was never again offered anything either to eat or drink by the Chamar community. The idea of offering tea to an outsider and its acceptance are the many ways through which the Chamar community contests the ranking and discrimination without challenging the village authorities directly.

the Bhangis. Because of the existing taboo against touching the Bhangis, other than Bairvas and Doms, all other caste groups maintain a physical distance from them. The settlement of the Bhangis, for the same reason, is located at a distance from the main village settlement.

Articulation of caste inequality and discrimination were rare in public forums because of growing awareness of the legislations against such acts (cf. Fuller 1996). The Chamars and Bhangis had used these legal provisions against caste-based discrimination to get access to the village pond. Also, some upper caste members in the area have had defamation suits filed against them by the Schedule Caste groups. There have also been certain movements by the larger *jati samaj* of Chamars and Doms in the area to consciously dissociate from their traditional caste occupation, considered a prime maker of their inferior position.

As several scholars[26] have observed in the context of caste in contemporary rural India, caste is only one aspect of social relations evident in Nibhera. It overlaps and at times is supplanted by other important aspects of their social relations. For instance, despite obvious attempts at rejecting, and covert attempts at contesting their caste ranking, the Chamars, still desist from openly challenging the claimed superiority of the other castes. This is not because of their position in the caste hierarchy, but because they are obliged to the upper-caste through debt relations. The identity of the village as a social unit remains central to dealing with the conflicts that arise with other villages in the area. At the level of the village, the communities come together on issues that pertain to the village as a whole, including inter-personal and inter-community disputes. These matters are usually dealt by the informal (non-state) village administration, referred to as the *nyaya panchayat*[27] (justice panchayat) comprising heads of the village called *patels*.[28]

There are also other forms of cooperation between the communities. There is a form of communal labour referred to as *lahas*. For instance, when a new roof is laid on an individual's house, he calls for *lahas,* wherein one male member from each family contributes his labour. In turn the host family holds a feast. *Lahas* is also a form of

[26] See Bayly (1999)
[27] See Chapter 3 for details.
[28] Patel is a title given to senior members who represent their communities in the panchayat meetings.

displaying social solidarity and most households, if not in conflict with the host family, feel obliged to attend. Also in an economy marked by resource scarcity, pooling labour to maximize output has created alliances across castes. There are close associations between some of the Gujjar and Chamar families whose fields are adjacent to each other and who have pooled capital and labour to build and maintain a common water source for agricultural use.

Political Hierarchy and Conflicts Within

More relevant than caste is the status of the communities in the political hierarchy of the village. The positions in this hierarchy while related to caste have been re-defined by other markers--education, changing economic circumstance and proximity to centres of power in the outside world.

Politically, Gujjars wield the maximum power in the village. Their political dominance is rooted in the fact that their ancestors (Gujjars of Jheelan) founded the village and were responsible for conducting some of the affairs of the Karauli princely state at the village level. Nibhera was a *khalsa* village, under the *ryotwari*[29] tenure, paying its revenue directly to the princely State. At the village level a member of the Gujjar community was responsible for the collection of revenue and was conferred the title of *mehte*. As the head of the village and the officially appointed representative, a *mehte* was held in great respect in the village and also fulfilled several social obligations at the village level. Although the role of a *mehte* was made redundant after Independence, the Gujjars often refer to the title in reinforcing the fact the village is essentially a Gujjar village and the other caste thrived mainly as service providers.

In the present set up, the *mehte* continue to fulfil their social responsibility but do not enjoy the same kind of political powers. The leadership position of the *patel*s is as prominent today as it was earlier. In the earlier days *patel*s were given authority for their wisdom, fairness of judgment and the respect they commanded in the region. In this respect too, the Gujjars are dominant. Some of the best-regarded *patel*s from the bygone era had been Gujjars from Jheelan. Although, some of the descendants continue to carry

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[29] Prevalent in some parts in parts of British India, under *ryotwari* tenure, the land taxes were directly collected from the cultivator (*ryot*)

the mantel, the criteria for their political prominence have changed. They are now judged by levels of education, oratory skills and proximity to formal political and bureaucratic systems.

The most respected *patel*s amongst the Gujjars are Bhanta of Jheelan and Govind Gujjar of Bhattin. Bhanta is the only individual of his age who has studied up to class 12. He is considered to be knowledgeable about village history, Gujjar ancestry and *duniya ke baatien* (affairs of the world). He has been regularly dealing with the district administration on matters pertaining to the village. Govind, although only educated up to 5th grade, has worked outside of the village and has access to the local FD with whom he has worked in various capacities. There are other senior members of the village who speak with authority on issues within the village, but always look to either Bhanta or Govind for the final word. The Gujjars have the maximum number of *patel*s and tend therefore to dominate most village meetings. Both Govind and Bhanta were also amongst my key informants.

The only other caste group that contend with the force of the Gujjars are the Brahmans. They are much fewer in number. Even though some of the families have lost their economic affluence, at one time the Brahmans were economically equally strong. The position that the Brahmans enjoy partly follows from the fact that their forefathers were among some of the most highly regarded *patel*s. More importantly, especially under the current circumstances, their political status comes from their access to state run political mechanisms. One of the Brahman families has held the position of the sarpanch for many generations. The other important *patel* among the Brahmans is Kirori Pandit, my earlier host and a key informant. He enjoyed popularity because one of school-mates had been elected a member of the state legislative assembly (MLA). With his aid Kirori Pandit had, on many occasions, been able to get several development projects for the village. Because of this Kirori was also well acknowledged among district officials.

What works further in the favour of the Brahmans, is what Srinivas (1991: 308) identifies as "…an element of dominance which is becoming increasingly important in rural India, namely, the number of educated persons in a caste and the occupations they pursue." Amongst the younger generation, the Brahmans are by far the most educated. Jagdish Sharma, the primary school teacher (and my host), has completed a college degree. Radha

Raman the other younger Brahman boy was in the second year of college and nurtured an ambition of becoming a *sarpanch* (elected village council head) some day. In terms of occupation five Brahman households had family members in government jobs within the village itself (two primary school teachers, one post man and one post master).

The Chamars, amongst the poorest in the village, also have a significant population. Their social and economic position parallels their political position. The Chamars have had influential *patel*s in the past but were not held at par with the other *patel*s. Their political position within the village remains subordinated despite the fact that the current *sarpanch* of the village is from their community. Buddu Chamar (also a key informant) won the elections on reserved seat for the scheduled castes. The other caste groups were unwilling to recognise the authority accrue to the position. The Gujjars and Brahmans claim that his win was incidental and purely because they chose to throw their weight behind him. They contended that he is a weak leader and on his own merit he would have stood a chance. They argue that they supported him not because of his merit but because they wanted the seat of the sarpanch to remain in the village. The Chamars never assert themselves politically, except when they are discussing issues among their own community. They are diffident and as mentioned earlier indebted to most of the high caste communities. Thus they prefer to take a neutral stand although they feel strongly about the discrimination they experience.

The communities of Telis and Doms because of low numerical strength feel unable to take a position on any of the conflictful issues in the village. Unlike Doms who tend to avoid the panchayats, the Telis make their presence felt. Bhangis are conspicuous by their absence in any political forum of the village. The five households of the Bhangis all belong to a single family. Goat rearing enables them to hold their own economically. The younger generation prefers to keep themselves out of the village politics rather than face symbolic social discrimination.

The political positioning of the Nais defies both their caste position and their numerical strength. They have only three household and are economically poor. Nonetheless, their presence in the village leadership is quite significant of the achievements of individual personalities. Bhairon Lal Nai always represents his community. He is very vocal and politically keen. He draws his strength from the fact that his family has always been

favoured by the FD and can interact with district officials. He is considered knowledgeable, clever and crafty by the other communities. He is always consulted by the influential *patel*s of the village. Further, one of his sons, a young lad of 17, worked as a Community Worker with SSD. Their influence notwithstanding, the Nais stay in deference with the upper caste.

It is important to point out that the *nyaya panchayat* (justice panchayat) serves as the public space where the social and political hierarchies are played out. The meetings are held in a raised platform call *anthain* (seat of judgment) and one is not allowed to show disrespect to it. The position that the various communities occupy on the *anthain* clearly indicates the social and the political position of the communities. For instance, the Brahmans and the Gujjars always sit on the forefront. The members of the other castes, barring a few, always take positions behind them. The Chamars are not allowed to sit on the *anthain* at all and the Bhangis never attend the *nyaya panchayat*. Women are also not allowed to attend proceedings of the *nyaya panchayat*.

Between the communities, the political and social hierarchies are always a source of discontentment and conflict. This is also because as Fuller (1996: 13) notes that although caste inequalities are less articulated or apparent in public domains, "…relational hierarchical values as expressed in purity rule remain salient in private domestic domain." For example, although Buddu Chamar is allowed to enter Masterji's house, he is only allowed to sit on a chair in the inner courtyard of the house, he is never offered the cot (*khat*) to sit on, he is served tea in a glass earmarked for use only by him and has to rinse it himself before leaving. As differences between the castes are narrowed in the economic and political arena, such symbolic markers are used to reinstate ranking in the village's social contexts.

 Chamars never openly challenge any of the upper caste but constantly rail against their discriminatory practices. Some of their elders, led especially by Buddu, the current *sarpanch*, are acutely aware of their rights and privileges as a reserved category. They grudge the upper caste their economic affluence and understand that their state of impoverishment is more on account of the social exploitation in the past. Their constitutional and political empowerment has considerably narrowed the scope for their exploitation. Most of the other castes are highly contemptuous of the Gujjars. They feel

totally dominated by them and even accuse them of being thieves and liars. This is especially articulated in the context of agricultural land encroachment and acquisition of buffaloes. They are also accused of conducting unfair *nyaya panchayat* and of practising partisan politics.

At the time of this field work, Nibhera was divided over a dispute between the Gujjars and the Brahmans. The conflict started over a land dispute between Bhanta Gujjar of Jheelan and Kirori Pandit of Beech Ka. Over the years it has snow balled into a serious caste conflict, inviting the intervention of their *jati* samaj. The Gujjars have declined the *purohit* (priest) services from the Brahmans. The Gujjars and the Brahmans no longer participate in each other's social functions or eat together. The other smaller castes, like the Telis, the Nais and the Badai and Doms have rallied their support around the Brahmans. Individually these communities may have at some point had issue with Gujjars and have felt unable to garner the support. By rallying around the larger alliance of the Brahmans they felt that they will be able to use the support to address the grievances they have against the Gujjars. This factionalism is often referred to as *palti bazi*. Although both communities are unwilling to give up their position on the issue, they agree that this kind of factionalism adversely affects the potentials of 'development' (*vikas*) of their village. The extent to which these conflicts are reflected in people's engagement with the development workers and forest department officials will be reflected in the various chapters that are to follow.

Livelihoods

Multiple occupations and multiple resource dependence marks the livelihood practices of the people of Nibhera. The communities are mainly agro-pastoralist, dependent on agriculture, cattle and goat rearing. The resources of the Sanctuary are absolutely crucial for their livelihood and the presence of the FD has further accentuated the existing short fall of resources.

The communities' dependence on the resources of the Sanctuary has been dynamic in nature, dictated by the larger social, political and climatic history of this region. Thus although there are strains of continuity to be found, the above factors have affected significant changes in their livelihood as it was practiced at the time of this research.

Pastoral activities have declined and agriculture has intensified and the pressure on agricultural land is increased manifold. While forests continue to be the main sources of timber and firewood, market products have increasingly substituted other forest products. Both the above features are discussed at length in Chapter 3. Here I will only elaborate some of the other significant feature of their livelihood- dependence on non-resource based options.

Among non-resource based options, wage earnings are considered most critical for survival. Salaried jobs, contractual jobs, borrowing and loans were part of the everyday economy of some of the communities. These means have emerged as an alternative to forest-based livelihoods that have over time become inadequate to meet all needs. Hence if livelihood needs of the people have to be understood in its entirety, these sources have to be understood properly, especially because the various communities have differential access to resources, and the lower end of the wealth continuum depend more on the non-resource-based sources.

Wage labour (*majuri*) is a critical means of survival for large number of families in the village. With a short supply of resources and frequent droughts, more and more families (especially the poor and average income families) are substantially dependent on wages for their livelihood. For most of the Bairva community wages contribute to more than 50% of their livelihood and there are people like Bhagbati Rana a 30 year old Dom who claimed that 75 *paisa* of every rupee that he spent was earned as wages.

Within the village people worked as daily wagers for the civil works that the panchayat, the NGO and the FD offered in the village. This is primarily in the form of manual labour for the construction and repair of watershed structures. The villagers earned approximately Rs. 45 for eight hours of work. These opportunities, being subject to the sanctioning of works were not a dependable source. Agriculture is a more substantial source of wages. There is usually an exchange of labour between families referred to as *goi*. Families with less land prefer to work for wages rather than exchange labour. They are hired by neighbouring villages as well. The wages for agriculture are kept at a low of Rs.20 so that people can afford to hire. Sometimes wages are paid in kind, in the form of measures of wheat and rice.

The real wage opportunities are to be had outside Kailadevi Sanctuary. Many young men from the poorer families of the Gujjars and Chamars stay away for months working as labourers in stone quarries operating in the areas adjoining the Sanctuary.[30] Working as unskilled labourers these men earned up to Rs.7-8,000 over a period of 3-4 months. Every year, about 20-30 people, in the age group 17 – 35, travel out further, to distant cities in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi. They work as domestic helps, construction labourers and as 'stone setters' (setting marbles on floorings of houses and offices). As skilled labourer one earned Rs.200 a day. Living in groups and on minimal expenses in the cities, they were able to save between Rs.10-14,000 over a period of 4-6 months. For some families back in Nibhera, these remittances are the only source of income.

Until recently wage labour was always looked at as the occupation of the poor and the lower castes. The Brahmans and Jujus never had anybody work for wages. However the need for cash income to survive is pushing all communities towards wage labour of one kind or the other. As Kerri Pundit commented- "nowadays everybody does wage labour; we would have starved otherwise in these days of droughts". Working as a daily wage labourer in the village was considered to be less respectful than working in the distant cities. Thus with the exception of one young Brahmin man , who is very poor and works in and around the village, most Brahman families dependent on wages, have their boys working in distant cities. Most wage earning members of Jujus work in the mines. Only about 4 Gujjar men work in the distant cities; unless compelled to, Jujus do not like sending men too far from their homes. The younger generation of the big landholders (*bad jot*) and the large cattle owners also look towards availing of wage earning opportunities. As Radheshyam Gujjar, a *badjot* and owner of 12 buffaloes put it—"when we have less work in the fields we do *majuri*, who dislikes cash (*rupiya*) these days".

Women earning wages was also common and was considered a critical input to the family economy. Women worked only in Nibhera and the nearby villages. Given the importance of wage earnings, norms regarding the restriction on women's mobility were changing,

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[30] This region is rich in shale and sandstone, which is quarried and exported to other parts of the country. On the declaration of the Sanctuary, most mines inside the Sanctuary were abandoned.

even at the cost of earning the disapproval of the elders in their communities. Sharda a young Brahmin woman counters the opinion of the elders-

> Let it not look good what can I do? If I don't do *majuri* how will my family fill its stomach? I have three little children to feed and only some un-irrigated land. I have no cattle. Will they look after me?

In fact the projects that the various agencies were carrying out in the village were appreciated more for the wage opportunities they generate then for the end objectives. In the beginning, both men and women would often interrupt my questioning by saying-

> What good are these talks? Get us some 'real' (*asli*) benefits (*faida*). Get some work to the village so that we can earn some wages and fill our stomachs

Salaried opportunities are few and as mentioned earlier, most of them have been taken by Brahmans. With frequent droughts, poor agricultural yields and inability to hold much livestock, a steady monthly income is by the villagers as a "means of assurance" (*bhorosa*). Some of the young boys in the village studying in class 10 and 12 aspired to have salaried jobs. The options they weighed were between "becoming a master, enrolling in the army or being picked up by some NGO (*sanstha*)".

Debt and borrowing was also an aspect of their livelihood strategies. The significance of borrowing can be gauged by the fact that some of the poorer families in the villages have debts to the tune of Rs.100, 000. According to Hareth Bairva (50) who has a debt of Rs. 60,000:

> We don't have money, there has been no produce in the past three years and how do we buy grains? We have to borrow for our daily needs of the household-for grains, oil, salt, clothes etc.

Even the more able families have to borrow to meet the bigger expenses involved in festivals and rituals. For example *bhat odhana* is a practice where a bride's maternal uncle has to make a substantial contribution to the wedding and present gifts to all close kin who attend the marriage. People spend up to Rs.10, 000 on such ceremonies. The death feast (*nukta*) involved even more.

As is being increasingly recognized there is a direct correlation between migrant labour and debts (Mosse *et al.* 2002). Jagdish Master, whose two younger brothers work in Bengaluru, explains- "We keep borrowing and repaying and keep getting our work done".

Also as mentioned earlier, the debt relations played a decisive role in the factional politics of the village.

When the livelihoods of communities mentioned here is read along with Chapter 3 it becomes clear that the livelihood patterns are neither traditional nor subsistence oriented. The patterns of resource use have shifted and economic activities are oriented towards a cash economy. The livelihoods are marked by scarcity of land water and forest resources. Every available opportunity for alternatives means are being pursued by the younger generation.

Thesis Layout

The rest of the thesis is set out in seven chapters.

Based on the analytical framework outlined in the introductory chapter, Chapter Two analyses three key issues that underpins the politics in participatory conservation in India- 'Conservation', 'Participation' and 'Community'. Section one focuses on the discursive formation of ideas of conservation and environment across the colonial divide in India. It argues that the discourse on conservation that dominates management models need to be seen in relation to power positions of the multiple actors involved in conservation and the type of knowledge that it privileges. It argues that dominant conservation models and its articulation of nature or resources tend to be in clear opposition to the perception of resource dependent communities whom these management models aim to govern. Through a discussion on various discourses on participation and its operationalisation in the field of conservation in India, section two focuses of why participation has come to be seen as the 'new orthodoxy 'and the tyrannical potential it embeds. Section three focuses on the notions of communities that dominate conservation practices and the agency exercised by communities in both resisting and shaping the outcome of participatory conservation projects.

Chapter Three discusses *kulhadi bandh panchayats* in terms of its significance for the communities, its origins and its operation prior to the intervention of the external agencies. . It focuses on the making of 'environmental subjects' (Agrawal 2005) owing

not to government strategies for conservation but to their dependence on the forest resources, the increasing scarcity of resources and impingement by the local sheep herding community. In outlining the structure and operation of the KBP this section locates KBP within the local governance practice as distinct from that of the State. The Chapter outlines the larger narrative of *kulhadi bandh panchayat* by relating it to its socio-cultural significance for the communities. It traces the resource relations of the people to their emplaced identity. In doing so it emphasises on why structures like EDC are inadequate for encompassing practices like KBP and therefore fail to generate any ownership or belonging among the community groups.

Chapter Four focuses on Forest Department and Project Staff's approach to the implementation of the participatory conservation initiative. The principal argument the chapter makes is that while the agenda for participation and conservation remained unchanged, the department capitalised on the symbolic import of participatory conservation to meet their institutional and individual targets. The agenda of participatory conservation was co-opted within the bureaucratic and imperialistic culture of forest management. The process of implementation that endeavoured to co-opt *kulhadi bandh panchayats* proved counterproductive to both conservation and community participation.

Chapter Five focuses on the NGO initiatives in Kailadevi and their engagement with both Eco-Development Committees and *kulhadi bandh panchayats.* This chapter raises a few critical issues pertaining to the roles NGOs are associated or identify with in facilitating the process of participatory conservation. The chapter demonstrates that NGO missions often emerge in the relation to 'fundable' issues; propelling their survival on agendas on community-based conservation, NGOs in Kailadevi have a valuable stake in advocating community-based conservation and upholding representations of their successful implementation (especially if they are involved as facilitators). The chapter also demonstrates that NGO positions on issue are less driven by their commitment to upholding the interests of people they claim to represent and more on the 'development context' within which they operate i.e. the larger network of its funding and support organisations.

Chapter Six focuses on the responses of the communities groups to the participatory initiatives and the attempts at co-opting their initiative on *kulhadi bandh panchayats.* It

analyses three key areas- peoples' understanding and interpretation of the States intervention vis-à-vis their resource use and rights, locally established institutions (EDC and VDCs) and undermining of KBP these interventions have brought about. The Chapter argues that people interpret the present in relation to the past and see these externally-aided interventions as yet another means of tightening control over the communities' resource. The Chapter concludes that people consent to and confirm the success of the imposed models of participatory conservation not due to making of environmental subjects but primarily as a strategy of survival under extremely threatened circumstances. The Chapter also focuses on continued relevance of *kulhadi bandh panchayats*.

The final chapter provides the main conclusions of the thesis.

An Epilogue has been added, covering the period of the last decade, to provide an insight on the state of Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve, the villages in which the primary research was conducted and the issues that continue to influence the direction of conservation in India.

Chapter 2

The Politics of Participatory Conservation

Introduction

Protected Area (PA) as a means of conservation, both in its ideology and legislation is premised primarily on keeping human beings and wildlife apart. Pressure exerted on the resources by dependent and resident communities are seen as the principal threat to wildlife conservation. These measures of conservation impose restrictions or completely deny access to lands, resources and livelihood, to dependent communities. In addition, the communities continue to suffer the threats from wildlife. Crop-raiding, cattle-lifting and fatal attacks on human beings by wildlife are reported from all parts of the country. Such measures have generated considerable hostility among dependent communities as mentioned in the previous chapter. It is believed that the outcome of exclusionary measures is now proving counter-productive to meet conservation objectives. Especially so because local communities are now seen as being complicit in the active destruction of forests and wildlife, aiding and abetting poaching activities, illegal felling, setting off forest fires and other such activities.

The India Ecodevelopment Project (IEDP) perceives these human-wildlife conflicts largely as 'adverse impacts' - of wildlife on people and vice-versa and thus propose participatory measures to address them. This chapter argues that these measures are predicated on a simplistic understanding of the issues of conservation and resource conflicts. They deny the complex historical, social and political contexts in which these conflicts are entrenched. Ideas of conservation, participation and communities embodied in the project principles, in reality are highly contested, implicating issues of power and control over nature.

Ideologies of conservation embodied in protected areas have evolved through a long socio-cultural and political history of colonial and post –colonial India and essentially privilege one vision of nature against the multiple others, imposed through textual and institutional instruments of power. The human-wildlife conflicts, especially the hostilities

of dependent communities against the State are elements of contesting these visions and impositions. The institutional enforcement of the privileged vision of the State as well as the oppositions to it is firmly entrenched in the terrain of 'conflict' of PAs in India. Projects like Ecodevelopment with ideas of participatory conservation do not provide any real solutions as they do not necessarily supplant these conflicts; they are implicated in it and provide new idioms of contestation and instruments of legitimatizations.

This chapter, drawing on studies in political ecology, environmental history and anthropology outlines the politicized environment of protected areas in India. It focuses on ideas of conservation, participation and communities and their problematic applications both conceptually and in practice in India with specific reference to participatory conservation in general and protected areas in particular. In outlining these aspects it provides the framework within which the implementation of the participatory initiative in Kailadevi pans out in the rest of the thesis.

Conservation and Conflict

The political context of conservation is set by what definition is given to it, by whom and through what process. As Neumann points out (1992: 86; also see 1998) conservation is not only about conflicts over access and control of resources, but also contests over "meaning, symbols, aesthetics and imaginations of how nature "ought" to look. How 'nature' ought to look is dictated by not so much what is 'natural' but by the imposed cultural values of some (Cronon 1996; Neumann 1998). Promulgations of discourses on conservation and related ideas have been consistently linked to the emergence of new authorities and institutions empowered to manage and control (Stott and Sullivan 2000; Fairhead and Leach 1996; Grove 1995).

Science and scientific knowledge has been handmaiden in such discursive administration of power. However as has been well argued by many scholars, knowledge whether scientific or indigenous is socially and politically situated (Agrawal 1995; Stott and Sullivan 2000). Much of the predominant scientific narratives either on biodiversity or sustainability derive their legitimacy from what Stott and Sullivan (2000) refer to as the 'Big Talk' of science. They argue that while ecological sciences are significant and have a basis, much legitimacy is drawn by "using the language, if not the practice" (ibid: 5).

Within the above framework, the concept of Protected Areas and their establishment, to use Neumann's (1992:87) words, 'are impositions of one cultural vision to the exclusion of another, transforming through political history one form of landscape into another and alienating and marginalising resident communities'. Most nature reserves that have originally emanated from the Yellowstone National Park in the US and transported by the British to their Colonial domains beginning with Africa, have turned -"complex cultural-environmental landscapes of *production* into commoditised landscapes of tourist consumption, where environment and society are artificially partitioned…."(Robbins 2004:148). According to Robbins (ibid: 150) conservation and control thesis –

> Control of resources and landscapes has been wrested from local producers or producer groups (by class, gender, or ethnicity) through the implementation efforts to preserve "sustainability" "community" or "nature". In the process, officials and global interests seeking to preserve the "environment" have disabled local systems of livelihood, production and socio-political organisations.

Given the origin of nature reserves, Neumann (1998:9), in relation to his study on Arusha National Park in Tanzania, argues that one needs to conceptualize national parks or protected areas "not simply as threatened by social, political and economic forces beyond their control but as active socio-political forces in their own rights" as most PAs is "overlain by and implicated in an historical struggle over land and resources."

Analysing environmental conflicts through a historical perspective as both a material and a discursive struggle, many political ecological studies have demonstrated that in many resource conflicts (both in PA and non-PA forests) what most authorities see as issues of encroachment, illegal access to resources and an issues of unsustainable demand of an ever expanding population on resources of ecological significance, the local community see as issues of loss of ancestral land, ownership, cultural identity and threats of wildlife attack on their lives and livelihood (Robbins 2004; Brockington 2002;Neumann 1998; Peluso 1992;1993; Stevens 1997). Emphasising the historical contingency of environmental conflicts Fairhead and Leach (1997) have argued in the case of Guinea that conservation becomes very clearly a question of social or political choice about what vegetation or biodiversity forms are desirable at any given time in social history. Thus focussing on the extraordinary mismatch between the 'locally lived history which has shaped local priorities and conservationist's representations of it' they conclude that local

conflicts and antagonism towards forest conservation cannot be addressed or understood outside of its specific historical context.

In India Protected Areas as artifices of conservation as we know them today owe their origin to British India. The evolution of the ideas of conservation and wildlife protection are embedded in policies and practices of British India mostly privileged concerns of state making, game hunting, commercial and material needs. In establishing their physical and moral control they had a debilitating impact on the resource dependent communities-dispossessing them of and delegitimizing their resource dependent livelihood practices. Independent India reinforced this process further with its expanding networks of PAs. Much of what is now considered as 'pristine' landscape or 'wilderness' of PAs in India have emerged through bitter and conflictful histories of state imposed ideas of conservation and local resistance of resource dependent communities(Saberwal *et al.* 2001; Rangarajan 2001; 1996; Tucker 1998; Khare 1998; Kothari *et al.*1995;).

Wildlife Conservation in British India.

According to Sivaramakrishnan (1995) the rhetoric of conservation, environmental protection and sustainable development, commonplace in current international debates on forests were generated in the colonial projects of laying the foundation of state management (Also see Saberwal *et al.* 2001). The Act of 1878 that established the categories of reserved protected and communal forests was a manifestation of the unprecedented extent of state control that marked the colonial policies of forest management.

A large part of colonial State Forestry (governed by the Act of 1878) was justified by the discourses of scientific knowledge pertaining especially to the issues of conservation and environmental protection. The two most significant discourses that underwrote the colonial policies were 'dessicationism' and 'scientific' forestry. The conservation agenda of the former was professedly to do with agrarian prosperity and social stability. The principle proponents of this discourse Alexander Gibson and Hugh Cleghorn from 1837 onwards drew attention to the connection between deforestation and drought. Protection of forests was now seen to be essential for maintaining water supplies and safeguarding

agricultural prosperity. Scientific forestry dominated the discourses of conservation in the early and later parts of the 19th century (Grove 1995; Rajan 1998; 1994)

Arnold and Guha (1995) have stressed that "…the lexicon of colonial forest management is crowded with words like conservancy and scientific forestry which need to be understood in their political, economic and ideological context." It has been argued that the forestry policies of colonial India were adopted predominantly to serve it's the material and strategic interest (Guha 1983; Guha & Gadgil 1992) According to Skaria (1997) the discourse of scientific forestry that justified the state takeover of forest management from the last few decades of the 19th century had as its main concern production of revenue maximization.[31] The immediate need for bringing into effect the Act of 1878 was an assured supply of good quality timber for the establishment of the railway network. This was subsequently combined and replaced with revenue needs.

Sport hunting primarily meshed with the drive to assert control over produce from government-owned woodlands. For the imperial rulers and the Indian aristocracy hunting was not only the most prestigious of all sports but offered both a social and apolitical platform for the rulers. Hunting was an important consideration as it held wide vistas of meaning and possibility. As Mackenzie (1988: 168-9) puts it:

> Hunting represented a historic cultural interaction via which the British were able to build social bridges with the Indians, particularly the Indian aristocracy. They consciously sought to inherit the mantle of the Mughals through an opulent and highly visible command of the environment, as well as to establish relations with princely states through an apparently shared enthusiasm. The civil administrators saw it as obligation, a source of prestige, a route to understanding his district and people… Europeans regarded it almost a professional requirement.

According to Tucker (1991) the restriction on access to game through the Act of 1878 was the start of the 'fledgling national park movement'. The delegated provisions of the

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[31] Grove (1995) however contends that the earlier dessicationist theory had more genuine conservation concern than it is given credit for. According to him the ideological commitment of a section of colonial officials to conservation was more than a justification for the commercial interest of the empire in obtaining timber. He contends that the earlier conservation-scientist agendas of Cleghorn and Gibson had more to do with agrarian prosperity and social stability. However he too agrees that it was the economic exigencies of the 1857 period that saw a turn in policies on forest protection from broader social concerns of the early nineteenth century official like Cleghorn to a production-centred agenda. Other studies have also argued against materialist exploitation being the sole purpose of colonial forestry policies (Rajan 1994; Rangarajan 1996; Sivaramakrishnan, 1999; Saberwal, 1999). These studies point to several local, institutional and other factors instrumental in shaping some of the colonial forestry policies in different parts of British India.

legislation enabled the Forest Department to make regulations which would restrict the hunting rights of the indigenous forest inhabitants and confirm the position of the forest officers as protector of their property (timber stocks); and later in the century, to administer the hunting resources of the forest by dividing them into shooting blocks which would be opened and closed depending on the apparent fluctuation of the faunal population (Rangarajan 2001; Tucker 1991). The Indian royalty adopted British game laws for their hunting reserves and thus prohibited any human interference or use of the reserves resources by dependent communities (ibid).

In this context it is important to note that the issue of wildlife conservation figures very little in the early writings of the Indian Forest Department (Rajan 1998). According to Tucker (1979), during the period of colonial rule it was a section of foresters, hunters, naturalists and Indian aristocrats who were responsible for whatever little wildlife conservation took place. The extent, to which wildlife entered their official engagement, was either in the context of the debates about farm-forest conflicts or discussions about sport hunting. Thus, as Mackenzie (ibid.) argues prior to the late 1930s conservation was more in the nature of preservation of 'game' (not wildlife in its totality).

In 1934 the Indian National Parks Act was promulgated embodying "…many years of experience of game laws and their implementation" (Tucker 1991: 45). Focusing mainly on the sport hunter the Act had provision for seasonal access and restricted entry of visitors and issuing of licenses. The Act was otherwise silent regarding resident tribals and peasant communities (ibid.). The promulgation of the National Park Act and the policies of conservation that followed were influenced by international experience. In Africa the British adopted the creation of national parks as a model of conservation based on the model of Yellowstone National Park in the US. The apparent success of this model in Africa led to its subsequent introduction in India. In the1920s the England-based Society for Preservation of Fauna turned its attention to India. The Society began to press for the systematic study of Indian fauna, causes for its decline and preservation, the tightening of game laws, the appointment appropriate officials and the establishment of protected areas. A number of game hunting reserves maintained by the Indian aristocrats were converted into sanctuaries. In fact a number of PAs established in Independent India, including the Ranthambhore National Park, were carved out of previously declared sanctuaries and Reserved Forests (Rangarajan 2001; Saberwal *et al.* 2001).

Differing Idioms and Restrictive Regimes

The British policies of forest management and game laws had a profound impact not only the hunting rights of forest dependent communities but also on their access to resources, their livelihoods and their identities. The game laws of princely India were also equally harsh (Gold & Gujjar 2002; Rangarajan 2001; Tucker 1991). The idioms and contexts with which communities expressed their resource relations were entrenched as much in their social and religious domains as in their economic domains. This differed from the predominantly economic and scientific construction of nature that pervaded colonial ideologies (Skaria 1998; Sivaramakrishnan 1995; Tucker 1998). An example of how differences of perception shaped policies to the disadvantage of local communities, and which continues even today, is the existing classification of Major and Minor Forest Produce. The categories emerged from a classificatory mechanism employed in the silvicultural practices of scientific forestry, which according to Tucker (1998: 465) has shown that in the case of Western Himalayas the official definition of Minor Forest Produce was minor only in monetary terms "…though by no means minor in the range and diversity of biological species or their human uses for rural subsistence and some trade." The denial of access to 'minor forest produce' was the root cause of social unrest in the Himalayan forests and continues to simmer to this day.

These differences prevailed over laws pertaining to wildlife as well. For the hunter-gatherer tribal communities, hunting was both, a means of livelihood and a part of their ritual domain. Colonial game laws, however, defined all hunting practices of the locals as detrimental and summarily banned them all. The basis of the ban was largely on prejudiced moral and cultural values towards indigenous hunting practices. While large mammals were regularly hunted as 'vermin' and other animals as 'game', the decline of game species continued to be attributed to destruction brought about by the 'natives' (Rangarajan 2001). Hunting without firearms was considered cruel and, as competitors to the same resource, hunting communities had to be checked. The conservation of game was essentially to 'end cruelty, especially by low caste *shikaris* (hunters) and tribals' (ibid.). The game laws being introduced in India interfered with practices of ritual hunting, as in the case of the Marias of Bastar and the Chenchus who were left fairly crippled so far as means of survival was concerned (Furer-haimendorf 1943a; 1943b)

The promulgation of the Act of 1878, and the subsequent Acts along with the introduction of European system of jurisprudence, notions of property and the significance attached to the written word, redefined customary rights and established a whole new regime of rights. Baden Powell, in crafting the Act of 1878, made a distinction between 'rights' and 'privileges' for the first time. 'Rights' could not be abrogated without compensation but had to be written in the settlement records. 'Privileges' on the other hand were always regulated and could be terminated but where allowed were alienable. He averred that villagers, who from time immemorial were accustomed to graze their animals in the nearest jungle lands, did not acquire rights by prescription because they used the forest without any distinct grant or license. As the local community defined the network of rights, responsibilities and privileges through symbolism and social organisation and economic activity, they were not recorded on parchment. Thus all customary rights were converted to privileges and hence were made expendable (Guha 1989). For example, the Baigas were denied their rights to shifting cultivation because according to the positive law and settlement code they had no title to proprietary right or to occupancy right to the land they claimed as their own (Elwin 1939).

Colonial policies that justified the State takeover of forests also had significant adverse impacts in terms of how it redefined the communities and their livelihoods. Terms like 'tribal', 'caste', 'forest dwellers' and others, that are common place in the discourse of traditional communities vis-à-vis forest rights, have emerged through a history of colonial intervention and colonial anthropological writings that patronized Eurocentric theories of cultural evolution. These terms that negatively implicate the people who they represent were often used in determining their rights vis-à-vis conservation and forestry.

Padel (1998) states that "anthropological writings constructed an image of tribal people as 'at a low level of civilization' or 'in a primitive state of development', and so implicitly in need of civilization." According to Skaria (1997: 268) "the colonial list of tribes emerged from such process of primitivization or of the invention of primitive societies." Subsistence hunting which was considered as being the lowest stage of evolution was associated with the tribal. Their dependence on shifting agriculture was viewed as antecedent of settled agriculture. Their mode of subsistence was taken to be wasteful, unproductive and reflective of laziness. The forest or hills were perceived as the wild

portions of the land, away from 'civilization', associated with the plains or riparian areas. Absence of literacy, codified laws and dependence on customary laws were instead taken as criteria for classifying communities as tribes. It was these criteria and other attributions of masculinity, wildness and racial affiliations that were used to impose imagined categories on the populations and hence the making of arbitrary distinctions between those categorised as castes and tribes (Dirks 1989; Skaria 1997).

The negative images had a status of scientific facts, and so in effect they served to justify the 'subjection' or 'pacification' of tribes, 'opening of their territories' with roads and the forest policies adopted against their interests. In the case of Baigas, preventing of shifting cultivation was not so much as to save forests from destruction as to 'civilize' the people and make them useful members of the commonwealth. Categorisation of certain communities as 'criminal tribes' in British India paralleled the effort of the colonial regime to civilize and settle them as well as to gain effective control over their forests (Bhattacharya 1995; Nigam 1990).

Protected Areas in Independent India

As summarised by Khare (1998: 88) the colonial conservation policy was a) governed by elitist concerns for game species and the colonial need for timber; b) increasingly relied on exclusion of humans and human activities from reserved areas; and c) barring a few exceptions, was apathetic to the plight of tribal and other communities whose livelihood depended on the natural resources of such reserved areas. The post-colonial policies have seen little change in terms of decentralization of management; on the contrary 'policies and procedures of the colonial period were further strengthened during the post-Independence era. According to Kothari *et al.* (1998: 21) the colonial provisions of the 1927 Forest Act continue to be in force and therefore impacting forest and wildlife management in India.

Up to the 1970s commercial exploitation and both regulated and unregulated hunting by aristocrats continued in many forest areas including those designated as national parks and sanctuaries. Availability of modern amenities like automobiles and firearms, breakdown of hunting regulation of princely states and the commercial lure of the animal

and timber trade, led to greatest loss of both forests and wildlife in Independent India. (Saberwal *et al.* 2001; Ward & Ward 2002). The Indian Wildlife Board was established as early as 1952 by the first Prime Minister of the country, Jawaharlal Nehru, but comprised mainly of erstwhile maharajahs, prince, aristocrats, tea and coffee planters, who were all also keen hunters. Thus, admittedly they were concerned about wildlife conservation; their concern was to protect them from the local, forest dependent, communities. The other concern was to ensure that provisions related to sport hunting should not be compromised in all policy directives. For instance, the Wildlife Board that met for the first time after its constitution stalled any attempt to stop tiger shooting during the breeding season in Rajasthan (Rangarajan 1996).

It was only in the 1970s, fuelled by the personal interest of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi,[32] responding to the concerns of international conservation trends[33] and some Indian conservationists, that the network of protected areas for wildlife conservation was consolidated. Between 1969 and 1973 several regulatory measures and key projects were undertaken, laying the foundation for the exponential growth and establishment of PA network in Independent India. The Wild Life (Protection) Act, under which sanctuaries and parks are established and governed, was promulgated in 1972. The Act established a 13-step legal process for the establishment of national parks and sanctuaries and banned all commercial activity in the designated areas. It also imposed strict restrictions on the extent of human use permissible in PAs.

In 1973 Project Tiger was launched with the declaration of nine tiger reserves[34] across the country as "…it was inevitable that the tiger would be central …a prime target for sports

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[32] Indira Gandhi had been a keen member of the Delhi Bird Watchers Society and was also hugely influenced by her close association with a new generation of wildlifers in the Bureaucracy, especially MK Rajinthsinh, an Indian Administrative Service officer and Kailash Sankhla, an Indian Forest Service officer (Rangarajan 2001; 1996). Rajinthsinh was central to drafting of the Wildlife Act of 1972. It thus that Kothari *et al.* (1995), speaking on the irrationality of not addressing the human aspect of wildlife conservation, have argued that the apathy to the local communities comes from the fact that most of the legislations have been designed urban elite naturalist and conservationists.

[33] The 10th IUCN General Assembly was held in Delhi in 1969. The primairy focus of the various experts from across the world, participating in the conference was to put the Indian Tiger on the 'endangered' list. Mrs. Gandhi is consolidation of the strict preservationist approach received its inspiration from this meeting (Rangarajan 2001).

[34] 'Tiger Reserves' are not a legal category under any existing forest or wildlife law. The purpose of declaration is more notional and to focus attention on these areas both administratively and financially. Thus, Tiger Reserves were a natural choice in selecting areas for the World Bank supported India Eco-development Project.

hunters, it was transformed into the symbol for the preservation of wildlife" (Rangarajan 2001: 95) Project tiger was one of the largest wildlife conservation project in world, it was for its time in the early 1970s, one the first wildlife conservation projects in India funded through international support (the World Wildlife Fund raised almost a million dollars for the Project). It also established the concept of a 'core area' where "…all commercial activity including forestry was halted and the protection of nature took precedence over the generation of revenue." (Saberwal *et al.* 2001: 41). On the other hand, Project Tiger also set the trend for the exclusionary policies that would mark the development of wildlife conservation and set the tone for the bitter environment vs. development debate in India:

> Project Tiger played a key role in broadening ecological perspectives. It was clearly a single species scheme to start with, but the position accorded to the tiger in the food chain generated a logic that took the scheme further, 'Do nothing' to interfere with nature was a philosophy that allowed dead trees to be home of wood-peckers and owls; in the end of the category 'vermin' gave wild dogs the right to live off deer. Total preservation was soon extended to lands beyond those of the tiger. The first executive head of the project went on to help establish a desert national park in the Thar. The lions of Gir Forest won a lease of life as their habitat and prey were given better protection by the state government of Gujurat (Rangarajan 2001: 101)

The mid-1970s onwards saw an exponential growth in the number of national parks and sanctuaries in the country. Between 1975 and 1980 the numbers increased from 131 to 224 and by 1995 the PA network comprised of about 500 national parks and sanctuaries (Khare 1998; Kothari *et al.* 1995) The Wild Life (Protection) Act and the establishment of PAs marked continuity with colonial policies in terms vesting full control to the Forest Department and effecting a complete separation of human beings and wildlife. In fact these measures were considered more punitive:

> What is ironical is that the notion of biological diversity –of saving the entire spectrum of life from the elephant to the pangolin –was accompanied by a hardening of attitudes to the resident peoples of the protected areas. In the national parks, there were no rights of residence or access….The notion was simple: the exclusion of local land users was essential if nature was to survive unscathed. Policy makers were convinced theirs was the only possible response to a crisis situation. However, from a brief survey of the past it is evident that they were deeply conditioned by their reading of history (Saberwal *et al.* 2001: 41-42)

The declaration of core zones under Project Tiger was accompanied by the relocation of villages from Kanha, Ranthambhore and Gir national parks. The resettlement process was shoddy involving the Forest and Revenue Departments, neither of which were oriented to

resettlement and rehabilitation, and perhaps created among the first 'conservation refugees' in the country. The land provided for agriculture was not arable and many of the material benefits promised were never delivered. However, the expanding PA network continues to displace thousands of people across the country (Kothari *et al.* 1989). In some cases, like the Keoladeo National Park in Bharatpur, the declaration of the Park in 1982 led to criminalising the resource activities[35] of the communities overnight (Saberwal & Rangarajan 2003). A nation-wide survey conducted by IIPA[36] in the 1980s revealed that more than 55% of PAs had people living inside them and 80% had people living around them. More than 40% of the PAs had affected the traditional rights and leases of communities, especially grazing rights, fodder extraction, timber extraction and Non-Timber Forest Produce (Kothari *et al.* 1989). The extent of damage caused by wild animals can be gleaned from the following:

> In a mid-1980s survey, 63 of the 206 PAs surveyed in the county reported human injuries or deaths caused by wild animals; in West Bengal alone, 189 human deaths caused by tiger attack were reported over the period 1979-84. On average, wild animals, wild elephants kill thirty to fifty people a year in south India, similar numbers in West Bengal, five to ten in Uttar Pradesh, and over fifty in Assam, much of this during bouts crop raiding. Crop losses and destruction of property due to rampaging elephants are widely reported from each part of these parts of the country-worth Rs.6.5 million between 1981-83 in south India and much higher levels recorded in north east. Crop losses to blackbuck in parts of Rajasthan, nilgai populations in Haryana, black bears in the Himalaya, and chital and wild boar populations in many parts of the country are also well known. Livestock losses are similarly high-with animals being killed by lions, tigers, and leopards in various parts of the country. A minimum of 622 cattle were killed by tigers or leopards between 1974 and 1983 near Bandipur Tiger Reserve. (Saberwal *et al.* 2001:73-74).

These impositions have been met with violent resistance from local communities all across the country. In Keoladeo National Park, the forceful entry and use of resources led to police action and firing where nine villagers lost their lives (Saberwal & Rangarajan 2003). Similar conflicts were reported from all over the country - Rajaji National Park in the north; Nilgiri Bioshpere Reserve in the south; Betla Tiger Reserve in east and Nal Sarovar Sanctuary in the west (See Guha & Gadgil 1995; Sivaramakrishnan 2003). Incidents of arson have also been reported from Kanha National Park in Madhya Pradesh

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[35] Keoladeo National Park, is an artificial wetland that was also used by the surrounding villages to graze buffaloes. The buffaloes would help keep grass levels low in the marshy area and create open water passages across the wetland. This in turn would attract hundreds of species of migrant wild fowl from Siberia, including the endangered Siberian Crane, eventually earning it the World Heritage Status from UNESCO. In an attempt to enforce Keoladeo's national park status, grazing was abruptly terminated leading to a violent standoff between the Forest Department and local communities.

[36] This was the first systematic attempt in India to asses the status of management of national parks and sanctuaries and to identify issues that required policy intervention of conservation was to succeed.

in 1989 and Nagarhole National Park in Karnataka in 1992 where protesting local communities set fires to large parts of the reserve (ibid).

Adding to these complexities have been the developmental (read industrial and commercial) demands on the resources within PAs. Many of these areas are not only rich in biodiversity but also in minerals. Succumbing to industrial demands several PAs have, in part or entirely, been de-notified to enable activities such as mining and quarrying to take place. Darlaghat Sanctuary in Himachal Pradesh was denotified for a cement company, a mining company in Kudermukh National Park in Karnataka was given fresh mining leases even after its declaration as a National Park (Kothari *et al.* 1995; 2001). Industrial pressure is seen as a common threat to both the livelihoods of local communities as well as to biodiversity itself. It was not until the 1990s that there was recognition of the common threat and in some cases agencies across the divide of the people vs. wildlife debate came together to address these issues in the context of PAs (Kothari *et al.* 1995).

As the instances of poaching, encroachment and de-notification mentioned above indicate, the 'state' as such has not been entirely effective in pursuing its policy of 'guns and guards'. The administrative responsibility of managing the PAs is that of State Forest Departments. As many scholars have pointed, whether in colonial times (Rangarajan 1996; Saberwal 1999; Sivaramakrishnan 1999) or in Independent India (Baviskar 1998b; Saberwal *et al.* 2001; Saberwal and Rangarajan 2003; Thapar 1998) the Forest Department has never been able to exercise its full authority vested under the Wild Life (Protection) Act. Within the Forest Department the objectives of its two Wings (Territorial Wing for commercial forestry and Wildlife Wing for conservation) have to be reconciled. There are no separate cadres so officers are often cross-posted to from one Wing to another. The frontline Forest Department staffs are often left to interpret Departmental policies, besides being inadequately equipped or trained to take on their protection duties. It is not uncommon for Forest Guards to have empathy with village communities whom they have to police rather than for the wildlife they are expected to protect (Vasan 2006).

One of the most difficult factors to contend with is political interference at different levels that seeks to compromise the efforts at wildlife conservation. Often the Department's

work to protect a PA is undone by local politicians who would be keener to secure their vote banks in the local communities than to secure the ecological security of the area. The Ministry of Environment and Forest at the national level often has to defer to the demands of the other Central Government Ministries concerned with industries, commerce, power and infrastructure. The political support of Indira Gandhi that led to the expansion of PAs until the 1980s dwindled significantly under the successive governments. As Saberwal and Rangarajan (ibid.) point out "…Forest Departments and the Ministry of Environments and Forests have been consistently weak players within the Indian bureaucracy."

In summing up, two issues are of importance. First, given the history of creation of PAs in India, people-wildlife conflicts in India are not just a matter addressing 'impact' issues that threaten wildlife conservation, as for instance sought by IEDP. These conflicts are more between one set of human beings with another and emerge from differing ideologies, meanings and power struggles that are rooted in history. The conflicts are not only about contested claims over resources and livelihood but more fundamental issues of belonging, identities, dispossession and impositions of meanings. Second, the management of PAs are not driven by an all powerful, cohesive and well trained authority. The ability to manage a PA or implement any project therein is constrained by several broader organisational, political and bureaucratic forces within which they are located. Thus people-wildlife conflicts are not one dimensional, instead they are underpinned by a complex of socio-political and historical issues of which economics and livelihoods are only a part.
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This analysis has significant implications for the rest of this thesis. First, the history of regimes and differing meanings through which the notion of 'Protected Area' has evolved, including its inherent disadvantage to local communities, significantly informs the implementation of any new management approach. Communities interpret new management approaches by relating them to the past history of struggles and threats. These interpretations in turn inform their responses to such approaches and influence their likelihood of succeeding or failing. Also, irrespective how projects frame the basis of conflict, for communities these continue to be struggles over meanings of identity and rights. Alternative livelihoods are seen as yet another means of leveraging these issues but not necessarily replacing them.

The past remains entrenched in the politics of the present for the State, but more so because the discourses of conservation and communities used in the present are in continuity of their colonial antecedents. The history of management and control also has a significant bearing on the institutional memories and practices of the implementing agencies such as the Forest Department. Departmental bureaucracy continues to operate with the framework of the same inherited colonial systems of management. For instance, the Departments complete rejection of the importance of the forests for the people was reflected in a conversation with the Assistant Conservator of Forests, Karauli:

> I wonder why these people (inside PAs) want to live in these sub-human conditions
> in the hilly tracts of Kailadevi? The forests are depleting and have practically nothing
> to offer… What do they get by living here? If I had my way, I would make them
> wear shirts and pants and send them off to schools in the cities and that would set
> their lives on a road to development. I too came from a village, but if I had insisted
> on staying there then would I ever have made to it to my position here today?"
> (Assistant Conservator of Forests (Wildlife Wing), Karauli Forest Division 15th
> September 2000)

One also encounters statements at the official level that echo the colonial discourse which branded Gujjars as 'wild, hill dwelling… thieving community' (Bingley 1899; Rose 1970) Perceiving the *dangs* as a dacoit prone area has a clear implication for the perception and prejudices against the Gujjars and an imagined geography of the region. The popular official narratives in this region imply that Gujjars have an inherent 'ability' to become dacoits because of their profession and because they can easily navigate the dense forests. The level of illiteracy prevalent in the *dangs* is attributed more to the 'nature and mentality of the forest dwellers' rather than an inherent failure of the state to deliver on basic education and other development services.

The second implication is in terms of the several pressures that work on the actual functioning of the Forest Department and its impact on the implementation of projects like IEDP. The Departments ability to implement the Project cannot entirely be attributed to its 'statist' attitude. The institutional networks within which it functions, its own marginalised position within a state structure and the political compulsions of producing a 'success story' is what leads to the unfolding of the Project at the field level in a manner that tragically fails both conservation and communities.

Participatory Approach: Discursive Practices

The term 'participation' was derived from radical ideas challenging the developmental orthodoxy of centralised 'top-down' development policies (Cook & Kothari 2001; Gardner & Lewis 1996) Conventional development programmes were perceived as being technocratic and imposed change without taking the real concerns of the people into account. These policies were critiqued essentially as instruments of domination and subjugation (Esteva 1992; Escobar 1992, Grillo & Stirrat 1997). According to Rahnema (1992: 121) the Participation Action Research theorists as a rule conceptualised participation as the only way to save development from degenerating into 'bureaucratic, top-down and dependency institutions.' The evolution of the participatory development discourse, and in particular its methods for rural/rapid appraisals, influenced by the work of Robert Chambers (1992; 1995; 1997) were meant to democratize the process and make it more inclusive.

The spirit of participation in development received strength from its usage in the Popular Participation Program of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) as means of the powerless to re-distribute 'both control of resources and power in favour of those who live by their own productive labour' (Kaufman & Alfonso 1992: 6) The definition of participation has been further refined as 'collective efforts to increase and exercise control over resources and institutions on the part of groups of those hitherto excluded from control' (ibid.). The notion sought to include people as participants in the planning and implementation of development programmes. The process of involvement was to empower 'socially and economically marginalised' people to take decisions and thus direct the course of their development (Gujit 1998). Participatory approaches in development also received legitimacy for being relevant, sustainable and empowering (Cook & Kothari 2001).

But the practice of participation worked itself out quite differently and the concept of participation, as used in development discourse, has been criticized on several grounds, especially for the way it deals with power politics (see Bastian & Bastian 1996; Cook & Kothari 2001; Mosse 1994; Nelson & Wright 1997). Different ideologies and interests defined the multiple ways in which participation came to be practiced in the delivery of

development. The diverse approaches have been broadly categorised as participation as a *means* and participation as an *end* (Nelson & Wright 1997; Oakly 1991). The former is largely seen as a functional, instrumental and restrictive form of *participation in development* - where the communities facilitate achievement of pre-determined goals and objectives. Nelson and Wright (1997:6) put it as, "…to accomplish the aims of a project more efficiently, effectively or cheaply." As 'end', participation was meant to empower - "…where a community group set up processes to control its own development." (op. cit.) Given the proliferation of different notions of participation and practice, some have rightly argued against the existence of distinct categorisation (Mosse 1996), where it may be useful to understand the power relationships between 'members of community as well as between them and the state and agency institution' (op. cit.) The critics of participatory development have argued that participation is largely used as a legitimizing instrument in what continues to remain a top-down approach, concealing the power politics implicit in the processes.

For example, the prolific development of participatory research methodologies like Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Participatory Learning and Action (PLA), have been used to enable communities to contextualise management strategies by voicing their needs and choices. However, what is often taken as 'local', 'traditional' or 'indigenous' is often an outcome of the interface in the 'battlefields of knowledge' and the power positions that underline them (Hobart 1993; Long & Long 1992; Mosse 1994) Cook and Kothari (ibid.) argue that 'tyranny' i.e. the unjustified exercise of power, is both a real and a potential consequence of participatory development, counter-intuitive and contrary to its rhetoric of empowerment. It is thus that some view participation as the 'new orthodoxy' (Stirrat 1996: 67).

It is the attempt of this thesis to take on a more critical perspective by examining how participatory processes and policies work at the field level, and tend to lean towards the tyrannical implications of participation. At the most basic level, participation reinforces an increasingly popular observation that 'despite the emphasis on participation and benefit sharing, many of the new projects replicate more coercive forms of conservation practice and often constitutes an expansion of state authority into the remote rural areas' (Baviskar 2003; Neumann 1997).

Participation and Conservation

Participatory approaches in conservation have been significantly influenced by the Common Property Resource literature that focused on communities and collective action manifest in institutional arrangements and management systems for sustainable and equitable use of natural resources (Agrawal 1999b; Baland & Platteau 1996; Bromley & Cernea 1992; Jodha 1992; Ostrom1990, 1992, 1999; Wade 1988). This body of literature has focused on several aspects of rights regimes, types of resources, composition of communities, types of institutional arrangement and their operations. Ostrom (1999) and others (Baland & Platteau 1996; Wade 1988) have attempted to outline several conditions for effective collective action by communities (See also Agrawal 2001). For example, for Wade (ibid.) ownership and scarcity of resources are important conditions while Ostrom (1990, 1999) sets out certain 'design principles' pertaining to issues of defined boundaries, cost-benefit analysis, collective choice, conflict resolution mechanisms among others.

Some of these principles and conditions have been instrumental in informing donor-led projects on institutionalisation of community participation in conservation (Agrawal 1999, 2001a; Li 2009). This has resulted in approaching community participation more as a technical matter, or as Pimbert and Pretty (1997) put it a 'blueprint', rather than a process-driven approach. There are, however, several problems with regards to the CPR literature. One of the main arguments has been that the variables that have emerged in relation to specific resources and communities may not hold true across the board (Agrawal 2001b). In addition, the focus is only minimally on the "external social, institutional and physical environment" (ibid: 1655) and they have been "relatively inattentive to issues of power and the larger socio-political context within which most common property are embedded" (Agrawal 200lb: 181; IIED 1994; Mosse 1997). The problem arises from the fact that 'resources management' does not by itself imply 'conservation' and requires an understanding of the dynamic nature of management practices. Participation does not always emerge from premeditated systems and may even evolve from everyday practices. As Li (2009: 274, citing Campbell *et al.* 2001:595) states:

> Common property literature emphasizes 'possible positive outcomes rather than
> field complexities'. The emphasis is on formal, rule-based systems governed by

perfected 'design principles' fails to connect to conditions in which resources are low value and rights complex, contested, and overlapping. Nor does it adequately grasp the uncertainties of ecology or social relations, or the possibility that what appears to be rational landscape design or 'management' is the serendipitous outcome of everyday practices that have quite disparate motives.

The analysis in this thesis of the community-initiative of *kulhadi bandh panchayat* in Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary, as an example of management of common property resource, bears out some of the critical observations regarding participation made above. This is also why the process of its incorporation into the FD and NGO-led local institutions proves to be disjunctive.

Agrawal (1997: vii) in reviewing the community-based forest management practices prevalent in the 1990s emphasises, "community-based conservation is unavoidably about a shift of power as well as about how power is exercised, by which loci of authority, and with what kinds of resistance." The conflict emerges as Stevens (1997) suggests as much from what definition is given to the problem of conservation, as from the definition given to the process of participation by various interest groups. Participatory conservation involves multiple interest groups including government agencies, NGOs, international agencies, activists, conservationists and the local people being affected by implementation of such policies. Perhaps the complexities of agencies and agendas that characterise participatory conservation context are best captured by Li's (2009) concept of 'assemblage' used to described community-forest management. According to Li (ibid: 263) community forest management is "an assemblage that brings together an array of agents (villagers, labourers, entrepreneurs, officials, activists, aid donors, scientist) and objectives (profit, pay, livelihoods, control, property, efficiency, sustainability, conservation)."

In this field of differing agendas, agencies and differential power positions, 'participation' serves as a symbolic capital and strategic tool to enable agencies to refract even while they appear to adopt a shift. Who participates in conservation is largely underpinned by the ideologies of conservation being pursued and the positionality in the power structures of those who pursue it. It is thus that Jeffery and Sundar (1999: 19) point out, "…terms like participation (as also community and civil society) in the field of development tend to have layered, multiple linguistic histories and their use in any context must be assessed critically i.e. one must raise the question of why participation is such a central value and

how is it constructed so that 'participation' can be managed?" The sheer number of ways in which participation has been practiced or conceptualised in conservation is evident from the typology provided by Pimbert and Pretty (1998: 65) where participation includes 'passive participation, information giving; consultation, material incentives, functional and interactive participation and self-mobilisation.'

As stated by Pimbert and Pretty (1997), the official standpoint of many countries with regard to participation is still seen as a means to achieve externally desirable conservation goals. Hence, while recognizing the need for people's participation many conservation professionals place clear limits on the form and degree of participation. In the case of Kailadevi Sanctuary, participation gains favour because of pragmatic purposes of easing out of the infrastructural and maintenance responsibility of the Forest Department and as Mosse (2001) argues, for negotiating relationships with donors and underpinning positions within policy debates. Despite all the rhetoric of participation, the Forest Department has not demonstrated any desire to relinquish or even share control and authority.

Participation as a means of empowerment largely finds institutionalised expression mainly through the establishment of local level institutions. Perhaps the most visible and manageable form of participation of communities (their potential to democratize governance) is thwarted by the process of what Li (2009) refers to as 'rendering technical'. The attempt to institutionalise participation (a key focus of this thesis) has been largely prescriptive and even restrictive in extent. Glossing over tensions that exist between the actors and the complex social processes involved in communities, the process of institutionalisation aims to, "…represent the unruly array of forces and relations on the forest edge as bounded arena in which calculated interventions will produce beneficial results" (ibid.: 270). Formed through project prescriptions these institutions tend to reconfigure community institutions as per the requirement of the projects and what it expects these institutions to do, trimming out the politically sensitive issues of rights, ownership and access. There is also a disjuncture with assumptions about communities and the power dynamics within. These institutions are more about what they 'ought to be' rather than what they are.

The institutions tend to have a functional role in enabling the smooth implementation of the projects. Consequently, they not only pose operational limitations, but are culturally inappropriate and viewed as a means of imposing external control (Hailey 2001). Implementers of participatory development tend to develop parallel structures, ignoring the existing forms of more socio-culturally appropriate and acceptable forms of village organisation. These imposed structures serve to co-opt people and their resistance in the implementation of externally defined agendas. Their claim is to empower communities to the extent they can negotiate with external agencies (government, donors and others) on equal terms. However, the channelling of these powers draw on the dominant political and judicial systems, streamlining these institutions in the mould of the dominant paradigms. Thus, rather than creating truly decentralised structures of empowerment they serve merely as another form of centralisation of power in the hands of individual government departments (Vasvada, Mishra & Bates 1999)

Participatory Conservation in India

In India the official participatory approaches to forest management or conservation have rarely enabled a shift in power in terms of access, control or ownership. Official positions on these issues have been defined as 'statist, centralised and bureaucratic' (Baviskar 1998). The position of the State on participatory approaches in India is evident in the implementation of the Joint Forest Management (JFM) policies. JFM was introduced in 1990 through a Government Order to operationalise provisions of the National Forest Policy of 1988. It was widely acknowledged as being among the first overt statements of government that recognised the livelihood needs and rights of communities. Reversing the earlier trends, JFM intended to provide a space for the participation of the forest dependent communities (Khare *et al.* 2000; Poffenberger & McGean 1996; Saigal 2003) Under JFM, the Forest Department and the village community enter into an agreement to jointly protect and manage forest land adjoining villages and to share responsibilities and benefits. Institutionalised participation of community was sought through bodies formed specifically for this purpose.[37] However as the critiques of JFM have noted:

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[37] These institutions have been variously referred to as Forest Protection Committee, Joint Forest Management Committee, Community Forest Management Committee,

> ….whether government foresters support it or not, the extent of Forest
> Department control within JFM is significant. Most importantly, village
> organisations in most states have no autonomous status and can be dissolved by
> the forestry department. The transfer of decision-making authority to local users
> implies a corresponding reduction in the power of the forestry department and,
> unsurprisingly, this continues to be resisted by many forest bureaucrats.
> Furthermore, over time a plethora of government notifications have created
> major ambiguities about the rights and concession available to forest-dependent
> communities. (Khare *et al.* 2000: iv. Also see Jeffery 1999. Jeffery *et al.* 2001).

Thus, in transferring only the task of forest protection and not management or utilisation
to local communities, as Jeffery and Sundar (1999:45) have argued, 'bureaucracy often
reinforces rather than abdicates power and furthers the remits of its controls' (Also see
Jeffrey *et al.* 2001).

The reluctance of the Forest Department to either devolve control or authority to
community structures has been seen noted as the principal problem in realizing any
meaningful decentralization in JFM (Hobley1996; Jeffrey *et. al* 2001; Khare 2000;
Poffenberger 1990). As Jeffrey *et al.* (ibid.) note that while the overt exercise of authority
is reduced, it continues to be maintained in the nuances of their interaction ('performance')
with the village communities, for example how authority is affirmed through the sitting
arrangements during the meetings. It is also explicit in the agenda setting and choices to
be made through microplans etc. It is thus that some critiques argue –'the failure of
donors/ authorities to implement policies on participation is institutionally deep-seated
and structural' (Hildyard, Hegde, Wolvekamp & Reddy 2001)

According to Vira (1999) the acceptance of involvement of local communities may serve
a pragmatic purpose for the department i.e. reduction in conflict; devolution of
management control; increased territorial control; regeneration of degraded forests and
international donor support. But devolvement of authority may be resisted because it is
perceived to reduce authority of the bureaucracy and increase accountability. Vira (ibid.
265) however rightly points out the need to "…disaggregate the forest bureaucracy, and
to identify the motivations and interests of officials at different positions within the
structure" rather than treat it as monolith. It is from this very resistant system that some of
the more innovative officers provided the initial impetus for the idea of JFM
(Poffenberger & McGean 1996). However as Jeffrey *et al.* conclude:

> (There is) evidence of changes in the attitudes of forest staff, with several
> moving towards more participatory positions. Yet even these agents are limited
> by the overall hierarchical structure of the department and other problems (such

as frequent transfers and lack of specialisation) continue to bedevil the bureaucracy at large.

Participation in Protected Area Management

Participation in Protected Areas is advocated on several accounts- that coercive and exclusionary approaches have been counter-productive to the conservation itself; inability of authorities to enforce effective protection of parks both in terms of manpower and costs; evidence of positive anthropogenic influence in bio-diversity conservation i.e. what is often seen as 'pristine' nature is often a product of human intervention; the evidence of collective action in effective management of common property resources and adverse social impacts of exclusionary conservation methods on dependent communities, mentioned in the previous chapter (Agrawal 1999; Pimbert and Pretty 1997; Kothari *et al.* 1996; Western & Wright 1994).

In India, as in the other parts of the world, the debates on people's participation in Protected Area management have been highly polarised one (Madhusudan & Raman 2003; Steven 1997; Saberwal & Rangarajan 2003; Shahabuddin & Rangarajan 2007; Kothari *et al.* 1995; 1996; 1998). The main arguments against participatory approaches to protected areas also referred to by some as 'preservationism', have been based on the ground that they are, by definition, inviolate zones, and do not permit human intervention. Consequently, there can be no arrangement for benefit sharing with the participating communities. The improbability of resource sharing and maintaining PAs as inviolate zones advocated by wildlife and biological scientist, wildlife conservationist and forest officials is attributed to the principle concept underlying the formation of Protected Areas – resource use by dependent communities negatively impacts the protected areas and are, thus, detrimental to biodiversity conservation. The plea of the advocates is made more forceful in light of the large scale loss of species like the tiger and rhino to poaching.[38] They advocate that strict preservation is possible only through the 'guns and guards' or 'fences and fines' approach in bounded landscapes free of any form of human

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[38] In 1993 about 487 Kg of tiger bones thought be the remains of some 40 poached tigers was hauled in Delhi, busting the illegal animal trading rings operating from Delhi and other parts of the country. Tiger bones have a high demand in China and South-east Asian countries.

intervention (Dey 1996; Johnsingh 2006; Karanth 1998; 2000; Madhusudan & Karanth 2002; Panwar 2003) Much of the justification is drawn from ecological sciences and the fact that between 1970 and 1990, wildlife that was conserved under strict preservation saw a significant growth and revival of numbers in India. Debunking the 'sustainable paradigm' that allows human use of areas protected for wildlife as one propounded by "savvy breed of executives schooled in social sciences, business management or law, possessing neither a theoretical understanding of ecology nor practical experience in wildlife conservation", Karanth (2000: 3-8) argues that the "…cumulative effect of this paradigm shift in protected area in India as "disastrous" and that a "renewed commitment to the idea of strictly protected wildlife reserves seems inescapable."

Exclusionary approaches have been resisted by various lobbies of activists, civil society organisations, environmentalist and conservationist who advocate inclusion in the interest of people as well as by academics. While some clearly place priority on human needs and issues of rights, the others have proffer evidence of community based conservation- folk traditions, sacred groves, community protection of certain birds and animals- across the country to advocate for including communities in management (See Kothari *et al.* 1998). They emphasise on 'traditional conservation' practices and 'conservation ethics' of communities, the loss of wildlife owing to ineffectiveness of state management and counter-effect of people-wildlife conflicts on conservation (Gadgil & Guha 1992, Gadgil & Guha 1995; Kothari *et al.* 1996; 1998).

Advocates of a more inclusionary approach or sustainable paradigm argue that exclusion of humans from nature reserves are based on biased cultural and historical process. Countering the 'myth of wilderness' they have shown how several areas which are now maintained as pristine nature have evolved through a history of human use and intervention. Typical examples have been sited from Himachal Pradesh (Great Himalayan National Park), Rajasthan (Keoladeo National Park) and (Madhya Pradesh Kanha National Park). They stress on reconciling the conservation needs with the livelihood needs of dependent communities and hold the alienation of communities from PAs as the reason for the increase in poaching and industrial activities in PAs. (Guha 2003; Kothari *et al.* 1989, 1995, 1996, 1998, 2000; Saberwal *et al.* 2001)

The debate on exclusion and co-management in Protected Areas has also revolved around the issues of scientific versus indigenous knowledge. While scientists and conservationist pay scant regard to local knowledge for its lack of scientific basis or rigour, the advocates of an inclusionary approach have questioned the scientific logic for keeping humans and wildlife apart. In fact countering the scientific rhetoric for keeping people out of PAs, Saberwal and Rangarajan (2003) have argued that the management plans for most PAs are based less on the use of actual biological knowledge and more on the fact that the laws do not allow human intervention in Protected Area. They cite several examples of how some areas where the ecosystem, benefited by human use has suffered when its use has been banned through legislative measures, executed with no due considerations of the actual biological impact of human use.

The lobby for the shift to a sustainable paradigm has been advocating the notion of 'Joint Protected Area Management' (JPAM). As stated by Kothari *et al.* (1996) JPAM is defined as:

> The management of PAs and their surroundings with the objective of conserving natural ecosystems and their wildlife as well as ensuring the livelihood security of local traditional communities, through legal and institutional mechanisms which ensure an equal partnership between these communities and government

Saberwal and Rangarajan (2003: 3) encapsulate the key issues on that characterise the debates around PAs in India:

> Concerns in the Indian Wildlife Board are thus increasingly couched in dualities of the following kind: should the state manage wilderness areas or should local communities? Should people be allowed to use Protected Areas or should areas be inviolate? Should 'western science' or 'local knowledge' provide the bedrock of the know-how on which these areas are managed? Should human habitation be relocated or not? Should power be devolved or should it, alternately be concentrated in a few expert hands? Should parks be insulated from or selectively integrated into wider regional economies? Is total protection a remedy or a problem? Should the existing systems be repaired and reformed from within or replaced with a different one?

These debates are polarized not only between the State and non-government organisations. They are as much contested within as between the multiple agencies. Government officials who have been long-time bureaucrats and also served as Secretary, Planning Commission of India, in their official capacity have been extremely critical of the Governments exclusionary policies. Within the government there are also tensions between the central and state governments over whether the forest and wildlife conservation should be in the concurrent lists of subjects. Among the NGOs, the World

Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF), Bombay Natural; History Society, and others have been advocates of the centralised model of conservation. This has brought them into sharp conflict with other NGOs working on ensuring human rights of communities. These differences are evident from the fact that the opposition to the Ecodevelopment Project was not unanimous. There have been several NGOs who have preferred to play the facilitators role in enabling collaborative management models as envisaged in projects like IEDP.

India Ecodevelopment Project

The India Ecodevelopment Project was perhaps the first systematic attempt of the Government to initiate a participatory approach in PA management, in so far as it recognised the adverse impact of the PAs on people; the need to contain the resentment of people for better meeting the conservation objectives of PAs and recognising people as 'stakeholders' in the conflicts surrounding the management of a PA. Ecodevelopment in PAs is not considered entirely new in India. Indian forest officials have argued that the notion has been practised in India with the establishment of the India Ecodevelopment Board in 1983 (Saberwal *et al.* 2001). This however was mainly focussed on removing the pressures of local communities from PAs and looked at relocation as a key element. Also the lack of governmental funding, ecodevelopment activities was never undertaken in any significant manner until the coming of the World Bank supported Ecodevelopment Project.

The ideas embodied in the Ecodevelopment Project find their origin in Integrated Conservation Development Projects (ICDP) which have been adopted in different parts of the world (Neumann 1997; Wells & Brandon 1992) In the wake of the growing conflicts around Protected Areas and other nature reserves that excluded dependent communities, notions of ICDPs have evolved in the 1980s as part of a broader effort by policy makers (World Bank, National Parks Congress in Bali, WWF) to address these conflicts by creating better economic opportunities in the areas around PAs and by enabling greater participation of local communities in the management of PAs (Koch 1997; Sanghamitra 2002; Wells & Brandon 1992). It was meant to reduce the pressures on PAs by

developing alternative rural livelihood measures and addressing the development needs of dependent communities through adopting participatory approaches.

Most widely used in Africa, ICDP approaches however are critiqued for the promotion of exclusionary paradigms, strengthening the State in achieving the same, underpinned by a continuance of the cultural and historical prejudices against communities and thus "replicate more coercive forms of conservation more coercive forms of conservation practice and often constitute an expansion of state authority into remote rural areas" (Neumann 1997: 559)

ICDPs often have a significant gap between rhetoric and reality so far as meaningful participation of the local communities is concerned (Adams 1995; Karlsson 1998; Wells *et al.*1992) Perhaps the most often quoted example of ICDP is Project CAMPFIRE (Communal Area Management Programme for Indigenous Resources) in Zimbabwe. CAMPFIRE was an attempt to harness the economic value of wildlife for local communities through promoting tourism and recreation (Koch 1997). The main criticism against CAMPFIRE has been that it has continued with the externally imposed models of conservation, involving local communities primarily to implement a centrally conceived programme. External agencies like tour operators etc are said to have wielded greater control and power over the process (Koch 1997).

Also at a broader level the assumption that livelihoods and benefits could substitute and be exchanged for resource rights and access is problematic; perhaps a benevolent process of legitimizing takeover of State takeover of communities' rights and land. Incentives to enable local participation are also seen to have a beneficiary orientation and as "hire the natives scheme" that deflect from issues of power-sharing and devolution of decision-making (West and Brechin 1991; p3). Also these schemes (as evident in this thesis) fail to develop any long-term, sustainable livelihood options (IIED 1994).

The India Ecodevelopment Project was preceded by two pilot projects under Forestry Research and Extension Project (FREEP). These two projects were implemented in Kalakad Mundunthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR) in Tamilnadu and in Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP) in Himachal Pradesh. Although, officially launched in 1994, they were not started on the ground until 1996. The World Bank aided India Ecodevelopment

was also launched in 1996 with a total budget of $ 68 million was to be implemented in seven PAs - Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve (Rajasthan), Periyar Tiger Reserve (Kerela), Simlipal National Park(Odisha), Nagarhole National Park (Karnataka), Buxa Tiger Reserve (West Bengal), Palamau Tiger Reserve (Bihar) and Gir National Park (Gujarat). During the course of its implementation however, the projects were pulled back in Odisha and terminated mid-term in Karnataka because of popular resistance to the forceful relocation of local communities being undertaken by the Forest Department in these areas (Also see Chapter Four).

Like other ICDP projects, the India Ecodevelopment Project has also been criticised for reinforcing the State's agenda and lacking in any meaningful participation. According to Kothari (1997: 28) IEDP was problematic for:

> ...virtually having no proposal to revive community rights over land/water/forest resources, or to reduce exclusive government control over these resources, or to reducing people's pressure, the assumption being that the local community dependence is inevitably destructive. Integration of livelihood requirements with conservation objectives within PA is not a major focus

The implementation of the project has also been heavily criticised in GHNP (Baviskar, 1998; 2003) and Buxa Tiger Reserve (Karlsson 1999) for only paying a lip service to the notion of participation, for reinforcing local power structures among communities, for marginalising (or excluding) the marginalised communities, for having a poor understanding of the biological aspects of the conservation needs of the areas, for poor understanding of local needs, for disregarding the local knowledge and imposing external models for institutionalising participation (Chapter Four provides the details of the project as conceptualised in India).

In summing up, the practices of participation have been as discursive in conservation as in development. Even where the notion participation has been officially adopted, like JFM it has meant different things to different people and served primarily the pragmatic purposes of the department with limited scope for empowering communities; participatory approaches have been reduced to technical and formulaic approaches that tend to depoliticize a process with clear political consequences. The debate on people's participation in protected area management and resource sharing has been a highly polarised one. Although the notions of joint protected area management based on similar principles as JFM, and has been advocated for over a decade now, the Government of

India has been firmly opposed to the idea. That governments and agencies less inclined to participatory approaches are increasingly making attempts towards this end is evident in with initiatives such as the India Ecodevelopment Project. Experience of eco-development models in other parts the world and India have been critiqued for further marginalisation of communities hold on land, resource rights and implementing a centralised notion of participation.

Community

The politics of participatory conservation is located as much in the use of notions and practices of participation as in the conceptions of 'community'. There is a trend in external interventions to simplify the social reality of the complex of communities and the agency communities bring to the 'peasant–bureaucrat' interactions. The shifts, the resistance, the self-representations, the negotiations and opening and merging of spaces for contesting intra-community relations and relations with the different external agencies defy any simplistic, linear analysis of the relations between 'people' and 'state' in the context of participatory conservation.

Drawing on various theoretical and intellectual traditions, the literature for community participation in resource management and conservation have harboured and promoted certain notion of 'community' as homogenous, apolitical, cites of consensus, bounded units, in 'harmony with nature' or as those of common interests used in advocating inclusion of resource dependent people in resource management (Agrawal and Gibson 2001)[39]. Much of the advocacy literature for community participation in India lent credence to similar notions (Berkes, F. 1993. 1989; Bhatt 1990, Gadgil & Berkes, Guha & Gadgil 1992; Sen 1992; Guha1989)[40].

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[39] They provide a comprehensive review of theoretical, intellectual and empirical roots of how now such notions of 'community' have come to prevail in policy and advocacy literature on community-based management. They also trace the idea of community as it evolved theories of structuralism, early theorist of social change and modernization. In terms of conception of community in conservation, they trace its roots to historical ecologists, literature on CPR and works focusing on community involvement in conservation.

[40] A comprehensive review of the Indian writing in this tradition on communities and resource management is provided by Sinha *et al.* (1997).

Anthropological and sociological literature has dispelled the 'myth of a community' both in the context of development and especially in the context of natural resource management (Agrawal 1997; Agrawal & Gibson 2001; Baviskar 1998; Gujit & Shah 1998; Grillo 1996; Jeffery & Sundar 1999; Jeffery *et al.*2001; Li 1996, 1997; Neumann 1997) Debunking much of the essentialist notions of 'community', the critics argue for an understanding of 'community' as complex entities, comprising of several groups that are differentiated by social positions, hierarchies, political and economic power, more importantly with differential use of and entitlements to resources.

Representations of certain simplistic notions of communities have had strategic advantages in advocating for the inclusion of people in state programmes for resource management and in getting their entity. As Li (1996: 509) argues, representations of communities as homogenous and/or in harmony with nature can have symbolic value for agencies advocating a greater role for communities; it can provide "points of leverage in ongoing processes of negotiation." For example, in Indonesia, simplified images of beleaguered tribes have been used with some success to open possibilities in the policy arena, to shift Indonesian state policy in favour of recognition of 'indigenous community' land rights (ibid). In the Indian context Sinha *et al.* (1997: 69) contend that "the 'traditionalist' discourse is not only an intellectual formation but an effort to reshape the relationship between local people, environment and the environmentalist state". For Baviskar (1998a) these discourses are the 'political use of symbols' that selectively appropriate some aspects of 'tribal' or indigenous knowledge for pursuing their agenda against the state and the 'scientific establishment'.

These notions of communities, that inform policy and project frameworks, lead to practices attempting to tailor existing social complexities to simplistic model–they end up 'constructing' spatially and conceptually a manageable unit, assumed to be representative and sharing a common interest (Jeffery *et al.* 2001, Gururani 2002). This is done more in service of administrative expediency or as 'project of rule' (Li, 1999). In analysing the use of 'communities' in JFM in India Jeffery *et al.* (2001: 103) state:

> Social units are often constructed for specific purposes, under specific rules. The communities that are basic to JFM policy may be better seen as forms of social life that have been created by JFM resolutions, rather than as inherent attributes of the people or the places themselves

The 'constructed' nature of communities in community-based approaches is best captured by Pannel and Benda-Beckmann (1998:20, as cited in Li 2009: 275). According to them 'community' as used in community management programmes:

> Compresses individual differences, intentions, and agendas, and presents people, in terms of their corporate membership in communities, as somehow singular, identifiable, and knowable entities. In assuming an unquestionable spatial visibility and temporal viability, the notion that 'community' can be a specific social achievement or a particular political performance is completely disregarded. In the novel form of essentialism communities becomes a new tribe, or even worse, the new races of development, environmental or resource management discourses.

However, viewing communities as a 'unified organic whole ignores how these differences affect resource management outcomes, local politics, and strategic interactions within communities, as well as the possibility of layered alliances that can span multiple levels of politics' (Agrawal & Gibson 2001: 7). Agrawal (1997) stresses that a more accurate understanding of community in conservation can be founded only by understanding the divergent interests of multiple actors within communities and that agents within communities seek their interest in conservation programmes and their interests and identities are often redefined as new opportunities emerge. According to him, "changing relationships with external actors allow different political actors within communities to play out their differences in new terms, create new alliances, and even create new terrains of conflict" (ibid:16; cf. Mosse 1997).

The disjuncture between assumed notions of community and the social reality of complex entities have several implications. It is now well established that the new structures of governance of resources embodied in local institutions, which impose certain notions of communities and their resource relations, misrecognizing the complex tenurial issues and differential resource use practices end up legitimizing the exclusion or denial of access to certain groups of the communities. As evidenced in JFM in India, the process of institutionalising community participation that ignore inter and intra-community dynamics–especially issues of gender and differential dependence- tend to reinforce the positions of the more privileged and powerful, further marginalising the already marginal groups (Jeffrey *et al.* 2001; Khare *et al.* 2000; Sarin 1998). JFM brings open access forests under new regimes as common pool resource and vests control (at least in terms of framing the rules and regulations) to community level. As Sarin (1998: 31) points out who within communities, and by which process they take decisions about the access rules,

determines which individuals or groups within 'communities' and households acquire the power to define and enforce the 'community's' forest management priorities. As she rightly argues, although it is usually the poorest and most marginalised groups within communities who are acutely dependent on the forest resources, because and the benefit to be earned from timber sale (and political capital to be gained through aligning with external agencies) it is often the powerful non-users of forests who have the greatest visibility and voice".

The homogenising of community and their interest in community participation for resource management has been particularly exclusionary of women and their equity issues. Informed more by a 'welfare' approach, the issue of women's benefit or participation has been predicated two issues- dependence on male episteme and an of a household as being a nuclear corporate unit where benefits trickle down to all equally (Agrawal 1998; Krishna 2003; Sarin *et al.* 1998). Consequently, women's participation in community institutions have often followed the existing constructs of gender prevalent in the given society which provide little space for women's participation in public or political platforms (Jeffrey *et al.* 2001). Krishna (2003: 19) outlines certain key issues that marginalise women and women's participation in community institutions-'not admitting socio-cultural practices and gender ideologies that restrict women's autonomy, mobility and capacity to participate in NRM are not admitted; lack of recognition of intra-household and intra-community inequities in the allocation of resource access and property rights and not recognising the distinction between resource management and resource rights.'

In JFM practices in India most of these issues are clearly evident. While women have taken on resource management aspects like protection and patrolling, "men become members and make the decisions regarding which areas to close off from the collection of firewood and grazing, or what is to be done with the final harvest." (Jeffery *et al.* ibid: 112). As Sarin *et al.*(1998; also see Correa 1999; Lock 1999) argues, since women's interests are not represented in decision-making, many of the resource practices like firewood and grazing getting restricted and their attempts to get the same gets criminalised and poses severe hardships. In the case of Africa, Neumann (1997), citing several studies points out how ICDP programmes aimed at tenure reforms in the buffer zones clearly disadvantage women, by failing to take cognizance of the fact that gender is

a key determinant in the ownership and access, the tenurial reforms exacerbate the gender divides and contests over land ownership.

Given the above discussion on heterogeneity of interests and the political implications of membership in local 'community' organisation for resource management it becomes problematic to accept Agrawal's (2006a) assertion that environmental beliefs and variations therein among the resident of Kumaon (western Himalayas) in relations to the Van Panchayats, (an instance of effective working of community forest management in collaboration with the government), are not contingent on socio-cultural positions of caste and gender but the extent of their involvement in environmental regulatory practices. However as evidenced in Kailadevi, and as argued above, who is involved and who is left out of such regulatory apparatuses is contingent on their socio-cultural position and the extent of their dependency on the natural resources. For example, in Kailadevi the outcastes - the Bhangi who were dependent on goat rearing and depended on the forests were never considered within the institutional framework of either KBP or EDCs.

Also, project constructed 'local' or 'traditional' communities, that exclude a host of other social relationships and that bind a defined set of people to specified resources or areas, tend to misrepresent social reality and cause the disadvantaging of other user groups (Li 1996; Parkes 1999, Baviskar 2003). Parkes (ibid.) points out that local resource management necessarily entails a practical political knowledge of outside interested parties as well as internal dissension and political opponents within local communities. This knowledge, through creation of new alliances with external agencies, is used by the local communities who form a part of the Ecodevelopment initiative in Great Himalayan National Park as well as in Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary to keep out the migratory pastoralists sheep herders like Gaddis and Rebari respectively. Migratory pastoralists posed a problem of over-grazing to the Forest Departments and competition to local communities. Thus, by excluding the migratory pastoralist from the 'local' and 'traditional' communities prescribed in the project framework, their access to the resources was effectively delegitimized (Baviskar 2003; 1998; cf. Karlsson 1999).

A more significant focus of this thesis however is on the agency of communities in shaping the project practices and in turn, its outcomes. It is important to note that the politics of participation is not a simplified analysis of relations between the 'powerful'

and the 'powerless' as is also evident in the analysis of this thesis. According to Foucault (as cited in Gordon, 1980: 236) - "power is not an institution, a structure, or a certain force with which certain people are endowed: it is the name given to a complex strategic relation in a given society."

In India the imposition of hegemonic visions of nature, conservation or environment has not been without resistance from resource dependent communities; neither in contemporary nor colonial times. The communities have either resisted openly or using what Scott (1985) as the more covert "everyday forms of resistance", including feigned compliance, that he calls the "weapons of the weak". Guha and Gadgil (1989) chronicle a number of such movements among resource-dependent communities spanning a large time frame. Protests and revolts were seen amongst the hunter-gatherer communities such as the Chenchus of Kurnool; the shifting cultivators like the Baigas of Madhya Pradesh and also the famous Gudem Rampa revolt among the Koya and Konda tribe that occupy the hill tracts of present day Andhra Pradesh. This resistance lasted for almost a century and was also present among settled cultivators (non-confrontationist) protests by the farmers in the Madras Residency. The authors (ibid: 175) point specifically to the 'wide variety of strategies' used by different categories of resource users to oppose state intervention. They note that the hunter-gatherer and artisans and small dispersed communities, lacking in institutional network of organisation, were unable to directly challenge forest policies. They did, however, resort to break the new regulations by resorting chiefly to 'avoidance protest', petty crime and migration. The social conflicts resulting from the establishment of PAs in India have already been mentioned. Also the repeated protests have had a significant impact on government policies as well as conflicts between forest officials. The fear of popular resistance and avoidance protests like migration, prevented colonial forest officials from imposing absolute restriction on resource access by local communities in some parts of India (Guha & Gadgil 1989; Skaria, 1999; Sundar 1997).

Besides the ability of authorities, especially the forest department, to keep people away from accessing resources (from PAs and non-PA forests), through exercise of legalisations and policing has always been compromised (a primary reason for the need to include people in conservation). In every part of the world where communities have continued to exercise their *de facto* rights either through establishing kin networks, using

political capital with local politicians, through the allegiance with the forest guards, through bribes or just on the sly (Vasan 2002; Robbins 2000; Saberwal 1999; Peluso 1992; Neumann 2002).

In the interaction of the State and communities in the more structured context of development and conservation programmes/project, where compliance of communities is necessary to legitimize the State intervention as 'benevolent' (not coercive) and a success (not failure) Li (1999; 2009) accords communities with an a more proactive, engaged and knowing agency– one that affords them greater leverage and more powers to negotiate, even though the field power remains uneven. She argues because of the inherent contradictions between the rhetoric of 'project of rule' and the reality, the project of rule cannot be imposed, it has to be worked out to appear as if achieved-it has to be accomplished. The accomplishment rule she argues requires the engagement of those to be ruled in relations of compromise and collaborations, of knowing complicity-

> In development encounters...it is less important that plans and discourses prevail than that they engage, providing room for manoeuvre and opportunities for compromise, with all nuances of that term. As an agreement between two parties, a compromise assumes that agency is distributed, if unevenly; both sides have "power to". It also assumes a level of conscious knowledge and understanding of what is being gained and what is being given up (Li 1999:298)

The relation of compromise, unlike 'hidden transcript' of Scott (1990), focuses on the vulnerability of the authorities and the fragile nature of bureaucratic schemes. While in Scott's (1990) analysis of 'arts of resistance', peasants refrain from speaking "truth to power", and strategise 'off stage', in relations of compromise the, 'state functionaries also live lies' and are vulnerable to the 'possibility of exposure and disgrace' (Li 1999). Thus in "successful" projects, both the communities and authorities compromise and are comprised, providing in the bargain, some spaces for continued access. According to Li (2009: 279)

> [A]ssemblage such as community forestry cannot be resolved into neat binaries that separate power from resistance, or progressive forces from reactionary ones. It is difficult to determine who has been co-opted and who betrayed. Fuzziness, adjustments and compromises are critical to holding this assemblage together.

In analysing the agency of communities, in Kailadevi, villagers draw on a range of strategies both direct and indirect, to retain access to their key resources, that comprise of compromises, every-day forms of resistance as well as 'hidden transcripts'. Also, 'compromises' while helps them leverage certain short-term project benefits, in the end

are more driven by more coercive threats of relocation. Collaborating with the forest officials in sustaining the representation of "successful" KBP compromises the communities own hold on KBPs. This nevertheless is done with the hope of averting the possibilities of relocation as well as to deflect the surveillance of the guards on the continuing use of the axe in the forests. In the end, their access to resources remains more "fragile" than that of the bureaucratic scheme. As Brockington (2004) clearly argues, despite all the resistance and protest of resource dependent communities, they ultimately remain a weak force that can be overpowered by the authorities.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this chapter was to outline the contested nature of 'conservation', 'participation' and 'community' both conceptually and in participatory conservation practices in India. It sets the politicized context in which any new participatory wildlife conservation paradigms are implicated, unfold and their outcomes shaped.

The evolution of PAs in India embodies the cultural politics of forestry practices, state-making, sport hunting, ecological concerns, and civilizing mission of Colonial and Royal India. The processes through which wildlife conservation has emerged have systematically denied, de-legitimized and dispossessed a vast number of resource dependent communities from their lands, livelihood practices and identities. But these impositions have not been without resistance or conflicts from resource dependent communities. Thus, inscribed in each landscape is a history of contested meanings, regimes of controls and the *de facto* practices of resource use and assertion of belonging by dependent communities. Independent India reinforced these processes further with its expanding networks of PAs. Much of what are now considered 'pristine' landscapes or 'wildernesses' of PAs in India, have emerged through bitter and conflictful histories of state imposed ideas of conservation and local resistance of resource dependent communities. Hence people-wildlife conflicts cannot be understood or addressed outside of its specific historical context as the past remains entrenched in the politics of present both for the State and the resource dependent communities.

The chapter also highlights the politicized aspects of State management of PAs. The political will or the lack of it at all levels of the government, the marginalized positions of the Ministry of Environment and Forests and the FD within the larger bureaucracy as well as the horizontal and vertical divided within the Forest Department itself have played and continue to play a significant role in the way decisions are made and PAs are managed. While collaborative management is made out to be an issue of the 'people's impact', the larger bureaucratic and organizational concerns get a short shrift.

In apparent recognition of the historical injustices done to dependent communities and to counter the adverse impacts that people-wildlife conflict have on conservation, participatory approaches in wildlife conservation aim to reconcile livelihood of local communities with the conservation imperatives. But as in development, participatory practices in the context have been discursive in nature and 'tyrannical' in their import. Participatory forest management experiences in India suggest that participation is adopted by a rather reluctant state for pragmatic purposes, primarily in service of its own need and involves no real devolvement of control or decision making. The idea of participation has helped legitimize what remains essentially a top-down approach where participation has a vast array of meanings ; even the mere presence of 'beneficiaries' suffices as participation.

 Participation as a means of empowerment finds expression mainly through the establishment of local level institutions. However as the various experiences on institutionalisation of participation in conservation discussed demonstrate, local institution building becomes a facilitative process in the expansion of bureaucratic control over community managed resources and land. Their potential to democratize governance is thwarted by the technical approach taken to their operation and formation; glossing over tensions that exist between the actors and the complex social processes involved in communities.

While the adoption participatory approaches have been accepted and made possible in non-PA forests, the adoption the same in PAs have engendered a highly polarised debate. The government, ecological scientists and wildlife conservationists have advocated the separation of humans and wildlife as a prerequisite for maintaining viability of species and supporting viable ecosystems. On the other side of the debate are strong advocates

for including communities in wildlife management and PA management. The latter justify their stand on several accounts - social justice, evidence of favourable anthropogenic influence on ecosystem maintenance and a concern for safeguarding industrial interests. They argue that dependent communities have a greater interest in maintaining the ecosystem and therefore will be better deterrents to poachers and the intrusion of commercial and industrial forces into their forest areas.

Integrated Conservation Development Projects like IEDP, the prevalent and popular answer to people-wildlife conflict, attempting to meet the needs of communities and conservation are critiqued for being as statist as the projects on community forest management. They too have been critiqued for enabling the expansion of state control, operating on pre-determined agendas and failing to involve communities in decision making. Equally problematic in these projects is the misrecognition of issues of rights and belonging. Economic benefits often tend to be used as means of buying out community rights.

Finally the chapter focuses on 'community'- a key protagonist of participatory conservation. It highlights the cultural politics inherent in the use of popular notion of 'community' in participatory conservation and the implications it has both in terms of reinforcing social inequities within communities and enabling state projects for advancing its own brand of conservation and participation. 'Community' rather a denoting a singular entity and embodying conservation ethic, comprises of a complex of entities, with differing agendas, interests and power positions. The inequities and conflicts often find renewed articulation in new alliances and forums afforded by external interventions. Finally, the chapter focuses on dynamics of peasant-bureaucrat interaction and the local level resistance frameworks. It discussed the kinds of compromises, collaborations and negotiations that take place and their impact on the final outcomes of projects.

Given the multiple histories, meanings, agendas, contests and practices that characterize the context of participatory conservation in India and elsewhere, in any given context to understand the direction in which projects unfold and the politics that underpins it in India, it as Peluso (2003: 62) suggests, one would need to ask –

> What are the origins of the problems? How do State and the other powerful
> actors constitute 'problems' and their 'solutions'? How are the various sorts of

claims expressed, negotiated and realized? Who benefits and loses from these arrangements in ways beyond the obvious changes in direct access to the animals under discussion? How and why are power relations shifting in ways that enable 'local people' to express their claims through national and international actors? And how have these allegedly 'new' voices acquired legitimacy?

The thesis analyses the community – initiative and its engagement with government and non-government participatory conservation initiatives in Kailadevi against an understanding of this complex political context and by asking of each practice and outcomes, some of these questions.

Chapter 3

Resources, Identities and Forest Protection

Introduction

Kulhadi bandh panchayat served as the mobilising metaphor for all participatory initiatives by the external agencies. The main focus of this chapter is to contextualise this practice within lives and livelihoods of the people of Nibhera and to extricate it from the conservation gaze employed by both, advocates of the isolationist approach and community rights. Gaze, according to Foucault, 'implies an open field, and its essential activity is of the successive order of reading; it records and totalizes; it gradually reconstitutes immanent organizations' (1973: 121).

As discussed in chapter two, community initiatives in forest protection and their resource relations tend to be appropriated within the traditionalist discourse by advocates of community rights. Equally, communities' relations with sacred sites and practices are usually advocated as socio-religious practices of conservation. Alternately, the advocates of scientific management tend to appropriate these initiatives within a discourse of biodiversity conservation where protection of resources is seen as the opposite of utilisation.

This chapter analyses six key aspects – people's dependence on resources; their landscape and identities; acts of forest protection; change in dependency; the emergence of *Kulhadi bandh panchayat*; and the shifting sense of place and identity. The primary purpose in analysing these aspects is to locate the people and the forests of Nibhera within their locally articulated contexts and demonstrate the inextricable relatedness of the communities' dependence on the forests, their sense of place, their socio-political identities and the acts of forest protection. The chapter attempts to establish that in the worldview of the local communities there is no dichotomy between forest protection and use as there is no duality in wanting to stay in the forests and the need for development infrastructure therein. Resource-relations and resource-use practices among the

communities are dynamic, experiential and locally evolved practices of nature and governance directed towards living and livelihoods and not 'conservation'.

Directing attention to the origin, structure and function of *Kulhadi bandh panchayat* within the broader framework of communities' resource-relations and resource-use practices, the chapter reinforces the point that 'institutional base for resource management is shaped by cultural and historical context within which the particular resource based economy evolves and the social interaction that takes place within these domains are constituted in culturally and historically specific ways' (Mosse, 2003: 4). Hence, it argues that principles of communities' participation in and management of resources (envisaged in conservation models) arrived at by 'abstracting them from the social relations and practices through which they are produced' (Johari, 2007: 49), tend to be ineffective and of much disservice to the communities they are meant to serve.

Livelihoods and Forest Dependence

The habitation area of village Nibhera is on a plateau and is surrounded by vast stretches of agricultural land. The vegetation is sparse on the plateau. *Neem* trees and a few flowering hedges and shrubs are to be found closer home and in the fields. Further away from the habitation, one finds a scattering of *bamboor* and *keekar* and a wild growth of Ber (Zizyphus sp.) shrubs. Beyond these fields are a slightly denser Dhok (Anogeisuss pendula) forests. As one moves further away to the east, west and northwest of the village, the forest thickens, the terrain is more undulating and gives way to densely forested hillsides. This area is locally known as *dongars* (hillocks). Between the valley and the plateau of Nibhera there are several *kho*s or river gorges. These gorges are very densely forested and, according to the local Forest Department, are the richest biodiversity reserves of this area. To the south of the village is one of the biggest *kho*s of Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary, *Kudka ki kho* and to the west is the Nibhera *kho*.

As Gold and Gujjar observe for a forest-dependent community in another part of Rajasthan, for the people of Nibhera too, 'livelihood at every level of society was enhanced, and benefited from healthy forest cover both then and now' (2002: 245). For each of these caste groups the forest resources are an indispensable source of sustenance.

The villagers when asked about the significance of these forests often say, "Our ancestors settled here because of the forests". Although there are different versions of the origin of the village in terms of which caste settled first, a common lure for all them seems to have been the forests. The community of carpenters (Badai) contend that they were the first community to settle in the area, lured by good timber available from the Dhok forest. The Chamar community claims to have settled here around the same time as the Badai. Their ancestors were attracted by abundance of wildlife in the region and the good hides it would provide. All the other castes maintain that the Brahman and the Gujjar (Baba Balram being the first) were the original settlers. The Gujjars of Nibhera assert that "from the very beginning we have grazed our *dhor-meweshi* (livestock) here as we came here in search of good fodder." [41]

As discussed in the later section of this Chapter, the forests have dwindled significantly and livelihoods have undergone a significant change. These changes notwithstanding, basic survival is still dependent on agro-pastoral activities and the forests remains indispensable for sustaining the lives and livelihoods of the communities in Nibhera. In response to my question on the ability of the forest to benefit these communities, the first three things that most responded to was "*chara, jalau kaje lakdi aur imarti lakdi*" (fodder, fuel wood and small timber). There are several other uses that the forests have for them except that they are not as crucial to their existence as these three uses. Govind Gujjar sums up the extent to which communities continue to depend on the forests, "Without the forests neither will we survive nor will our livestock!"

Livestock rearing and dependence for fodder

Livestock in Nibhera comprise buffalos, cows, bulls and goats. There are also 5 camels in the village used mainly for drawing carts. In Nibhera, Gujjars hold the largest herd (*dhor*) of buffalos. A single unit of their *dhor* is a *khoj*. The largest owners are the four brothers from Bhattin Ka Pura, who jointly own 40 *khoj*. Then there are persons like Bhanta and his brother Haricharan Kurkawale, who along with their sons own about 25 *khoj*. The

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[41] The early literature on the *Gujjars* too identifies them as pastoral nomads. Bingley (1978) notes that even Jahangir, one of the Mughal rulers of India, as far back as in the 17th century associated the professions of *Gujjars* with milk and curd. As pointed out by Verma (1971) the association of *Gujjars* with pastoralism and with dairy produce has often led them to be strongly identified with lord Krishna.

other big cattle owner possess between 8-15 *khoj*. There are also a few Gujjar families like Ramji Lal who do not own any cattle. Equalling Gujjars in the number of buffalos are ten Brahman and Teli families. Chamar families have been able to afford cattle only in the past ten years and most households own one or two buffalos. Doms and Nais have none, having lost theirs to 'bad times'.

Cows are found mainly with Brahmans and are only a few in numbers. Some families of the other caste groups like Nai, Dom and Teli also keep one cow each. One rarely finds a cow with a Gujjar. As Pritam Singh Gujjar, proud owner of 20 buffalos explains, "Cows are an expensive affair. To look after them along with the buffalo is a problem as they have very different requirements. Cows need more looking after. A grazier always has to accompany them." Cows are kept primarily to meet the household milk requirement and the maximum that one has is about 4-5 heads. Bulls are kept mainly in pairs or in singles and are very few in numbers.

The goat owners or *cheriwalen* are a growing population. The main *cheriwalen* are Bhangis. They have no land and between the five households in the village, they own over 150 goats. Chamars also have a sizeable population of goats between them. Although goat rearing is looked down upon as a lower-caste occupation, but because of the growing market for meat in the area, some of the poorer Gujjar families have also taken to goat-rearing but at a much lower scale.

Livestock rearing supports the local economy in many ways. Apart from meeting their daily need of milk, whey and clarified butter, much of the produce is managed for sale. Most of the milk is sold at a dairy run by a cooperative at Gangapur City (about 90 km from Nibhera and also the nearest railhead). There is a dairy in the village, operated by Prakash, a young Gujjar boy, which runs for four months during the monsoons. During the monsoons on any given day Prakash claims to collect more than 100 litres of milk. Milk is sold depending on its fat content and the minimum price is about Rs. 5 per litre. Families also sell milk, curd and whey to each other within the village. Clarified butter (*ghee*) is a priced commodity and is sold in the local markets in Kailadevi and Karauli.

Goats are also reared primarily for sale, with each animal being sold for about Rs.1000. Buffalos and their calves are also sold in the local cattle market. A healthy female buffalo

can fetch about Rs.10000. Every summer cattle traders (*vyopari* and *banjare*) from Karauli and Gangapur come to buy their livestock. Even cattle dung, used as manure (*khad*), is sold by truckloads to middlemen who come from the near-by cities.

Thus, livestock rearing by way of cattle wealth is coveted. As Mulla of Bandhan ka Pura said once, "I have at least Rs. 2 lakh (around USD 4500) worth of goats and buffalos that are grazing in the *dang*." Even in the wealth-ranking exercise, land and livestock are the two main criteria for deciding a household's wealth. "Salary," (*tankha-rupiya*) as Basanta Gujjar (in his 60s) puts it "is limited, while *dhor-maweshi* lasts for generations."

Given that these communities have been entirely dependent on pastoralism for generations, fodder has been the *manna* of their lives. The availability and unavailability of fodder is an integral part of their paean on the vicissitudes of their lives, marking the transition from 'good times' in the past to the current 'bad times'. Forests offer both leaf and grass fodder. *Dhok* leaf is the most preferred leaf fodder. There is a wide of variety of fodder grass and is graded as per its nutritional value which is in-turn measured by the milk-yield it enables. There is a definite seasonal pattern in the use of the various fodder sources and it would seem that the life of a cattle herder is organised around the availability of fodder.

The four months of monsoon (*chaumasa*) from mid-June to mid-September is the season of plenty. As Charat Gujjar, of Bhattin ka Pura, a young man in his 30s and a proud owner of 20 buffalos describes, "The trees begin to sprout green leaves. Everybody invites you to see their *dang* in *chaumasa,* and there is greenery everywhere. There is grass everywhere. There is lots of milk, curd and *ghee*!"

The leaf fodder is mostly relied upon at the onset of monsoons. The cattle at this time graze in the forested parts of the plateau. Temporary cattle camps called *khirkaries* are also set up in the forests. The cattle camps enclose a wide area so that the buffalos can be tethered when needed, with rough stone and thatch shelters for the people tending to them. Grazing at this time is referred to as *pasar.* Since this is also their busiest season for agriculture, men with their cattle herd leave as early as 4 a.m. every morning.

At the beginning of September, when the green fodder on the plateau area is exhausted, men move their cattle camps into *kohar* – a 400 hectare fodder enclosure that was built by the FD some 10 years ago. The *kohar* is closed to grazing during *chaumasa* and serves as their reserve for the period following the monsoons. Ideally they can graze their cattle here until end-October.[42]

The final movement of livestock takes place after the important festival of *Diwali* (the Indian festival of lights). On this occasion the cattle population is elaborately worshipped by the villagers. The ones with larger herds move down to the inner reaches of the densely forested *badi kho*. This is the area that Nibhera claims exclusive grazing rights over and where only villagers from Nibhera are allowed to put up their cattle camps. In an average year the fodder in this location can last up to December. If the monsoon has been good then fodder in this *kho* can last up to March.

Badi kho is about 4-5 km away from the settlement area of Nibhera. Cattle herders have to stay there over night and keep a watch over their cattle to ward off possibilities of attacks from wild animals. While the older men stay back in the *kho*, living on basic minimum and sleeping on beds of grass or on the bare earth, the younger men move between the *kho* and their homes on a daily basis. They leave the *kho* every morning, taking the milk to the village on the plateau, and having attended to all the chores in their homes, return every evening.

In the years when there is poor rainfall, there is a short migration cycle that commences from the month of April. About 30-40 men migrate with their cattle towards the plains around Karauli, Gangapur and Sapotra for fodder and water. These areas are locally referred to as *aantri*. The villages in *aantri* have more water as well as crop fodder, usually left standing in the agricultural fields. Cattle herders of Nibhera are allowed to graze their cattle here as a part of a reciprocal arrangement. "We go there in the summer and they get their cattle here to our *dang* in the *chaumasa*. If we do not allow them here, why would they allow us there?" says Radheyshyam, the elder son of Ramkilan, who jointly with his three brothers owns about 30 buffalos.

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[42] The *kohar* has been under dispute with their neighbouring village. Its maintenance was taken up for the first time after a gap of 3 years. As a result, in 2001 the *kohar* had fodder that lasted only for 15 days.

Fuel wood and Small Timber

Equally important as fodder is communities' dependence for fuel wood (*jalau lakdi*) and small timber (*imarti lakdi*) on the forests. In July of 2001, under the EDC program, the FD has distributed LPG connection to 60 families. Of them, some of the families are yet to start using it and some are scared to burn-out the first LPG cylinder as the refilling would cost Rs.240, an amount that seems too steep. Even though some families have started using the LPG, kerosene stoves, crop stalks and dung cakes as fuel, these items constitute not a substitute but a supplementary source. As Guddi, my host argued, "These things won't serve our purpose". Their primary dependence is on their traditional hearths called *chullahs* and fuel is a daily need.

Dhok is the most preferred fuel wood species as it burns longer. Increasingly other trees like *Salar* (*Bosewella serata*)*, Kekar, Karil*, bamboo and *Ber* (*Ziziphus jujube*) are also being used as fuel wood. Women do most of the fuel-wood collecting at the household level.[43] Much of the fuel wood collection takes place in the winter months between October and February. According to Gaya, a mother of eight young children, "It is the time of the year when the wood is dry and easily collected by the womenfolk". They are also mostly free from agricultural activities during this period. The fuel wood is stockpiled (*tal*) for use through rest of the year, especially for during monsoons when fuel-wood collection is near impossible. They collect what they claim is "dead and fallen" wood, mouthing the expression of the FD. But as the women admit, they have to be skilful in "generating" enough dead and fallen wood for collection.

The amount of fuel wood collected is calculated in units of a head load (*bojha* or *gatha*) and as *kori* (a bundle of about 10 pieces).[44] Fuel wood is mainly collected from the plateau forests and the forested hillsides (*dongars*). Often the proximity of the *dongars* to their hamlets, and availability of fuel wood, determines the preferred collection areas. It can also depend on which group a woman may want to join based on their inter-familial ties or friendship.

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[43] Morechi ki Dangaria, which is the furthest hillock, is the only *dongar* from where men fetch fuel-wood.
[44] Fuel-wood is also extracted by the tractor load and camel-cart load. This is however an illegal activity.

The amount of fuel wood used varies according to the size of the family, their cattle holding and the season. Often when talking about the amount of fuel wood required for a family, the women would state – "the consumption goes up as a family expands… you need to make that many more *rotis* (wheat or millet bread)". The maximum consumption takes place in winter when, on an average, most families use twice the amount of fuel wood they would use in the summer. In the winters bonfires in village meeting places and in the courtyard of the houses are common and hearths double up as fireplaces inside the houses. Buffalo owners use more fuel wood than others. As Dhanbai, a Gujjar woman in her 70s put it, "We need to boil larger quantities of milk. Also in winters buffalos are fed with a special diet called *banth* (a kind of porridge that is cooked in large amounts on slow fire for long period of time)".

Small timber or *imarti lakdi* serves as their main resource material for all kinds of construction (houses, barn and cattle sheds); for making agricultural implements and items for household use. There are only four *pucca* houses in the village. The remaining *kuccha* houses are made from locally available stones and logs of wood of thinner (B*ang*) and thicker girth (*Baranga*). *Khat-pidi,* literally means cot and stool, but refers to a broad range of items and implements used in the household (including urns used for storing grains or churning butter), shaped from small timber.

Imarti lakdi is preferably got from the *kho*. As Murari Lohar (late 40s), the only one from the caste of carpenters who still continues his profession puts it, "The *kho* has older trees. They are stronger, taller and thicker… they have the right girth for construction." There is a very clear identification of what wood suits what purpose. *Dhok* is the most preferred and is considered an all-purpose and durable wood.

Small timber used for several social and auspicious ceremony are ascribed certain sacred and mundane properties to them. Ordinary or *madhyam* propertied trees (in terms of their sacred value) like *Gular* have defiling attributes and thus can be used only for items of mundane and everyday use. Premium (*uttam*) trees like *Kadam* are considered to have purifying values and are used in rituals and ceremonies (like in the construction of marriage podiums or for burning in the ceremonial pyre). *Dhok* occupies a special place in the category of *uttam* trees. Bodya, an 80-year old Dom says that the *Dhok* embodies the spirits of sages and thus possess life-sustaining qualities. Every household at any point

in time has a stock of thinner logs of timber to be given towards the death-ritual called *daag*. When a death occurs in the village, every household has to contribute a big log of wood for the pyre. This act is symbolic of inclusion and collective identity of the village.

The number of wooden poles extracted per family depends upon number of factors. On an average, a household with 5-8 persons uses about 10-12 poles annually. The poles used for construction in a house are rarely changed. However, cots, ploughs and other items are changed from time-to-time, especially, since "the wood is not as strong as it used to be. One has to replace the cots every one-and-a-half years and the plough every one to two years, thus each family ends up procuring wooden poles almost every year".

Fodder, fuel wood and small timber, the main resources of the forests that are indispensable to the lives and livelihood of the people of Nibhera, are also the primary source of conflict between the Forest Department and the communities. Holding the communities singularly responsible for the depleting forests, and in turn its adverse impact on the dwindling wildlife population of the Sanctuary, the Department's efforts are directed at curtailing the use of these resources. As we will learn in the Chapter 6, the Department has deemed most of the resource use activities of the communities as 'illegal'. Also, through the implementation of the Eco-development and its policy of 'reciprocal obligation' from communities, the Forest Department has attempted to buy-out or sign-away the minimal legitimate rights of the people in the forests. Consequently, surviving on illegal exploitation of the forest resources, the communities' are vulnerable to the legitimate and illegitimate exploitation of the Department and its guards at all times.

Other forms of dependence on forests

Besides fodder, fuel wood and small timber there are several other forest products that are also used by the local community. Several thorny shrubs are used as hedges around fields. The woody pods of plants are used as reinforcing material for tools. Some types of grasses are used to weave sheets (*tat-pati*) from branches and twigs as roofs or walls of cattle sheds and barns. The slender branches are used to weave baskets *(dhakoli)*. Fibres are procured from barks and hemp of tress, from herbaceous plants and certain types of grasses to weave ropes *(jebri)* of various types. Ropes are required for cot weaving, for churning butter, for drawing water from the well, for making pot hangers to store their

milk and curd, to tether their cattle and several such uses. Women also collect various kinds of seasonal fruits from the forests.

The forests are also a source of *materia-medica* for the local healers, of which they are various kinds. There are Brahmin herbalists (*vaid*) and non-Brahmin specialised priests (*bhopas* or *gothiyas*) who also serve as magico-religious healers. The herbalists and priests treat both humans and animals and procure most of their herbal ethno-medicinal herbs and roots (*jadi-booti*) from the forests, especially from the *kho*. The significance of these healers and their prescribed herbal medicines cannot be undermined given that the villagers prefer to first try out remedies of the local healers before they decide on taking allopathic medicines and treatment.

Agriculture and Forest Land

Agriculture is now one of the major occupations of the villagers, perhaps even bigger than pastoralism. Agriculture in the *dang*s has developed around two primary resources – land and water. The Sanctuary area is equally coveted for the forests as it is for the agricultural land.

Cultivable land exists both on the plateau and in the valleys below, with most land being held on the plateau. Those who have land in both places grow a winter and a summer crop each. They harvest *dhani* (paddy), *bajra* (millet) and *tili* (rapeseed) in the winter. In the summer they harvest *gehu* (wheat) and *sarson* (mustard).

Agriculture in the plateau area of the *dangs* is mainly rain-fed. Some amount of rainwater is harvested through the creation of shallow water reservoirs called *pokhars* (pond reservoirs). These reservoirs provide drinking water for the cattle as well as for irrigation. Wheat is grown in the valley with water lifted from open dug-wells using diesel-run motors. Not everyone can afford to cultivate wheat as it tends to be capital intensive.

The landholding pattern varies across the caste groups. The big landholding farmers (*bad jots*) are among the Brahmans (e.g. Kirori and Latur) and Gujjars (e.g. Ramjilal and Haricharan). They own between 8-10 *bigha* per household. On an average people own between 2-4 *bigha* per household. However there are also people like Kajjoria and

Ramjilal who own less than a *bigha*. Among the Scheduled Castes, the Bhangis do not own any land, while a few Chamar households hold 1-2 bigha of land. Share-cropping (*sajho-patto*) is common among the landless. Kirori owns *badia* (good) land in the valley but being old cannot cultivate and his only son is employed outside the village. Therefore he makes his land available for sharecropping to Samanta Nai, who is landless. Kirori provides the seed, Samanta cultivates the land and they share the produce in equal halves between them. Most *bad jots* give out their land for share-cropping.

According to the Agricultural Supervisor, Department of Agriculture, Karauli, "The dang is no area for agriculture. The terrain is rocky, without water and has poor quality soil. Since there is no other means of occupation the villagers continue cultivation this land." Departmental statistics of 1991[45] indicate that from the total land area of 6,190 hectares (24,760 *bigha*) only 3.6% of the land is actually available for cultivation. Thus, not only is the yield poor, but there is an acute shortage of *jutayu zameen* (arable land) also. The Revenue Department records the lowest collection of revenue from the dang region. According to the 1991 village primary census, the total collection was only Rs.1301, a sum the Tehsildar (administrative officer) considers quite negligible.

Although according to official viewpoint agriculture may be poor in the Sanctuary area, people in the sanctuary hold on to it as a primary source of survival in the wake of their declining pastoral activities. According to the narratives of the local people, a combined effect of failing monsoons, scarcity of fodder, declining cattle population and rising prices of grain has led to a gradual expansion and adoption of new practices in agricultural activities.

For Dhanbai, an 80 year old Gujjar woman, "agriculture was inconsequential" when she came first to the village.

> Who would do agriculture...Each householder (*dhani*) used to have 100 or more heads of buffalo. In one day we used to have over 100 kilos of milk and churn 7 urns full of *ghee*. People used to stay with their cattle all day as they used to be scared of the tiger and of others stealing their cattle. We had no shortage of anything, those were days of great pleasure (*khoob mauj ho*).

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[45] At the time of the research, the data from all the departments was in the process of being computerised. Thus unless they had the approval from the Collectorate which had not finished checking the errors, the officers were barred from committing any figures for the current years.

As per Bhairon Lal Nai, 65, people started paying attention once the situation in the dang began to deteriorate and they lost their cattle

> It is in the last 40 years that people started to stay in their lands more. As shepherds started coming from outside our cattle started to feel the shortage of fodder. We had to start taking our cattle out…the health of our livestock began to deteriorate and we lost a lot of them to various kind of epidemic diseases. These problems started 25-30 years ago. It is then that our people started to pay more attention to agriculture. For a while people managed both with agriculture and cattle rearing. Then it started to change as the rains became less, the sheep came from outside, and then the fodder started to deplete. Earlier when the *Samvat bigdo* they would sell a *pada* or a *padi* (a male or a female calf respectively) and manage but now that is not possible anymore. (December 2000)

The significance of agriculture increased as it seems to have enabled the villagers to survive in an increasing cash-based economy. According Radheyshyam Sharma –

> Now we have more money. Earlier we used to just have curd, milk and *roti* (wheat bread). But now we can eat well. We can buy various kinds of vegetables. Now we can cultivate better. Now we have more wells and less land tax to pay. We can buy food because we can sell our grains. Before if we sold 1600 kg of paddy they we would get Rs.400. Now for the same amount we get Rs.4000. We can also sell the rice saplings and get fodder from our fields. (June 2001)

Better cultivation practices have been, and are being, continuously adapted and adopted by the villagers. As Bhairon Lal Nai put it-

> People in our village started to learn new things about agriculture. They saw and learnt from the people outside. They figured how wheat and sugarcane were being grown in that area. They started to cultivate mustard only in the past two or three years. Earlier they did not know what it was. They started cultivating Bajra only after the bad times started. Earlier they did not grow *Bajra* (millet), and would concentrate on *Dhani* (rice). People in the plains grew Bajra, especially in the Karanpur area. Here the heavy rains would cut the land and drown the Bajra fields. Gradually as the rains became less and less we took to cultivating Bajra. (June 2001)

In the past three to five years the *bad jots* have adopted several new measures. They have started using urea (a chemical fertiliser). Iron ploughshares are replacing wooden ploughshares. Tractors are being used to plough the land. Some have started using insecticides. Some farmers were induced to use new varieties of rice but having failed once, they gave it up. The *pokhar*s are also being deepened and their bunds concretised.

With the increased stress on agriculture, need for land is primary. In the reckoning of the older generation the land under agriculture has doubled in their lifetime. According to Bodya, an 80-year old Dom –

> If earlier it was 10 *bigha*s now there are at least 20 *bigha*s (land per family).
> People took up more and more land as the prices of the grains went up and cost
> of living increased. In the last fifty years the farm area has increased manifold.
> Earlier there were only some 10 landholders, now there are more than 35. (June
> 2001)

The *Jamabandis* (Land and Revenue Records that are maintained village-wise) show that the total agricultural land for Nibhera between *samvat*[46] 2015-2034 (1958-1977) was 495 *bigha* and 9 *biswa* which had increased to 771 bigha and 14 biswa in samvat 2055-2058 (1998-2001).

Given the need for more land, villagers resort to acquisition in the Sanctuary and encroachment on the forest land. This therefore is an issue of great conflict between the FD and forest communities. When the FD calls agriculture 'untenable' and 'negligible' people perceive it differently. According Birbal Gujjar –

> These are just excuses to prevent allotment of additional land to us. So what if it
> is bad land. Let them just give it to us and we will manage the rest. (June 2001)

Besides constantly battling with the FD, the villagers have made several applications to the District Collector, who in-turn claims that a vast amount of forest land has already been encroached-upon by these people for cultivation. The desire to acquire land and claim ownership is at the centre of most conflicts that exist even within the village. In fact a land dispute between Kirori Pandit of Beech ka Pura and Haricharan Gujjar of Jheel ka Pura has factionalised the village, and as many complain has "doomed their community". "It is these conflicts," according to Jania, "that have poisoned our society…everybody wants to steal from the other".

The dependence and resources for the inhabitants of the *dang* (where the Sanctuary is located) cannot be seen in isolation or in abstraction to their worldview of who they are. Belonging and identity, and the shifts therein, are rooted in where they live, what they do and the changes they witness. As Basso (1996: 7) writes, "For what people make of their places is closely connected to what they make of themselves as members of society and

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[46] In the Indian calendar, seasons follow the sun; months follow the moon; and days, both the sun and the moon. The era in the Indian calendar is called the *Vikram* Era, or the *Vikram Samvat*, which began in 57 B.C. To calculate the corresponding year of the Common Era, 57 years should be subtracted from the Indian year if the date falls between the beginning of the Indian year and the end of the Western year (http://www.swaminarayan.org/calendar/).

inhabitants of the earth". According to Basso (op.cit) 'place making is a way of constructing social traditions and in process, personal and social identities'.

Emplaced Identities and Resource Relations

Much literature on anthropology of place and space have argued 'locality' and 'place' are made by the interaction of the people with the landscape or space that they inhabit (Field and Basso 1996; Lovell 1998). In the case of communities like those in Nibhera who live in close proximity to and are dependent on natural resources (forest, water, etc.), the interaction between people and their landscape is often seen as a close inter-weaving of natural and the social/cultural[47]. In this interaction between people and their environment, defying the dichotomy between nature and culture, "persons and environment are regarded as parts of each other and as reciprocally inscribed in cosmological ideas and cultural understanding" (Croll and Parkin 1992: 3).

By imputing social, spiritual meaning to their landscape and surroundings, people create their *sense of place*. Emplaced identities (social, cultural and political) are created through myths, legends, memories of the inscribed and socialised landscape that include the land, forests, animals, humans, the supernatural and the divine. Implicated in their sense of place, wherein the sacred and the social are inextricably linked, are rules of engagement with resource use and their management. These principles of nature and governance are evolved historically, through the lived experiences of the people, informed by their sense of being, belonging, practical needs and cosmological worldview, from which they can neither be abstracted nor be ascribed a 'conservation oriented sub-consciousness'.

As revealed in ethnographies of resource dependent communities, myths, legends and inscribed memories and their perpetuation become a means of safeguarding the collective identities, cultural and territorial boundaries of the communities (Miura 2005; Arhem 1998; Basso 1996; De Boeck 1998). Belongingness and territoriality for the communities

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[47] Haraway (1993) envisions this kind of interaction as 'social nature' wherein although the expressed relationships transcend any difference between nature and culture, its making is inherently social. This kind of interweaving is not restricted only to forests alone. Similar interweaving of the natural and social cultural practices is seen in all forms of resource relations. See Vasavi (1994) for agriculture.

of Nibhera is expressed through narratives of origin. In case of the Gujjars, to borrow a phrase from Lovell (1998: 2)[48], "the centrality of cosmological origins precedes and conditions actual territoriality, spiritual well-being and material survival". The Hindu Gujjars of North India have always been associated with buffalo herding (Bingley 1974; Verma 1954). In the village however, according to the Gujjars' myths of origin, as narrated by Bhanta, the origin of Gujjars is associated with the Hindu god, lord Krishna who is associated with cattle herding. They believe that their god, *Devnarayanji* is an incarnation of Lord Krishna. Hence they claim that buffalo herding is their pre-ordained profession, not something that they chose. As Ramkilan Gujjar, over 60 years of age, puts it, "a Gujjar is born to herd cattle…whatever else he does is up-to him". Following from this origin, they consider the *dang* to be their pre-ordained abode. According to Bhanta Gujjar, "*Barudevji* willed that we are born in the *dang*. It is our fate (*bhag*)". When asked why the *dang*, the answer from the group discussing the origins of the *Gujjar* was unequivocal-[B]ecause of fodder. What else does a Gujjar need except buffalos and fodder?"

The forests also define male personhood. Being a Gujjar is inevitably associated with being able to negotiate the forests better than any other community. To the people who live outside of the *dang* area, the *dang* represents an area that is comprised of undifferentiated forests with villages interspersed. However, people who live in the villages in the *dang* area have clear spatial demarcation of the area surrounding them, based on the location and use. Thus, amongst the communities in Nibhera, there is a difference between the villages (*gaon*), their inhabited, less forested area to the *ujar* –the interiors of the dense forests[49]. The *ujar* is associated with the wild and the wilderness. *Ujar* is where not humans but wild animals live. It is the areas where dacoits take refuge and malevolent human spirits (*prêt atma*) live. The *ujar* is both difficult and dangerous. Amongst the communities in the village, the Gujjars are considered to be best adapted to negotiating the dangers and difficulties that the *ujar* poses. Such ability is taken as "natural" attribute of the Gujjar; the inevitability is assumed because of the preordained nature of their abode and livelihood. For the other communities, and Gujjars themselves,

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[48] Who discusses this idea in relation to Australian aboriginals' plea to the State for restoration of their lands to them.
[49] Skaria (1999) explains such spatial distinction among the *Bhils* of the Gujarat *dang*s as the cosmological distinction that the Bhils harbour between 'nature' and 'culture'.

this idea is epitomised in their earlier herding practices. In the earlier days, when pastoralism was the dominant occupation, most male members of the Gujjar families often stayed in the deep recesses of the forests, for months at a stretch, grazing their herd of buffalos. This practice is locally referred to as "to stay with buffalos" (*bhens mein rehna*).

Staying with the buffalos also denotes being *jangli* – associated with the *ujar* and the ability to stay without any human company and live fearlessly with the wild animals. For a Gujjar man being *jangli* and having its associated traits add to the bravado of a man. Masculinity is always defined in relation to a man's ability to negotiate the dangerous and the wild nature of the forests. These abilities make the difference between a 'weak' Gujjar of today and their 'strong' ancestors. As Ramcharan, aged 60, remarked –

> What do these other people know of living in the *dang*? Nobody can stay here like a *Gujjar* can. A *Gujjar* man can travel any distance at any time of the day; he fears no one. In the earlier days our forefathers (*agle bade*) used to stay with the buffalos for months! Dare anybody challenge them, whether spirits or animals? If one is a man (*mard*) one is not scared of the *ujar*. (December 2000)

In the *ujar* is also located their resource rich sites like the *dongar*s, *kho*s and *dang*s. Accessing these resources make people and their cattle vulnerable to the 'dangers' of these *ujar*s. Marking these territories and protecting the people are sacred groves (*vannis*) and sites marking the abodes of their ancestral and divine spirits (*devi-devtas*). These sites are known as *sthans* (place). The *devi-devtas* are enshrined in featureless flat stones that are placed atop a rocky platform. Patches of forests surrounding a *sthan* is designated as a *vanni* and dedicated to the residing deity or ancestral spirit of the *sthan*. These sacred sites root the people to the land. The specificity of the site has much significance for the communities of Nibhera. First, these sites have been installed by their ancestors. These sites always recall the lineage of specific community groups. According to the communities some restless ancestral souls attain peace only when their immediate families perform the rituals of enshrining their spirits and worshipping them annually. Thus these sacred sites embody and anchor the history, ancestry and kinship ties. Every year the familial group, sharing the same lineage or ancestry (*kutumb pariwar*) participates in a *jāt* (pilgrimage). It is believed that this binding and belonging to the land through these sites is created by the volition of the human and divine spirits who make their wishes known through their chosen medium (*bhopa*). Once installed these sites cannot be moved. The annual worship, seen as an appeasement of these sprits, are

considered vital to the well being of the families both materially (resources and livelihood) and physically. The landscape is also dotted with sites and trees that are attributed supernatural agency and consciousness. They are considered abodes of spirits of ancestors who possessed superhuman qualities when they were alive and come to acquire divine attributes on their death. These trees are also worshipped annually by the clan to whom the ancestors or divine spirits are affiliated.

As Johari (2007) writes on the local associations of gods and sacred forests among the *Gujjars* of Sariska Wildlife Sanctuary, implicit in these spatial histories, myths and legends of spirits and divinities is the politics of resource use whereby inclusion, exclusion, and ownership are legitimated through locally constituted and negotiated sanctions and norms. The *sthans* in Nibhera like in other villages of the Sanctuary also embed the village's territorial claim to resource sites as against claims of neighbouring villages. When asked how the people were so sure that *parthuna dongar* (the forested hill site where most communities collect fuel wood from) was within their boundaries, Bodya Baba promptly replied –

> What do you mean? Who else's will it be? Have you not seen the *bhumia baba*'s *sthan*? He belongs to the *kutumb pariwar* of our village. (January 2001)

Also, the inscribed landscape reflects the blurred boundaries between humans, spirits and gods inscribe a moral landscape. The access to resources or the manners of their uses are regulated by rules, which though socially enforced, are based on the sacred sanctions of these ancestral sites. As seen among other resource, the communities' myths and shamanic knowledge play a central role in defining their resource use practices and regulations (see Arhem 1998; Morphy 1995). This is equally evident among the communities inhabiting the Sanctuary. People incur the goodwill or ill-will of the supernatural in accordance to their conduct in using the resource. For example in Nibhera using the resources of the fodder enclosure (*kohar*) at the end of the monsoon season is commenced with the sanction of the local deity *Bhaironji* whose *sthan* stands at the entrance of the enclosure. Unsanctioned use is believed to always evoke the wrath of *Bhaironji* who may deprive people of the fodder in the next season. The landscape also abounds with stories of how people in the past that had either lost their lives or limbs owing to exploitation of unsanctioned use of resources in the forests or *vanni*s. These stories of the *vannis* are akin to Basso's (1988) analysis 'speaking with names' among the

Western Apache wherein they serve to 'affirm the value and validity of traditional moral precepts' regarding appropriate resource use practices.

The loss of forests and persistent droughts are seen as withdrawal of benefits by the active agency of nature on account of the improper conduct of the people. As Chiranji Gujjar (50) says:

> Our *agle bade* (ancestors) had always advised us against cutting trees
> indiscriminately. They had predicted bad consequences. These *dhoks* are abodes
> of sages (*rishis*). It is because of their merits and blessing that there are rains.
> The noise that comes from cutting trees is the pain of these *rishis*. If we cut them
> like some of us did where do you think rains will come from? When sins spread
> around who cared for the advice of the *agle bade*? Now we have to suffer!
> (January 2002)

Such association of people and its forest, especially in the realm of the sacred tend to be framed, celebrated and romanticised within the discourse of 'traditional/indigenous' practices of conservation emerging from traditional religious belief by the advocates of communities rights and participation in management regimes[50]. However I agree with Johari (2007) who citing Tuan (1997:72) argues:

> Maps of gods and memories of trees are thus rooted in specific and dynamic
> relationships formed within an intimate collective of gods, humans, animals and
> trees. They simultaneously refute an idealised and dislocated religious eco-logic
> and a 'scientific' ecologic… [I]mportantly, they reveal the ways in which nature
> is embodied, experienced and valued….through locally constituted meaning,
> identities and relationships.

The argument is further reinforced by the fact that in Nibhera although the sacred closely inform their principles of resource use and ownership, the rules are dynamic, shifting and reconstituted in accordance with time and changing needs wherein the existing rules need no longer be inherently 'sustainable' or 'judicious'[51] to use of the resources. This is evident in some of the thinning *vanni*s. As the resources get scarcer, the rules of engagements change. Permission to one of the *Devi ki vanni* for felling green branches is granted through the intervention of the mediums. Also as dependence on agriculture increased people moved out of the old village more towards the forest lands and gradually created the current settlement of the village. The moving, though seen as a moving away from the sense of 'community' and breaking away of the social ethos, was considered inevitable and legitimated through the desire of the ancestral spirits seeking enshrinement

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[50] See Sinha *et al.* (1997), Guha and Gadgil (1992), Darell Posey (1999).
[51] See Guha and Gadgil (1992).

in the new areas. Also, while forest resources were subject to common rules and regulations, other common property resources like the common grazing ground (*charagha*) merited no such restrictions and have been completely encroached upon.

Contested Landscape and Forest Protection

Writing on the cultural politics of landscapes, Bender (1993) argues, "landscape is never inert; people engage with it, re-work it, appropriate and contest it. It is part of the way in which identities are created and disputed". Space in Nibhera holds memories that implicate people and events and as Connerton (1989: 3) observes concerning 'social memories' – "images of the past commonly legitimise a present social order". It is through collective 'memories of resistance and struggle' that residents of Nibhera reaffirm reconstitute and contest ownership and territoriality of their land and forests from their neighbouring villages.

Much of the glory of Nibhera is attributed to the extent of forests enclosed in its traditional boundaries. Kirori Pandit, age 58, claims that none of the other villages in the *dang* have as much forests as Nibhera. As per the extent of forests, he asserts, "There is no measure of that! It extends very very far". The Gujjars are proud of the fact that the largest tracts of forests were not given, but were rather bought within the boundaries of their village by an act of bravery of their ancestor Baba Balram "more than 500 years ago". Bhanta Gujjar, considered as the most knowledgeable man in the Gujjar community of the village, tells the story of Baba Balram:

> In the erstwhile State of Karauli, under the *Ryotwari* system of land tenure, Nibhera was a *khalsa* village or one that paid its taxes directly to the State. Under this system every *khalsa* village where Gujjars predominated, the State appointed a *Meheto* to collect the taxes and hand them over to the *patwari*[1]. Baba Balram collected the *bhej* (tax) from us but refused to pay it to the King saying that why should he pay for something on which he had no claim. The King heard this comment and sent his *sipahis* (guards) to get Baba Balram who fled in the direction of the *Kho*. He is believed to have made his way across the river Chambal to Madhya Pradesh and into the State of Palpur.
>
> The King of Palpur was very impressed with him and was willing to send him back to Karauli if the King there promised not to harm him. The King of Karauli accepted these terms. Upon his return to Karauli, he was produced in the *durbar* where the King declared that even though he had done a wrong by not paying the revenue, he was nevertheless a brave man and that he needed such brave people in his State. As a reward for his bravery he was willing to grant him whatever he

wanted. Baba Balram is believed to have asked for the reinforcement of the boundary of his village. The King proclaimed that all the land that he could encircle on a horseback in one day would be granted to him. Baba Balram encircled what is today considered the boundary of the village in just half a day and would have proceeded further. However, when he was moving beyond the south-east borders, the people of other villages there pleaded him to spare some forests for them and thus, taking pity on them, he did not move any further.

The extent of Nibhera's village boundary *(med)* and the extent of forests it encompasses is a key factor in terms of the social and political standing the village enjoys in relation to the other villages in the region. The size of the village often underlines an individual's claim to social and political prowess in the region. According to the local narrative, in the erstwhile state of Karauli, Nibhera was a "well known" (*jāni hui*) village. Jania Gujjar, an octogenarian, has seen the reigns of the last two *maharaja*s (kings), Ganesh Pal (1947-84) and his father Bhompal (1927-47). According to Jania Gujjar:

> Then Nibhera was the biggest village of some 24 villages in and around. This was *dera* village. All important officials from the Karauli *darbar* used to come here and all important events used to take place here in our *anthain* (a designated place where village elders convene their *panchayat*). (May 2001)

Interwoven into the establishment of the political territories are the larger societies of the people – the web of networks and social ties with other villages. These networks constitute their *samaj* to whom they are tied by marriage, kinship, caste-affiliations, *jajmani*, trade, communal labour and resource relations. These *samaj* exist at multiple levels. These ties have formed within local contexts of social, political and economic relations that the forests and *dangs* have enabled. For example according to Kirori Pandit (58) his grandfather was keen that his mother marries into Nibhera because he was very impressed by the abundance its forest resources and by the health of the livestock that fed on it.

In a region where the economic, social and political identities have been dependent on natural resources, particularly forest-based, the forests of Nibhera have always received competition from communities both within the region (from the neighbouring villages) and areas beyond. Given the significance of the forests to the existence, identity and worldview of people therein, the territories of Nibhera have been fiercely guarded, contested and expanded. Thus most of the resource sites like the forests of the *khos*, *dang* and *kohar* have histories that speak of bloody contests between the villagers of Nibhera and the neighbouring villages or communities from outside.

The communities of Nibhera have extended tales of how they have always protected their forests and resources into legends. The *Badi Kho*, over which Nibhera has exclusive grazing rights, was won after several fiercely fought battles. Bhanta, an evocative storyteller, relates the story:

> In the beginning, the *Kho* actually belonged to a Baba (holy man) from Beherda[52]. Once he needed money so he mortgaged the *Kho* it to the people of Nibhera. When he was unable to pay the money for a long time, he was bound to give up the *Kho* to Nibhera. However, later his intentions changed. The people of Beherda did not like the fact that the *Kho* should come to Nibhera. So they tried to take control of it by force. Blood flowed in the valley. Hundreds of our people died. We won because we managed to escape by climbing the sidetrack in the valley. Then our men got the control. But time and again the people from Beherda would come and create problems. Then our ancestors went to the King and got a deed that was etched in bronze.[53] It gave them exclusive grazing rights over the *Kho*. We paid revenue to the King. Even now we continue to pay Rs.2 from every family to the revenue department. (May 2001).

There are other more recent experiences. About 30 years ago the entire village fought a group of migrant cow grazers. The cow grazers from the Marwar region (the western part of Rajasthan) used the pastures of this region, which they had been doing so since at least from the early 20th century. The conflict between the grazers and the villagers arose over the fact at in a particular year when fodder was scarce; the *marwaris* (as the local people refer to the cow grazers) let their herds into agricultural fields with standing crop. The migrant grazers refused to move even when asked to by individual farmers, and instead beat up some people of the village. In response, all the able bodied men of the village attacked the *marwaris*. They ravaged their camps and beat up their men and women. The *marwaris* lodged a complaint with the police. Bimla (in her late fifties), the mother of Jagdish Master, recounts what happened thereafter:

> The police came to the village but did not find a single man. The men were all hiding in the *Kho*. They came several times. When the police finally caught up with our men…the village as a whole, all seven castes …took the blame. They arrested all the men…but could not hold them for long. Eventually they let them go. The case went on…the *marwaris* however dared not trouble our village anymore. (May 2001)

Bimla's narrative reflects the other significant function of the processes involved in the people protecting their forest – the reinforcement. In conflicts with other villages, the assertion of ownership also calls forth the assertion of the collective identity of the village.

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[52] Beherda is located on the plateau across the *Kho*. The *Kho* and the valley in-between divide Nibhera and Beherda.

[53] Despite several assurances of its existence, I was never actually shown the bronze plaque that establishes their ownership.

Thus most narratives of confrontation with the other villages, like in Bimla's narrative, always merit a mention of the presence of "all seven castes". It is an expression that is stressed to imply the significance and the magnitude of the conflict. By this expression the narrator points to the fact that it was not a small conflict between a few people, but a conflict where the whole village was involved and showed great solidarity in staving off the threats.

The narrators of these conflicts always name each of the caste groups involved. To have been left out of such conflicts reflects poorly on a caste's commitment to the cause of the village. Even organisationally, in any act directed to resource protection, it is made sure that all able bodied men from every household make their contribution. This was evident in the conflict with the neighbouring village of Morechi that took place in 2001. The conflict was over the FD-sponsored fodder enclosure (*kohar*). The people of Nibhera claim that the enclosure was built within the boundaries of their village, therefore they have the exclusive rights over it. Since, in effect, the enclosure has come up on the boundary-area between Nibhera and Morechi, the residents of Morechi stake a claim of for access and use[54].

Till about 1998 the people of Morechi would not comply with the restricted periods of the enclosure and forcefully grazed their cattle there. On one such occasion the people of Nibhera confiscated their axes and lodged a complaint with the FD. In August 2001, Morechi again attempted to break the boundaries of the enclosure. On 2nd August a meeting was called in the village and despite the ongoing conflict it was decided by the Panchayat that one man from every house of the village in rotation would keep vigil over the *kohar* and prevent other people from encroaching. This conflict was temporarily resolved as the *nyaya panchayat* of Morechi agreed to comply with the requests of the Nibhera panchayat.

The display of collective identity and village solidarity in forest protection activities is an extension of an aspect that is integral to village social organisation and village polity. In

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[54] The traditional boundaries, as villagers recognise them, may vary from the Forest Department records. As was made evident in an inter-village conflict over access to 'village' forests, the Forest Department demarcates the forests as per Blocks. A single Block may contain forests that lie within the traditional boundaries of two or more villages.

every ritual and non-ritual activities that require them to pool their labour, the communities follow the same principle; contributions are made by every household of the village. While contribution displays solidarity, the non-contribution by a household or a community marks their conflicting position in the village. For example following the conflict between the Gujjar and the Brahmin communities, the village never celebrates *punyo* (marking the commencement of the summer and winter agricultural seasons) together anymore. Prior to the conflict, all the communities in the village used to celebrate this festival together; the Gujjars cooked and the Brahmins conducted the rituals, while the other communities helped in their various capacities. Despite the conflict, the two issues that constantly test the solidarity of the village are protection of resources and the matters pertaining to the village temple.

Establishing territoriality is not just about asserting their political identity but is crucial to the reciprocal exchange of resources that takes place as a part of their risk management. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the villages in the Sanctuary, until recently used to allow cattle graziers from the plain areas (*aantri*) to graze in their forest area in exchange for being allowed to take the cattle from the Sanctuary to the fields in the villages in the plains during the summer when there is an acute shortage of fodder and water in the Sanctuary area.

In these exchanges it is important to assert to the outside cattle graziers the territorial rights of the village in which they are grazing or the village they receive hospitality from. Similarly, asserting territoriality becomes important in the sharing of resources between the villages. Nibhera has on many occasions allowed a neighbouring village of Amrapur to take logs from their forests as a 'favour'. However on one occasion when villagers of Nibhera caught villagers of Amrapur stealing wood on the sly they reported them to the forest ranger who then extracted a fine from the defaulters. As Daujiya Gujjar, an active participant in the Panchayat that was called over the Amrapur issue explained:

> If they ask for it and then take, there is no problem. If we give a few logs there will not be a huge shortfall in Nibhera…more over we have some of our daughters married there. But why should they steal? They feel insult in asking from Nibhera that is why they steal…they feel their honour is lost if they ask. (June 2001)

In essence, the forest resources function both as material and symbolic honour. Consequently, its protection or sharing is also symbolic of a village's social position,

honour and political position vis-à-vis other villages in the region. Thus establishing resource territoriality is also a political act. This is also evident in the present grouse the villagers of Nibhera nurture against Beherda.

There have been many intermittent stand-offs with Beherda. The Meenas of Beherda regularly extract small timber from the *Kho.* They also try and graze their cattle by stealth. There have been many occasions where, in retaliation, the people of Nibhera have raided Beherda at night and have set fire to their fodder stock. When I commented that by burning the fodder they disservice to themselves, losing the very fodder they were fighting for, Ranji Gujjar replied –

> It is not only about fodder. They have their eyes on the *Khos* for ages. Today they come for fodder, tomorrow they will come for the land and then a few years later they will make a claim to the ownership on the land. It is important that we teach them a good lesson…let them know that they can never win against us. (March 2001)

The point that I am trying to make in this section is that the idea of forest protection assumed in the policy discourses of community-based conservation widely differs from what communities make of forest-protection activities. Forest protection is not an isolated act directed towards the conservation of biodiversity; conservation as an objective is incidental. Further, the act of forest protection emerges from a context that is deeply embedded in the social and political organisational structures of the society. It also has several perquisites like ownership, reciprocal exchange and livelihood. Denying the communities these perquisites and isolating the activity of forest protection from its village based social and political context, as is attempted through institutions like EDC, do not forbear the same effect or significance for the communities.

Declining Resources

Although lives and lifestyle to a large extent, continue to remain forest-dependent, local histories suggests that what remains now is barely a fraction of the "total dependence on the forest" primarily because "one cannot see that kind of forest anymore". The comment of the people of Nibhera on the depleting state of forests is always expressed in terms of the abundance they enjoyed earlier. Besides abundance, the quality and quantity of the forest resources available, and its 'proximity' to the settlement are some of the indicators

used by the people. By almost all the villagers I spoke to, the primary concern expressed in relation to the consequences of the loss of forests was the drastic reduction in the availability of fodder. Khuku Teli, over 50 years of age and the oldest among the Teli community, recalls:

> What do we have now…nothing! In my lifetime I have seen forests where in the month of *Sawan* and *Bhado* we used to have grass right up to our doorsteps. The *chara* (fodder) lasted till Holi… even then it never quite ran out. Our cattle used to graze in the dang all year round! My father died about 30 years ago in the monsoon season. I remember, when the relatives came for the death-feast (*nukta*) to Nibhera, they were particularly troubled because they had to wade through fields of grass that grew up to their waist and shoulders!

Indicative of the state of loss of forests, is the tragic absence of *dhok* that was "taller, thicker and stronger." Bodya Dom, considered by the villagers to be the oldest person (he claims he is over 80 years old) but a man with a sharp memory, tells the state of the forests by its density and proximity:

> The forests were terribly dense! We never had to go deep into it to get what we needed. In fact, we were afraid because it was so dense. The *bangas* and the *barnagas* (wooden poles used in the construction of houses) could be found in the forests of the plateau itself. Now even in the *kho*, where the last remaining patches of dense forest still remain, we do not find the same quality, as we did on the plateau area in the earlier days!" (July 2001)

Fuel wood in the past was apparently not collected from 'forests'. Dhanbai Gujjar, an old woman of over 80 years of age claims to not have seen any wildlife as she never went to the forest. She would go only to collect fuel wood which was always available in her "backyard". Life, she claims, is much tougher for her daughters-in-law who have to "go almost three times the distance that she had to in the past for fuel wood." According to Kiori Pandit, 58, everyone has to "travel longer and further to survive in the *dang*. Even then we do not get enough and what we get is of poor quality."

A combination of complex reasons explains the changes in types, quantity, quality and availability of resources. The common refrain to my questions on when and why did the forests deplete was – "some were felled by *log-bag* (people) and some by the *sarkar* (government)." This seems to have occurred in the last 45-50 years. Between these two primary causes encompass the changes of several kinds that have swept through these dry hills touching the forests and the people of the dangs. The merger of Karauli State, the Independence of India from colonial rule, the passage of the forests to different owners and administrators and their differing management objectives are among the many factors

that have shaped the forests of the dangs. Natural factors such as change in weather conditions over the years and a periodically failing monsoon has also had its own impact.

The role of the State is discussed in detail in chapter 6. In analyzing the circumstances that led to the initiation of *Kulhadi bandh panchayat*, it is important to understand in the role of the 'log bag' as perceived by the villagers. When asked why would people cut down the forest only in the past 30-40 years and not in the times prior to that, a unanimous response was that the *samvat* (a calendar year) began to *bigdo (*go seriously wrong). In this context *bigdi samvat* is used to refer to 'bad times' i.e. when the monsoons fail. According to Jania Gujjar (over 70 years):

> The years of bad monsoons did it all…when it did not rain and we began to starve then the people started to cut the *dhok* for their cattle! The *samvat* has been particularly bad in the past 25-30 years.

For Dhapo, the bad *samvat* began a few years after Bhagwanlal, her eldest son, now 21, was born:

> Earlier the people used to cut trees, but only a few. There used to be such heavy rains that one did not notice when it would grow back. After Bhagwanlal was born the rains started to decrease and people started to cut and lop heavily for fodder.

As a consequence of scanty rainfall, there have been regular droughts (*akal)* and famines (*bhook)*. Having been told about these *akal*[55] that occurred in even the 1950s, I asked why there has been felling and severe loss of forest only in the past 30-40 years. Kali Nai, an older cousin of Bhairon Lal Nai, explained:

> Earlier these droughts were short lived and not so severe. Most years of scarcity were followed by a few years of *acchi* (good) *samvat*. Thus we managed somehow. Besides in the earlier years, generally things were not so expensive and the cost of living was manageable.
>
> In recent times, whenever we felt a lack of fodder we cut *dhok* which made it worse. Can there be rains without dhok? Dhok are the abode of sages and it is because of their merits that we get rains. Our elders asked us not to cut these

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[55] *Akal* (drought) is a part of their history. In the local history the village Nibhera was originally known has Nibheri and was settled in the valley. The original inhabitants were *Lodhas* who were mainly agriculturist [55] *Akal* (drought) is a part of their history. In the local history the village Nibhera was originally known has Nibheri and was settled in the valley. The original inhabitants were *Lodhas* who were mainly agriculturist and fairly wealthy. However they left because during a particularly severe *akal* in the past their money could not buy them grains. In the current memory of the people, the most severe of all *akal* has been *chappania ki akal* (literally meaning *samvat* 1956) There is popular saying that in that area no grain was to be found in the four corners of the state. There are famines recorded in 1905-1907. There has been an *akal* in *samvat* 1996 (1939). That year is still very vivid is the memory of people who claim their age to be in the 70s and 80s.

trees. They said these trees have life... the noise that comes out when we cut the dhok is the cry of the dhok... it too has life. But we were foolish, the more we cut, lesser the rains there were!"

Most discussion on bad *samvat* led to the identification of another culprit apparently responsible for forest decline – the *bhedwale* (sheep herders). In the case of the *dangs*, the *bhedwale* refers to the *Rebaries*, a migratory sheepherding community who travel from the Marwar region of western Rajasthan across into east Rajasthan and north Madhya Pradesh. According to Bodya:

> The *Rebaries* destroyed our fodder resources! We faced a lot of difficulties with them around. The sheep ruined the soil… they finished it. With their feet they upturn and dig out the soil cover. They finished the soil cover and unearthed the stony layer below. Can any grass grow on stony land-without any soil?

Kulhadi bandh panchayats

Kulhadi bandh panchayat today has multiple histories in Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary. This is more so as it serves as the single most important symbolic capital in the micro-politics operational in the field between the parties vying to claim credit for its initiation and perpetuation. There were, and continue to be, many levels of collective action, and not one monolithic community of local users as is often assumed. The *kulhadi bandh panchayat* practice was spurred in different areas of the Kailadevi region at different times. However, given the currency the institution enjoyed with the external agencies, along with the agencies themselves, different community groups also sought to appropriate the history of its origin to their best advantage. In this section I draw on narratives of *kulhadi bandh panchayat* that were collected as a part of the Indian Institute of Public Administration research team in 1996-1997 i.e. before the Forest Department or the NGOs in the area had undertaken any significant initiatives in the area. These narratives are important on many accounts.

First, they are narrated in a context sans the opportunities presented to them by the externally-aided initiatives and thus celebrate *kulhadi bandh panchayat* as a community-initiative (even in the face of rejection by the Department), with a sense of onus and ownership. Second, in contrast to its appropriation as an achievement of projects aimed at sustainable development in the more recent narratives, *kulhadi bandh panchayats* in the older narratives are clear on the intent and purpose of the practice. *Kulhadi bandh*

panchayat was also one among the several initiatives (mentioned in the previous section) to protect their forests. Uncluttered by conservation jargons, *kulhadi bandh panchayats* were defined as a means of resource management with the stated purpose of managing the forests for future sustenance.

Kulhadi bandh panchayat as a practice was a response to the resource crunch experienced during the drought of 1985-88. Its immediate cause was the need to protect the forests from being used by the Rebaries. Rebaries are numerically the largest migrant group in India (Agrawal 1999) and are found mainly in Rajasthan and Gujarat. Although in the past the Rebaries were known as camel herders, today many have taken mainly to sheep herding. Over the years, owing to various state programs on land reform, agricultural development and conservation, the Rebaries' access to pasture on forest land and fallow agricultural fields of settled villagers, has been severely curtailed. Competition over decreasing resources and intensification of agriculture has in most cases altered the relations between settled agriculturists and the Rebaries from synergism to hostility (Kavoori, 1990; Kohler-Rollefson, 1992; Srivastav, 1997; Agrawal, 1999a)[56]. Kailadevi typically reflected this tension and politics between sedentary farmers and Rebaries that had intensified around the border areas between Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh (Agarwal and Narain, 1985).

In the Kailadevi area, the Rebaries traditionally travelled from the Marwar region of western Rajasthan up into east Rajasthan and through the Sanctuary to Madhya Pradesh. Apparently, since the early 1970s the Rebaries have been using the Sapotra and Kailadevi forests (located at the boundaries between Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh) as their transitory route (to Madhya Pradesh), foraging on the forest resources and the fodder available on fallow private field. Over the years however, with the establishment of the Ranthambhore National Park, Kailadevi Sanctuary and the restrictions imposed by the Government of Madhya Pradesh, their access to resources has been dramatically restricted. With relative intensification of agricultural practices, extended periods of drought and restricted access to the forest resources, settled agro-pastoral communities

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[56] There is often has been a relationship of mutual dependency between the settled agriculturists and the *Rebaries* in the past. Farmers, usually raising one crop a year would value allow the *Rebaries* access to the grass in their fallow fields in exchange for the sheep manure. There also engaged in trading over milk and sheep wool.

had to increasingly compete with the Rebaries over the limited and ever shrinking fodder resources. They have consequently been locked in conflict (sometimes violent) with the settled agro-pastoral groups of the area. Arriving with an annual herd size of approximately 1.5 lakh sheep heads, the villagers saw the Rebaries as the primary cause of the resource crunch they faced in terms of fodder availability – a view equally endorsed by the Forest Department. Although their entry into the Sanctuary has been officially banned since 1983 (the year of declaration of Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary), they continued to enter and graze their herds in the forests.[57]

In 1986, the conflicts led to an organised campaign by the villagers in and around the Sanctuary to drive out the Rebaries. This is popularly referred to as the *Bhed Bhagao Abhiyan* (drive out the sheep campaign) (Forest Department, 2000; Kothari *et al.*, 1997) There were many violent stand-offs between the villagers and the Rebaries[58] in the years of the *Bhed Bhagao Abhiyan*. Dwarka Sharma (40-50yr) a Brahmin with a sizeable cattle population and land holding, known for his enthusiasm in tackling the Rebaries, recalls:

> We were all there in large numbers …people had come from Rajour, Kannarda, Khujuro. We waited for long hours in the mountains for the *Rebaries* to show up. The *bhedwale* knew that we were waiting. They were on the other side… they had come equipped with *laths* (sticks) and guns…we were not to be put off. We had our guns ready…the Forest Department people didn't help. The police stayed away until after the conflict. There was much fighting, there was firing…some of the *bhedwale* died …some of ours died too. (October 1996)

Although the ultimate restriction on the Rebaries entry into this area was achieved by the active effort of the Forest Department and the support of the people, in the 1980s the movement was largely initiated by the communities themselves as their appeal to the Department to control the entry of the Rebaries had fallen on deaf ears. While the ultimate mobilisation occurred under the patronage of local leaders aspiring to enter party politics, for the villagers the movement was a measure to contain the crisis of decreasing availability of fodder and forest resources.

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[57] Complete restriction on their entry into KWS was achieved only in 1996 after much organised resistance from the Forest Department
[58] Agrawal (1999) in his study of the *Raikas* of western Rajasthan analyses in length the issues, the politicization and the problems pertaining to the conflicts between the *Rebaries* and the settled communities they encounter in their migratory routes.

Kulhadi bandh panchayat was initiated by a group of 12 villages that were at the forefront of the movement. Subsequently, it spread to several other villages in the region. A resident of a village who spearheaded the movement in 1988 relates the origins of *kulhadi bandh panchayat* as follows:

> We realised that our resources were dwindling not only because of the *Rebaries* but also because of indiscriminate use by our own people. In order to check this, we decided to stop the indiscriminate use of the axe in the forests and that is why we called it ban the axe movement. (October 1996)

In 1996 each of the 22 villages I visited (as a part of the IIPA project) inside the Sanctuary reported the existence of a *kulhadi bandh panchayat*. The purpose of the institution was to protect and sustain the resource base and was universally clear and understood. Thus, as captured in this narrative from a senior member of village Nibhera, the rules of operation was aimed at regulated use of resources:

> We started *kulhadi bandh* some 5-8 years ago. We have strict rules. We allow the people to meet their needs of firewood (*jalau lakdi*) and construction timber (*imarti lakdi*) but only as much as is necessary or needed (*jarurat ke kaje* or *kamsaru*). *Imarat lakdi* in large quantities can be bought only in consultation with the Panchayat. (November 1996)

It is important to note that 'ban-axe' as a term was employed by the people in a figurative sense to denote a ban on indiscriminate felling. They never meant it literally. Ban-axe did not mean that they would not carry an axe when in the forest or use it to log and chop wood when they needed to. In 1996, and even through the period 2000-2002 while I was conducting my doctoral research in the same area, both men and women always carried an axe whenever they went to the forests to collect wood. In fact they carried an axe every time they crossed the forests. As one of the villagers put it, "Can we do without an axe? All our work gets done with this!" As they navigate their lives through the forests, the axe forms an inalienable part of their existence. Walking up and down between the valleys and plateau of the Sanctuary, often having to cross steep, densely forested paths the axe helps the residents not only to clear the thorny entangled outgrowth but also acts as their primary form of defence against dacoits and wild animals.

Precisely because an axe is the single most important tool for harvesting fuel wood and construction timber, a figurative ban on its use was symbolic of the communities' resolve to control and regulate the use of forest resources. Members were allowed to get construction timber only as per their bonafide need (*jarurat kaje*) and not as they willed. They were especially keen to regulate or ban the practice of harvesting green wood for

fuel and the logging of whole trees just to reach the leaf fodder. The name 'ban-axe' probably took its name after the use of the term by the forest administrators of erstwhile Karauli who attempted to restrict local communities from accessing forest resources by disallowing the carrying of axe into the forests (Lyall 1914). To reiterate, terms like confiscation of axe (*kulhadi khusana*) or ban of axe (*kulhadi bandh*) are idiomatic of regulation, control and punishment, often also used by villagers in resolving inter-village conflicts over resource use and management.

Kulhadi bandh panchayats broadly followed a similar pattern of operation and regulation across the villages. Nobody was allowed to cut down green trees for fodder. Usually meetings were held every month. In the case of first offence the panchayats only warned the individual. A fine was levied on a second offence and if the person repeated the offence for the third time the offender was socially boycotted (*jat-biradiri bahar*). Depending on the nature of the offence the fine could vary from Rs. 11 to Rs.501 and sometimes even more. It was more common to evoke social and religious sanctions against offenders rather than imposing monetary fines.

The Panchayats were not only about restricting their own people. They also took up the responsibility for stopping the illegal felling of trees by outsiders. On one occasion an organised group from three villages had impounded a camel cartload of fuel wood and timber wood being smuggled out of the Sanctuary. The villagers of Lakhruki had also been successful in nabbing a forest guard's son involved in smuggling timber wood from the Sanctuary (Wadhwa 1996).

The system operated both at intra and inter-village level. The village level *kulhadi bandh panchayat* was responsible for protecting the natural resources within the confines of its traditional village boundaries. Inter-village disputes were settled by involving the *Kulhadi bandh panchayats* of all the villages included under a single Panchayat (the formally designated local governance unit). Usually inter-village level disputes were first handled between the two-concerned villages through the exchange of letters. One of the letters from village Nibhera to the panchayat of Morechi (accused of felling trees in Nibhera's forest) stated –

> In our village *kulhadi bandh* is operational. Our people found members of your village cutting trees in our forests. The *Panchayat* of Nibhera kindly requests

you to refrain from such activities. In future if we catch your men cutting trees in our forests we will confiscate their axes. (March 2001)

Although the practice of *kulhadi bandh* was new, its institutional manifestations were part of the village's existing political and social organisations directed towards resource management and use. *Kulhadi bandh panchayats* are organised and operate along the patterns of the age-old and existing *informal* (that is outside of the official local governance system of the Panchayati Raj System) village *panchayats* that characterize the current village administrative and political system. These systems are called into action in all forest protection activities, resource conflicts and other socio-political issues of the village. Making a distinction from the *panchayats* which are state institutions of local governance under the Panchayati Raj system, the villagers often refer to the village level informal *panchayats* as *Nyaya* or *Patel Panchayats*. Essentially, the *Nyaya Panchayats* convened specifically on issues pertaining to the ban-axe practice were referred to as *kulhadi bandh panchayats*.

Nyaya Panchayats have always reflected the traditional social hierarchy and the overlapping economic standing of the various communities. The arbitrating authorities at these *panchayats* are *patels*, a generic name for the representative heads of the various caste groups. Although most *panchayats* include *patels* from every caste group ('seven castes') present in the village, the important *patels*, usually from the dominant castes were the main decision-makers of the village. The inclusion of all castes in these *panchayats* was especially important because the forests were considered a common property resource. Further, as forest protection was to involve community policing, the villagers felt that every member needed to be equally vigilant and responsible.

Notwithstanding the representation of all caste groups' communities these *panchayats* were replete with practices of social discrimination that operate on an everyday basis. As discussed in Chapter 1, in general Gujjars and Brahmans are the dominant communities in Nibhera. The communities like the Nais, Doms and Chamars are among the most marginalised and owe substantial debts to local money lenders as well as some of the relatively affluent Gujjars and Brahmans. *Kulhadi bandh panchayat* in Nibhera was always presided over by the Gujjar and Brahman *patels*. Although people like Bhairon Lal Nai, Bodya Dom and Haricharan Teli were always included and had the right to speak, it was understood the final arbitrating authorities would be the Brahman and Gujjar *patels*.

Bhangi community considered as 'untouchables' were never a part of the decision making process.

Women's access and control over resources are embedded as Leach (1994) suggests 'in wider sets of ideas and social and political relations concerning gender'. Female seclusion in the Hindu multi-*jati* community of Nibhera is very strong. The seclusion is mainly manifest in women being denied visible access to domains that are public and male dominated like the village *panchayat* – the central political and administrative decision-making body of a village. Such prohibitions are indoctrinated as a part of the societal norms for 'appropriate female behaviour' (Agrawal, 1997: 36). Other than defining it as socially unacceptable behaviour, the men in Nibhera justify keeping women (*bahu-beti*) away from public or political space on grounds that the women are "illiterate", "cannot speak", "are not knowledgeable" , "only know how to squabble" and "aware only of *chullah-chowki* (matters pertaining to home and hearth or what is often conceptualised as the 'domestic domain')". Consequently women were not a part of the decision-making processes of the *kulhadi bandh* practice.

Given the above ideological position of women in their society, for a socially and politically embedded activity like forest protection women of all communities are absent from male narratives and activities pertaining to it. Women have never fought the physical conflicts with outsiders or the neighbouring villagers to secure the territories of their forests or their village resources. Despite being absent from male dominated and visible forums of forest protection, women nonetheless play significant roles from within spaces that are considered appropriate for them. The contribution of women is visible only in the female narratives of the conflicts. For instance, in the conflict that took place with the *Marwaris*, while the men only mentioned how they took on the *Marwaris* and managed to dodge the law, Bimla's descriptions gives details of how the struggle of men both with the *Marwaris* and the police was sustained to the point victory –

> The *bahu-beti* (daughters and daughter-in-law) who were left behind to deal with the police when they came for the men. None of the women opened their mouths. They said "our men don't tell us where they go". But the men would be in the forests. We *bahu-beti* would go in batches and only when we were sure that there were no outsiders in the region… We would take food and clothes for them. This went on for months. Women are also equal partners in our current strategic use of the idea of *kulhadi bandh panchayat* by men.

Reflecting the disagreement and discontent with the decisions made in these *panchayats*, people recount that how in the past the *patels* were "people with virtues of justice and fairness and delivered the correct judgement irrespective of the caste of the accused". Most people, individually, irrespective of their caste, alleged that in the current environment, the *patels* are nepotistic (*bhai-bandi karen*) and are unfair (*anyaya*) in their decision-making in the *panchayat*s.

There have been issues of inequity in terms of access to natural resources. In the past Chamar and Bhangi communities sourced drinking water only from the tail end of the main stream. They were also not allowed access to the village wells or pond. While the Bhangis are still restricted from openly accessing the village pond, the Chamars had to fight for the access they have now. Only under the threat of police and courts that the upper castes have allowed them access. And in almost all the villages of the Sanctuary the dominant caste groups like the Gujjars*,* Brahmans and Meenas are involved in land disputes with the lower caste groups of Nais or Chamars.

Further, the *kulhadi bandh* practice although was equally applicable to all communities it posed unfair constraints on some groups. Women were put to considerable difficulties so far as fuel wood collection was concerned; they had to walk much longer distances to collect firewood on account of the ban and were initially unhappy about it. Also it was particularly restrictive for the goat-herding communities like the Chamars and Bhangis who depend heavily on leaf fodder in the lean season.

As a consequence of the existing intra and inter-community politics, the ban on indiscriminate felling has come to nought several times in the past. For example, the goat graziers belonging mostly to the Chamar and Bhangi community repeatedly defied the ban and cut tree for leaf fodder. Repeated warnings from the *panchayat* did not help, since the communities as a whole defied the ban. Seeing the ineffectiveness of the *panchayat*, other communities started violating the ban. Finally, the Gujjar and Brahman *patels* decided to show their prowess. The bargaining power of the Chamars and Bhangis was weakened because of their indebtedness to the Gujjars and Brahmans. The latter two communities threatened to deny loans to the 'culprits' and also demanded an immediate payment of their debts. After a year, the villagers made a new resolution, sought the

"cooperation" of the Chamars and Bhangis and were finally able to implement the ban again.

However, what needs to be pointed out is that while these discriminatory practices and differential interests did (and may continue to) hamper the functioning of the *kulhadi bandh panchayat*s, the authority of the *patels* was never absolute. Evident in the intermittent dissolution of some of the *panchayat*s is the availability of space for negotiation to contest or protest domination and discrimination. Further, inequities practiced at the village level can also be challenged within the system. In addition to the *patel panchayats* each community has a large association of their respective caste group called *jati samaj,* an institutional arrangement that could include the same caste members from almost all the villages in the region. Most of the intra-community disputes that cannot be resolved at the village level are often referred to this *samaj*. As discussed in Chapter 1, the *jati samaj*s serve as important forms of political mobilisation of communities to rally for their rights either against the communities or against the State. It is through the *samaj* that the Chamars have used legal and constitutional provisions[59] to gain access to the common hand pumps in the villages and to a right bathe in village ponds. As many Gujjars complained, they are careful about how they treat the Chamars and the Bhangis as they have on past occasions been prompt in filing *cases* of discrimination against them. However, as we see in the later sections, the new local institutions modelled on *kulhadi bandh panchayats* initiated by the non-governmental organisation and the Forest Department, rather than addressing the inequalities, not only end up reinforcing them but also offer no avenues for contest. In trying to demonstrate their 'participatory' nature, it is *consensus* and not *conflict* and resolution that is important for the new local institutions.

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[59] Article 17 of the Constitution of India abolished 'untouchability' and its practice in any form. The Constitution strives to remove this practice by making the provision a fundamental right and through punishment to whoever practices or abets it in any form. Towards this end, Protection of Civil Rights Act 1955 was enacted. It has implemented several measures to eradicate this practice from the society. It stipulates up to 6 months imprisonment or Rs.500 fine or both. It impresses upon the public servant to investigate fully any complaint in this matter and failing to do so amounts to abetting this crime. Article 17 is available against private individuals as well and it is the duty of the state to ensure that this right is not violated (http://hanumant.com/ConstiProvisionsForCD.html).

Changing Times and Shifting Identities

Drawing illustration from Indonesia, Li (1996) argues that in the policy arena advocates promote images of 'traditional' communities as being in harmony with their environment primarily as a strategy to defend the rights of the communities. But as Baviskar (1998) argues, portraying tribal communities as natural repositories of ecological wisdom may be politically correct but does disservice to the people as it misrecognises their changing reality. Communities may demand futures that are 'antithetical to the goal of biodiversity conservation'.

In the study of power and politics of communities and their landscapes it is often pointed out that the way in which people understand and engage with their worlds will depend upon the specific time and place and historical conditions. It will depend on their gender, age, class, and caste and on their social and economic situation. Also, no place is bounded; a sense of place also evolves in relation to the wider network of interactions, exposure and movements (Ferguson and Gupta, 1992; Rodman, 1992; Bender, 1993). This subjectivity is clearly apparent in the many ways in which the people of Nibhera represent themselves and their location.

The evidence presented in this section indicates a change in some aspects, away from a forest-based dependence and towards a more monetised market-based economy. Agriculture has gradually replaced pastoralism, although the two are still in common practice. The need for monetary income to survive is now pushing many people towards migration in search of paid employment. In other cases, capital permitting, people are now preferring to move out of the village altogether. The harsh existence of the *dangs* and the desperate need to cope under rapidly changing conditions is taking its toll on the people.

In these changing times there is a complex balance between the people's sense of place, their history and what they perceive to be their future and the future of their children While most are unwilling to leave their land or their village and take great pride in the position it holds amongst other villages they also desperately feel the need for infrastructural development and income generating opportunities close home. Both these

pictures are equally true for them. This probably reflects on the many dimensions in which the communities seek an identity in times where they are compelled into exploring new modes of livelihood and lifestyles. Their sense of self-representation is an essential tool of survival and reflects both 'multi-vocality' and 'multi locality'[60]. Thus it is not unusual for them to appropriate the negative discourses on them and their state of life used by development and official agencies.

"We are lying in the hills – we are wild people of the forest! (*Hum dang mein pade hain, hum junglee log*)" is a common refrain among the residents of Nibhera to outsiders (including me). Chiranji, a Gujjar of Nibhera says –

> If not *junglee* (an uncaring dweller of the forest) then *what* are we? We don't have water, we don't have roads, we don't have electricity and we don't have enough grains. We are just like our *dhor-maweshi* (cattle); we live like the way they live in this *dang dongar!*

Within this perspective the *dang* is seen as a neglected forested area lacking in modern amenities and economic opportunities. However, when asked if they would leave the *dang*, in an event where the Forest Department comes up with a resettlement and rehabilitation package, people like Ramlal Pandit (60), the father of Jagdish Master, are clear that they are here to stay –

> Because of the *dang* we have a cherished life! Where will they find another *dang* for us? Where will they relocate so many villages and give them so much forest? Where will we live without our *samaj* (society)? What will our cattle feed on? We are destined to live here and here is where we will die!

There are similar voices among the younger generation. Radhamohan, the younger brother of Jagdish, who works as 'stone setter' in Bangalore, says –

> The lives in our village… the space, the forests, the hills are what I want to come back to when I am done working in Bangalore. I am saving money to come back here so that I can hope for an alternative to farming and cattle rearing.

Not everyone is so keen though about staying on in Nibhera. Suresh (20s) and Ramesh (30s), the sons of the village priest have relocated to Karauli with their mother. The priest himself has preferred to spend some more time in the village before joining them. Suresh is clear about his reasons to relocate –:

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[60] Multilocality and multivocality are used here are in reference to Rodman's (1992) analysis of the same. Of the many of dimensions of multilocal and multivocal explained by her, one refers to how a single physical landscape can be experienced and expressed differently by different users or even by the same user.

"What's left in the *dang*? We live in the city with great comforts. There is a fan and we get water from taps. You leave one job today you can do another tomorrow!"

The way of life and lifestyles of the communities, where the 'plains' (*taradi*) and the 'world outside' (*anth ki duniya*) are constant reference points, are also undergoing changes. As often quoted by the men folk of the village, in comparison to the *dangs*, the *taradi* is a 'success' area because "they have water, can grow wheat and *chana* (gram) in plenty, have electricity and all kinds of other facilities".

The *resource relations* of the people and the *changes* that it is undergoing, has a significant bearing on the people's responses to these project interventions, especially to their adaptation to their circumstances for survival. Unlike the advocates of conservationist agendas, for the people of Nibhera there are no contradictions in protecting their forests as means of resource sustenance and their desire for better development facilities and employment opportunities. Consequently, there are obvious discontinuities between the ideas and practices of the external agencies and the people of Nibhera. The people have an understanding of these projects as is filtered through their existing knowledge base of the 'world' and through the threats they feel of being dispossessed from their lands. The FD and the NGOs alternately pose threats and present opportunities as far as their livelihood is concerned. Thus, their responses to these agencies seem underpinned by a constant, un-stated attempt to negotiate for their own security and survival, making use of the options and spaces that the functioning of the NGOs and the FD offer.

Conclusion

The chapter primarily aims at contextualising *Kulhadi bandh panchayats* within the resource relations of the communities of Nibhera by focusing on the extent of their dependence on the forests, their sense of place, acts of forest protection, their dwindling resources and shifting identities.

Though much depleted, the forests still remain the principal source of survival for most communities of Nibhera that are predominantly dependent agro-pastoral economies.

Livelihood at every level of the society is benefited from the forest cover and land. The forests are primary source of fodder, fuel wood, construction timber and land. It also provides a plethora of *materia-medica* and roots, fruits and fibres for everyday use.

The forests, it argues, are not just "resources" but are an in-extricable part of the identities and existence of the communities. Defying the dichotomy between nature and culture, the locally evolved practices and experiences through which communities create their sense of place reflect reciprocal inscription of the sacred, social and secular realms. The interweaving of these realms, spatially and temporally inscribed in their landscapes, also offer a moral grid to regulate communities' resource use, stakes and practices. The inscribed places, practices and memories that make their landscape are an integral part of personhood, kinship, political and social territoriality, and survival. The chapter argues that communities resource relations as socially and religiously embedded practices of conservation as done by certain traditionalist discourses is misleading and misrecognition of the world view of the communities. Conservation, whether in the sacred or secular realm, is incidental; implicated in the locally evolved complex of sacred and social organisations are rules of nature and governance aimed at resources use and sustenance.

In a region where the economy has been heavily dependent on forest resources, protection of these resources from other communities both within the area (from neighbouring villages) and outside (from across the region) forms an integral part of the resource management strategy and characterises the socio-polity of the region. Competition over resources and their protection is central to the histories of origin and settlement of villages in this region and are immortalised in the form of popular legends proudly narrated by the winning side. In conflicts over resources with other villages, confrontation and protection has at stake political territoriality and calls forth the collective identity of the village. Establishing territoriality is also crucial to the reciprocal exchange of resources that takes place between the villages in the region, as a part of their risk management strategy. In essence, sharing and protection of resources are as much a part of their livelihood issues as of issues of honour, morality, politics and sociality.

In a time of acute resource crunch brought upon by frequent and consecutive droughts and dwindling forest resources, *Kulhadi bandh panchayat* emerged as a response to secure their resources from the threats posed not only by the *Rebaries* (the migratory

sheep herders from western Rajasthan), but also from their own indiscriminate use. More importantly 'ban-axe' was symbolic restriction of indiscriminate use of the forests by the communities themselves. It did not mean a literal ban on the use of axe or a complete ban on extraction of forest resources. Ban-axe meant that people could harvest only as much as they needed and not as much as they willed.

Kulhadi bandh panchayats were very much a part of the village political and administrative *panchayats* referred to as *nyaya* or *patel panchayats*. When these *panchayats* were convened to specifically address the issues of forest protection and use they were referred to *Kulhadi bandh panchayat*s. The functioning and operation of *Kulhadi bandh panchayat*s, like the earlier forest protection activities of the communities, was embedded in the complex of socio-political systems of resource management and regulations. They inextricably linked to their social, cultural and political identities. Also, there can be no romanticising community institutions. There are conflicts, divisions, hierarchies within communities and these are manifest in their institutional practices. However, when institutions like *Kulhadi bandh panchayats* are formed over crisis of common property resources, they exist despite the inevitable existence of hierarchies and conflict, with some provision to try and address them or contest them.

The point to stress is that forest protection is not an isolated act directed towards the conservation of biodiversity; conservation as an objective is incidental. Further, the act of forest protection through *Kulhadi bandh panchayats* emerges from a context that is deeply embedded in the social and political organisational structures of society and has several perquisites like ownership, reciprocal exchange, livelihood and identities. Denying the communities these perquisites and isolating the activity of forest protection from its village-based social and political context as is attempted through 'institutionalising participation' does not forbear the same effect or significance. Village polities are complex no doubt, but the inequalities therein need to be addressed more squarely. This however may not necessarily be done through seeing them as the 'other' and in need of a uniform structural system predicated on value-based notions of equity and justice as is attempted by the current preoccupation with enabling community participation and enabling 'community-based organisations'(CBOs).

Communities' needs for forest resources and their rooting to their landscape goes hand-in-hand with their changing needs and perceptions about their way of life brought about by the dwindling resources and changing livelihoods. In their perspective, there is no duality between their need to protect their resources and the need for better developmental infrastructures and opportunities for cash-incomes. The importance and need for both shapes their response to external intervention. The external intervention poses both threats of resource alienation and opportunities for income and development. Strategising a survival that enables them to secure both, they negotiate their varying responses – allowing appropriation of their initiatives and collaborating in sustaining its representations within the dominant discourses of conservation.

Chapter 4

Managing the Sanctuary: Projects and People

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to locate Forest Department's discourse on *kulhadi bandh panchayats,* within the larger institutional dynamics and organisational politics of donor-funded projects on wildlife conservation. It also seeks to analyse the implications of the implementation practices for issues of participation and conservation.

In analyzing development in practice, it has been argued that how policy translates into practice and outcome is less dependent on policy intentions and more on inter and intra organisational relationships of the agencies involved i.e. 'the development bureaucracies between intentions and outcome' (Quarles van Ufford, 1988: 12 and 1993; Mosse, 2005). Stressing on the need to focus on 'various ways in which development organisations actually operate' and the 'relationships between specific organisations and their environment', Quarles van Ufford (1988) emphasises the need to view development bureaucracies not as 'systems' with internal coherence and effectiveness but as 'arenas where different constructions of realities interact'.

Organisations however are not monoliths; there are considerable levels of 'ignorance'[61] and differences of objectives and understanding between the higher and lower levels of the organisations, with the top levels primarily concerned with the funding and its attendant mandates, and the lower levels with their immediate hierarchies and the constituency they are directly interacting with. Hence as Quarles van Ufford (ibid.) argues, policy making within development bureaucracies becomes a continuous process and 'policy goals are constructed and reconstructed' both between and within organisations. Simultaneously, organisations and different levels of organisations work more

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[61] Also see Hobart (1993)

immediately towards meeting their own 'system goals'[62] i.e. those of organisational/individual maintenance and survival.

Different 'realities' of the policy arena are a function of the fact that definitions of development problem confronted by development organisations are to a large extent determined by characteristic of the organisation – what the organisations can actually do, and by extension its culture (Epstein 1988). Organisational cultures and organisational relationships are integral part of each other; how organisations chart their relationships within and between them is to a large extent determined by their specific culture (Bebbington *et al.* 2007). Organisational culture has been analysed variously within management and anthropological literature on development with reference to context, history, integrative values and power relations among others. The analysis in this chapter refers however to a more comprehensive concept of organisational culture provided by Lewis *et al.* (2003). The concept of organisational culture within this framework includes a consideration of the socio-political and historical context, the values and meanings evolved within the context, the everyday practices informed by these meanings and power relations that dominate or counter the workings of it. Equally relevant for this analysis is understanding that organisations are not monoliths nor are their 'culture.' Organisations harbour within them fragmentation and sub-groups and thus fragmented cultures and subcultures (Alvesson 1994; Bebbington *et al.* 2007)

The India Ecodevelopment Project was conceived ostensibly to address usufruct issues and conflict over access that bedevilled the PA landscape because of exclusionary conservation policies. It was aimed at linking conservation to the development of alternative rural livelihood. This was sought to be done through the active participation of affected communities and reorientation of the management approach. However the project also brought together organisations like the World Bank and the Forest Department, both of which have, borrowing a phrase from Bebbington *et al.* (ibid: 617), 'deeply sedimented elements of organisational cultures' and 'sub-cultures' with varying organisational goals, interests and interpretation of policy.[63] Hence, as Mosse

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[62] Mosse also refers to it as the 'shadow goals' – illegitimate concerns that constantly threatened project purposes (2004: 651).
[63] Actor-oriented and network-oriented approach to the study of the implementation of eco-development project in Karnataka (Mahanty, 2002) and Tamil Nadu (Rees, 2000) have clearly established the diverse

demonstrates in the case of the DFID-funded rain fed farming project in India, in the implementation of Eco-development in Kailadevi 'practices, events and effects of development actors are shaped not by policy models but by the relationships, interests and cultures of specific organisational settings' (2004: 1).

The chapter by focusing on the interactions between the World Bank and the Forest Department, and the cultural politics of PA management within the Department, analyses the practices of the project and establishes how the disjuncture between project goals and organisational realities work against the 'leopard changing its spots'[64], along with how this disjuncture is 'managed' through representational politics with *kulhadi bandh panchayats* as the *leitmotif* of project "success".

Section one focuses on the approach of the Eco-development project: its main component and the main criticism against it. Section two focuses on the Forest Department of Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve and analyses the kind of problems the implementation of the project faced owing to some of the contradictions between the project ideals and the departmental realities. Section three; looking at the cultural politics of tiger conservation locates the marginalized position of the Sanctuary within the larger context of the Reserve. Section four traces the discursive contours through which *kulhadi bandh panchayat* was co-opted into the success narrative of the Eco-development project and the 'system goals' it served. The last, section five, analyses the implications of the project for conservation, participation and people; arguing primarily that the project reinforced the way the department had always done things.

IEDP: The Approach

As discussed in Chapter two, The India Eco-development Project was conceived as a pilot project in June 1994 on the basis of an Indicative Plan prepared by the Indian Institute of

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and divergent interpretations, interests and practices that governed the complex multi-institutional implementation process.

[64] Jeanrenaud (2002) observes in her organisational analysis of World Wildlife Fund –'reflexive relations between organizational structures, fund raising and dominant narratives can work against the 'leopard changing its spot' and help explain the uneven development of participatory approaches with global conservation.

Public Administration[65] on behalf of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India (GoI). The project was estimated to cost US $67 million, shared by the International Development Association, Global Environmental Facility Trust, GoI, and the respective state governments of the PAs selected for coverage under the IEDP.

Contest and Contradiction

The primary purpose behind the IEDP it seemed was an opportunity to address some of the fundamental problems that marred the attempts at conservation of biodiversity through the network of PAs[66] across the country. As stated in the Staff Appraisal Report of the World Bank:

> In response to pressures on protected areas, the Government is now beginning to address the special issues regarding participatory management of protected areas through a strategy of eco-development. The strategy aims to conserve biodiversity by addressing both the impact of local people on the protected areas and the impact of the protected area on local people. Eco-development thus has two main thrusts: improvement of PA management to conserve biodiversity effectively, to involve local people in PA planning and protection, to develop incentives for conservation and to support sustainable alternatives to harmful use of resources. It supports collaboration between the state forest departments and local communities in and around ecologically valuable areas. Ecodevelopment addresses the welfare and behaviour of local people and integrates these concerns into management of protected areas. It also builds private-sector stakeholder support for conservation among NGOs, nature tour operators and the general public. (World Bank 1996: p3)

The project had six components, of which the following three were to be implemented at the field level (processes and outcomes of which are analyzed in this chapter):

> (a) *Improved PA management* (US $14 million – 22% of the base cost):
> - improving PA planning processes and building capacity;
> - protecting and managing ecosystems and habitat within the PA; and
> - upgrading amenities for field staff
>
> (b) *Village Eco-development* (US $34 million – 55% of the base cost) that reduces negative interactions of local people on biodiversity and increases collaborations of local people by:
> - conducting participatory microplanning and providing implementation support;
> - implementing reciprocal commitments that foster alternative livelihoods and resource uses to be financed by a village eco-development program that specify measurable actions by local people to improve conservation; and
> - special programs for additional joint forest management, voluntary relocation and supplemental investments for special needs

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[65] IIPA (1993)
[66] The World Bank Staff Appraisal Report (SAR) of the India Eco-development Project provides details of some of these issues.

(c) *Education and awareness, and impact monitoring and research* (US $ 5min – 8% of the base cost) that develops more effective and extensive support for PA eco-development including:

- promoting public support for conservation through environmental education and awareness campaigns; and
- impact monitoring and research to improve understanding of issues and solutions relevant to PA management and interactions between PAs and the people

By way of the projects' commitment to participatory approach, as is evident above, over half the budget was to be spent on the village eco-development component, a departure from any previous schemes for wildlife conservation. A major element of the project design also included 'extensive consultation and participatory decision-making involving local people, with particular focus on forest dependent and disadvantaged communities' (Mott 1996)[67]

Conversely, (as many critics have also argued) the subtext of this unprecedented scale of allocation was that "people's pressure" was the primary threat to conservation, a viewpoint shared with the Statist approach to conservation. Implicit in the strategy was that local people needed to be made aware of conservation values of the PA. This is further clarified by the conceptualization of strategy of eco-development by the planners of eco-development. Singh (1995:2), the chief architect of the eco-development planning document prepared by IIPA, defined eco-development as a 'strategy for protecting valuable PAs from unsustainable or otherwise unacceptable pressures resulting from the needs and activities of people living in and around such areas'. Singh (ibid) outlined five means of achieving the above, of which three focused primarily on addressing the use of resources by communities:

- Identifying, establishing and developing sustainable alternatives to the biomass resources and incomes and other inputs being obtained from the protected areas in a manner, or to an extent, considered unacceptable.

- Increasingly involving the people living in and around such protected areas into the conservation planning and management of the area, thereby not only channelling some of the financial benefits of conservation to them, but giving them a sense of ownership towards the protected area.

- Raising the levels of awareness, among the local community, of the value and conservation needs of the protected area, and of patterns of economic growth and development which are locally appropriate and environmentally sustainable.

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[67] Stated in the letter dated 10 July 1996, addressed to one of the critics of the Project.

It is important to note that so far as state institutions for management were concerned, despite the abounding literature available in the early nineties on the role (historical, political and institutional) of the state in engendering these conflicts (see chapter two), the emphasis was on strengthening individual and institutional capacities with a focus on scientific research, plan improvement, upgrading amenities for staff' (World Bank 1996). So far as 'people' within the management framework was concerned it seemed restricted to enabling 'cooperation', 'participatory consultation' and 'developing benefit sharing arrangement'. Issues of rights and entitlements did not enter the framework.

The initiation of the project deeply divided the conservationist lobby in India, including those who advocated the inclusion of people and their rights in the management of PAs. IEDP was seen as detrimental to both conservation and local communities. The criticism levelled against the project brings out the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in the project. Conservation scientist like Ullas Karanth and some like Valmik Thapar who believed that wildlife in India can be conserved only by creating 'inviolate zones' argued that 'eco' in eco-development emphasized not 'ecological' but 'economic' (Telegraph, 1995)[68]. Their primary contention was that promoting eco-development with the Protected Area would compromise its ecological value. They argued that trying to promote livelihood activities would introduce market forces, attract more people from outside, introduce unviable use of biomass and thus exacerbate the problem. They attributed this lack of insight of the project to involvement of social and not ecological scientists in the planning of the project.[69]

The people's participation lobby on the other hand argued that the 'neo-colonial character and interests of the World Bank project would naturally strengthen the arms of the state and the forest department' (Erni 1997). A leading NGO, Centre for Science and Environment and Ashish Kothari of IIPA were the most vocal in their opposition.[70] CSE's

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[68] The objections to the project were raised by most conservation scientists in India including John Singh, Mr. Ashok Kumar, vice-president of the Wildlife Protection Society of India, Dr. Ullas Kranath and included senior government officer (serving and retired) like Director of Project Elephant, Dr. Vinod Rishi and S. Deb Roy

[69] This is a summary prepared from the correspondence between the conservationists and the World Bank, and the news paper articles published on the issue at that time. Letters between Ullas Karanth and Bank were dated 23 July 1996; letters between S.D Roy and Bank date17 June 1996.

[70] Both CSE and Ashish Kothari were seen as collective voice of different groups of NGOs and activists that shared the same viewpoint as them. Organisations and people who lent support to the CSE lobby led by

main contention was that the project had little to offer in terms of proactive role of communities in the project management and that they were not included in the planning and design stage of the project. Quite rightly, the critics accused the project of perceiving poverty as the main cause of people's use of resources and not the 'disempowerment by wildlife laws and programmes and the erosion of environmental rights to use their habitat' (Agarwal 1996)[71]. The criticisms also suggested that participatory approach was being used as a mere appeasement tactic and did not address the issues of rights and entitlements. Kothari (1996) too criticized the project for continuing to adopt an exclusionary attitude, ignoring the rights of local people over land and resources, ignoring the root causes of people-wildlife conflict and the lack of institutional structure for the involvement of local people in planning and management[72]. Also, despite the Bank's claim to consultative process, the major criticism was that it reduced such consultations to mere 'public relations' exercise and the inputs from the various NGOs and concerned individuals were not included in revising the plans.

The Bank team in India (especially the Task Manager for Eco-development) responded differently to different lobbies, primarily by referring back to the provision of the project documents as 'implementation of the project was to depend on the project document'. The responses of the Bank however bring forth the ambiguities and contradiction inherent in the Project design and planning. I present here some excerpts of the responses by the Task Manager.

In response to the fears of relocation that was raised in Nagarhole National Park by several organisations and activist:

> Consistent with the Bank's Operational Directive 4.20, the project would integrate tribal concerns rather than relegate them to a subsidiary tribal development plan or component. Site specific planning and monitoring would address concerns of legal and usufruct rights and status, traditional economies, cultural use of natural resources, livelihood strategies, ability to adapt to new economies, attitudes towards conservation, and social distribution of proposed project investments and benefits foregone (Jessica Mott, 15 August 1996)

Anil Agarwal, included Madhav Gadgil, Medha Patkar, Rajni Kothari, George Fernandes, Soli Sorabjee, Baba Amte, Walter Fernandes and others.
[71] Letter written by Anil Agarwal to the President of the World Bank on 12 July 1996. CSE carried a series of articles during this period on Ecodevelopment raising the issues (a comprehensive compilation is found in CSE Director's Report for 1995-1996).
[72] Letter written to the President of the World Bank on 09/05/1996.

In response to Dr. Karanth, the Task Manager wrote what can be read as a contradiction to the above assurance:

> The conservation of biodiversity, including these animals is the central focus of all project components, including village ecodevelopment. The reciprocal commitments arising from village ecodevelopment will include measurable actions by local people affecting habitat and mammal survival, e.g. curtailing grazing, curtailing fuel wood collection and increased participation in anti-poaching activities.
>
> The project design does not preclude encroachment control after the start of the project. The project's provisions resettlement would not preclude routine law enforcement activities affecting individuals. Enforcement related to poaching control…would continue to be important. PA staff would also be able to prevent the establishment of new settlements where there are no customary tribal or other rights over the land. The updating of the PA management plans would include a review of the current strategy and consider possible improvements, such as clearer boundary markings, new arrangements of patrolling etc. (Jessica Mott, 14 August 1996).

Primarily because of these inherent contradictions and lack of clarity in the project approach, academics point out that proponents of ecodevelopment fail to 'analyse critically the meaning loaded onto the phrase' and hence projects based on such concepts run a heavy risk of failure (Adams 1995). Calling the ecodevelopment a 'vague' concept, Karlsson (1999) points to the fact that Staff Appraisal Report is largely conceptual in nature, failing to provide any 'concrete examples' of how specific components or its main thrust – improving wildlife management and living conditions could be achieved. The 'framework' design that should have worked to the advantage of its emphasis on participatory planning, allowing plans to emerge in 'bottom-up' approach, in its implementation had the exact opposite effect – it seemed to serve the interests of the 'top-down' approach. As a result experiences of ecodevelopment led many to question if the model has been as open-ended and participatory in practice as in plans (Pandey 2005; Baviskar 2003).

Institutional Framework

Despite acknowledging the 'bureaucratic rigidity', the implementation process, by design was left in the hands of the 'governmental structure'. Hence like other international donor policy on participatory development (cf. Mosse, 2004: 654), ecodevelopment too had 'effects through its imperfect translation into the intention and ambitions of others – the institutional interests, operational systems, procedures and organisational culture of collaborating agencies, their workers and those recruited as beneficiaries'.

The funding for the project was operated by the World Bank (WB), while Project Tiger, Ministry of Environment and Forests at the Centre and the Forest Department at the State level were the primary implementing agencies. At the national level an Ecodevelopment Project Implementation Board was set up for this purpose and was assigned full financial and administrative powers to implement the programme. The Board comprised of the Inspector General of Forests, Inspector General Wildlife, financial advisor of MoEF, advisor of planning commission and controller of aid accounts of the Department of Economic Affairs, and a Member of Project Tiger Office was its member secretary. An Ecodevelopment Project Steering Committee was also set up at the national level to facilitate centre-state coordination and provide policy guidance on project activities and work plan. Most importantly the State Governments through their PA authorities were responsible for field level project execution. The management of the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve was the responsibility of the officers posted at the Project Tiger Office in Sawai Madhopur. The Tiger reserve has a 'core zone' (comprising RNP and adjoining areas) and a buffer zone (comprising KWS). Each of these zones is under the jurisdiction of a Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF). Each DCF has other officers of various ranks under their supervision – Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACFs), Rangers, Assistant Rangers and forest or the beat guards at the lowest rung of the hierarchy. The overall management of RTR, including the coordination of the activities of the two DCFs is under the supervision of a Conservator of Forests (CF), otherwise referred to as the Field Director with his office in Sawai Madhopur. At the PA level it is these officers who are in charge of the execution of the IEDP.

Essentially a colonial legacy, Forest Departments are characterized by centralized management (including planning and policy making), strict hierarchical structures, rigid rules, procedures and frameworks (Bahuguna 1992; Singh 1992; Palit 1996; Vasan 2006). It is known more for its preference for 'professional conservatism', with a preference for routine and convention rather than local initiative and adaptation' (Chambers, 1992; as cited in Vira, 1999; cf. Palit, 1996). As Vasan (2002: 2146) rightly points out, professional identities (that inform the strict hierarchies within) are enabled by 'a series of processes including recruitment, training, uniforms, perks and promotions (or transfers)'. These processes also create the institution's incentive structures. Conservatism and incentive (and disincentive) structures underline the need to 'toe the line'. Also ascribed

to it, especially to the lower rungs of the hierarchy is the issue of corruption (Robbin 2000; Vasan 2006)[73]. In the context of a collaborative approach to forest management, Forest Department's unwillingness to change their anti-community attitudes and devolvement of control to community institutions is seen as its defining characteristics.

Notwithstanding the highly rigid and bureaucratic structures, where, as Baviskar (2003: p287) puts it "decisions and processes are supposed to follow formal rules which guarantee consistency and efficiency", the Departments are not monoliths. As many scholars have demonstrated (both in the colonial and post colonial times), departmental policy making or quotidian operations are shaped not only by the hierarchical systems but equally by the inter and intra-departmental tensions and differences, individualized leadership initiatives as well as the influence of the local communities within which they operate (Sivaramakrishnan, 1999; Saberwal, 1999; Vira, 2002; Vasan, 2006). For example, Saberwal (ibid) points to the influence of institutional politics on policy discourses. He demonstrates that Himachal Pradesh Forest Department's policy discourse, justifying the restriction imposed on pastoral Gaddis from using certain pasture lands, was based less on the science of it than on their need to reaffirm their control and territorial jurisdiction against the claims being contested by the Revenue Department. In the contemporary context Vira (2002) demonstrates how the initiatives of individual officers had led to the successful implementation of the JFM programme in Madhya Pradesh.

Also much attention has been paid to the definitive role that the lower rungs of the forest bureaucracy play in implementation and operation of projects or policies. In fact, it is often pointed out whether in India or elsewhere, that the tensions between their role within the department and the relationship with the local people is what prevents the State from implementing its *dejure* rules effectively (Peluso, 1992; Moore, 1993; Saberwal, 1999). Given their significant role in shaping the outcome of the ecodevelopment project in Himachal Pradesh, Baviskar (2003: 288) writes:

> These actors are generally regarded as mere implementers who carry out
> assigned duties after appropriate training. However, it's more insightful to see

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[73] Both argue this from within an institutional framework wherein extra-legal exchanges evolve and are necessitated by the *dejure* rules of the institutions and the disincentives of the hierarchical structures and 'when seen within their social cultural context may not be corruption per se' (Robbin: p429).

> field-level workers as policy makers in their own right. After all, ecodevelopment as actual practice (as opposed to the version on paper) is actively interpreted and applied in specific and contextualized forms by this group....The institutional success of ecodevelopment hinges on this layer of the forest bureaucracy.

There are also several other local issues and concerns that the departments have to contend with – the demands of industries and infrastructure that lead to de-notification of PAs, the nexus between local communities and local politicians in resisting restriction imposed on resource use along with the vote-bank politics which prevents political parties from taking a decisive stand on the policies being adopted for protected area management (Saberwal and Rangarajan 2003; Cedelrof and Rangarajan 2009).

It is evident in the sections below how in implementing the project in Ranthambhore project prescriptions were assimilated into the working culture and agenda of the governmental structures. The implementation practices remained quite removed from the detail procedures of the SAR, especially the aspects which were aimed at enabling transparency, participation and inter-agency linkages[74]. Important for understanding the implementation process of the programme, are the above outlined aspects of organisational culture, the *defacto* practices, and the deeply entrenched ideological positions of the forest bureaucracy. Also significant are the constraints Department face in functioning within the larger bureaucratic structure of the State.

Implementing the Project in Ranthambhore: Troubled Waters

Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve (RTR) has a long history. Ranthambhore National Park (RNP) was the game reserve of erstwhile ruler of the State of Jaipur that was declared as the Sawai Madhopur Wildlife Sanctuary (SMWS) in 1955. In 1973 when Project Tiger was launched in India, SMWS was one of the nine selected tiger areas of the country included in Project Tiger. In 1980 a part of the Sanctuary was notified as a national park. Under Project Tiger the conservation of Tigers in the Sanctuary improved remarkably but

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[74] The monitoring and feedback systems (much emphasized in the SAR in as its commitment to a 'process-oriented' approach and largely to be contracted out) were never put in place anywhere in the ecodevelopment sites. The Supervision Missions of the Bank were the only external monitoring exercises that took place. Participatory monitoring that was to take place at the local level took place only after the mid-term review and was hugely manipulated by the frontline departmental staff.

only through the elimination and alienation of local communities. The presence of villages inside the Sanctuary area was seen as hindrance to meeting the conservation objectives of the Reserve. Thus, between 1973 and 1979, 12 villages were relocated from the forest area within RTR and settled into two settlements near the park. In 1980 the reserved forests of SMWS was declared Ranthambhore National Park (Rathore and Thapar 1989; Shah and Shah 1996). Since the declaration of the Park, its conservation value, measured exclusively by the tiger census has seen many ups and downs. In the early 80s the tiger population increased significantly. However, from mid to late 80s to the early 90s, there has been a severe loss of tiger population, primarily to poaching. The management has lost a number of Forest Department staff in encounters with poachers (Jackson, 2003).

One of the major management activities of RNP has been securing the Park against the neighbouring and relocated villages who use the forests as a source for firewood and fodder. The communities, comprising mainly of *Meenas*, a Scheduled Tribe (ST), who survive on cattle herding, are also known to forcibly enter RNP during the rainy season for grazing. There have been many violent stand-offs between the FD and the local communities in the past over the issue of grazing. The resident communities that were relocated continue to visit their religious sites located within the Park. In addition, there is a huge rush of pilgrims who visit the famous temple sites (encompassed by the Park), which are a part of the Fort of the erstwhile rulers of Jaipur. The core area of Ranthambhore is important and popular wildlife tourist destination. Management of tourism in the Park poses its own sets of problems for the Park staff. As the status paper reports, other than the expectation of VIPs that park authorities give them extra time and care, almost 60% of the management time is spent in tourism management. The revenue generated from tourism goes to the State coffers and not to the Park management. According to local staff, the State promotes tourism at the peril of the Park.

At the time of the selection of the Park, these problems were particularly pronounced. The management felt that given the magnitude of the workload involved in securing the Reserve, the support from the State Government was inadequate. Conservation, as some of the advocates of RTR continue to appeal, is low on the agenda of the Government and suffers from the lack of political will (Thapar 2006). The Park Management was also very

unpopular with several NGOs and activist groups who were opposed to the Staff imposing restriction on resource use practices of local communities.

All these factors made RNP an appropriate case for the Project. The Project was expected to enable a better management of the Park while being able to address what the SAR (1996: 100) referred to as the '[H]istory of hostile relationships between local people and PA authorities, problems of coordination among NGOs and PA authorities, delays in terms and processes of resettlement, and increasing pressure on resources from growing urban and rural populations'.

Despite the appropriateness of the IEDP for the Park, the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve proved to be a problem site for the World Bank. Although, during the implementation stage, the Project had faced problems in most areas[75], RTR as per the Banks own assessment was amongst the poorest performers.

The implementation of the project and its "lack of performance" in Ranthambhore brings to fore the complex, fragmented, multilayered working culture of the forest bureaucracy. It highlights the incompatibility of the project goal and the cultural politics of tiger conservations that characterise high profile Tiger Reserves like Ranthambhore.

Non-performing State

In May 2000, the World Bank conducted a Mid-Term Review (MTR) of IEDP[76]. In the Review, RTR came in for severe criticism. The major issue, it appeared, was with the Government of Rajasthan (GoR). Although the MoEF had released the funds on time[77],

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[75] This was mostly in the form of protest by NGOs who were of the opinion that the IEDP was detrimental to both conservation and local communities. In fact, it was reported that in several areas it was being used as a pretext to evict people from PAs. Nagarhole National Park in Karnataka even attracted an Inspection Panel of the World Bank to review the Project's performance.

[76] According to the Bank, the MTR provided an opportunity to review, revise and restructure the project according to its objectives and achievable targets within the then remaining time frame of two years until the project closure date of June 2002.

[77] Funds are released by MoEF to the implementing states every year and the unspent balance remaining with the States at the close of the financial year is revalidated by MoEF in the next year to finance project activities. MoEF has to ensure that the revalidated amounts are in turn immediately released by the state governments to the project implementing agencies as revalidation does not automatically result in availability of funds with the implementing agencies. Additional funds, over and above the revalidated amount, are also released by MoEF on the basis of approved project activities for the year. Here again

the gross delay on the part of GoR in making the funds available to the implementing agency, Rajasthan Forest Department (RFD) had led to an under-utilization of funds. Although money was sanctioned in 1996, owing to successive delays by GoR, implementation at the field level were initiated only in 1998. Even in May 2000, as the Bank had pointed out, GoR was still to release funds that had been sanctioned in the Financial Year 1999. Further, the Annual Plan of Operation, on which the budget is sought for the functioning of the Departments, had not been finalized nor sanctioned thus foreboding further delays in the implementation process.

GoR policies also impeded the implementation of some of the other aspects of the project. By the time of the Mid-Term Review, the GoR had not approved a single consultancy contract[78], it had not approved any study tours or training for staff, it had not supported the purchase of vehicles, computers and specialized equipment entitled under the Project.

Further, to foster an integrated approach to PA management, GoR was to facilitate inter-agency linkages by setting up state level coordinating committee and PA coordinating committee. By the time of the MTR, the GoR was yet to set up these committees. The Bank was extremely critical of this –

> [T]his clearly shows a lack of commitment and responsibility by GoR towards the project. In particular, the mission is concerned that GoR continues to contest the need for these consultancies when the entire scope and design of the project was prepared in consultation with the RFD and later confirmed by GoR through signature to the project legal documents. In light of these fund flow difficulties, Bank Management questions commitment and ownership to the project (p2).

The Bank also had several issues with the RFD. Under Improved PA Management, it was mandatory for all PAs to prepare their management plans. The plans were to reflect strategies and needs that were in line with the objectives of the Project. In the case of RTR, the Draft Management Plan was considered grossly inadequate, lacking necessary data and consultancy inputs.

There were also problems with the Eco-Development Committees set in the Park. EDCs were responsible for implementing village-level components of the Project (see details in

MoEF has to ensure timely placement of funds by the state governments at the disposal of the implementing agencies (WB, 2000).
[78] Implementation of some of the project objectives (improving planning processes, capacity building, microplanning, village ecodevelopment) mandated the contracting of NGOs and expert advisors.

section 5). The Bank observed that instead of the agreed 60 only 31 had been set up; no technical support had been provided, much of the money had been spent in building water reservoirs and the microplans did not clearly focus on the conservation linkages of the activities to be undertaken by EDCs. In its MTR the Bank also expressed serious concern over the lack of action under the components of 'Environment Education and Awareness' and 'Research and Monitoring'. The latter was seen especially important to ascertain the impact of the Project and ensure financial sustainability of the project activities.

The Bank was sceptical that in RTR the FD had focused its expenditure on infrastructure and paid no heed to the other aspects. It stated that the GoR and RFD were not interested in changing their attitudes towards the people and in taking advantage of the holistic approach envisaged by the Project. The general dissatisfaction of the Bank is evident in words of the then Senior Social Scientist at the WB, India Office, who was also one of the team members of the MTR:

> RFD has been very disappointing and dissatisfying. There are several reasons. The money from the project was being used as salaries rather than for actual work, the disbursement of funds was really slow. They have an attitude problem – they believe they know everything and have not, with the exception of one, engaged any consultancies as is mandated in the project proposal. Besides they have over emphasized the infrastructure component (20 May 2000).

Based on the findings of the MTR, essentially the non-performance of RTR, the Bank had threatened to drop RTR from the IEDP if the GoR did not comply with the terms of the Project. Simultaneously, in the MTR the budget for the Park was revised and the total was reduced from initial Rs.38.30 core to Rs.19.99 core. These targets were drawn keeping in view that June 2002 would mark the end of the project. Post the MTR, after extensive discussions with GoR and RFD, the Bank eventually arrived at an extensive list of "Agreed Action" with specified deadlines.

Aide Memoir of the Supervision Mission of September-October 2001, reflected a marginally positive note, but some key problems that had been stated at the MTR had remained. As the report noted:

> Overall the Mission is concerned about disappointing progress to date in implementation and completion of agreed priority actions. These delays can be attributed to delays in State clearance of financial flows and sanctions for essential activities; staffing constraints, including lack of women officers; and failure to prioritize and complete essential activities. It is critical that the Park staff now focus on meeting agreed targets prior to project completion and the State Government afford every means to facilitate this objective. (p2)

According to the original agreement, the Project was to conclude in June 2002 and all activities had to be brought to a halt by December 2001, giving a wrap-up period of 6 months. In the latter half of the Project, especially in 2001, there was a flurry of activities by the FD at RNP and KWS. The FD had sought to make rapid progress on possible targets as a follow up to a request for an extension on the project. The Mission, taking note of some of the pending objectives of the Project in RTR, had clearly stated –

> Based on discussions with the Mission, the RFD has submitted a proposal for extension of the project. At the wrap up meeting in Jaipur the Bank informed the Secretary and RFD that any consideration of an extension of the project for RTR would be contingent on performance against specific criteria. (ibid)

Evident from the discussion in this section, it is clear that notwithstanding the lofty goals of the Project, in the implementation of the Project, rather than changing, processes had been co-opted by the existing processes of the State bureaucracy and existing agenda of the Rajasthan Forest Department. The Department had been most prompt in using the project budget allocated to *infrastructure* building as it enhanced their 'policing' and 'patrolling' abilities. Forest posts like *chowkie*s and *naka*s were set up to enhance "the much needed 24-hour vigil" on the forests. These posts also served as the living quarters of the beat guards. Also, infrastructure building required no attitude change; it could be done without involving 'people' and was a tangible achievement.

The Incompatible Goals

As discussed above, the Project for RTR was designed to address the existing inadequacies at the field level and equip the management in an informed manner for more permanent solutions. However, as has already been discussed, there were many discrepancies between the Project design and its actual execution, especially at the level of the State. It was however the field level staff at all levels in the PA that was left to handle the consequences of the lofty demands of the Project, policy constraints, inaction of the State government and its larger political ambitions. It is important to point out that notwithstanding the project, as discussed in the last section of the Chapter, the discourse on conservation and participation did not change and the department was expected to continue with its regular policing, patrolling and protecting activities of the Park. Thus, as some of the officials seemed to suggest, executing the Project agenda under these circumstances had made the Project itself a burden for the management; especially in handling some of the very issues the Project had set out to address.

One of the biggest problems facing the management prior to commencement of the Project was the inadequacy of staff (a problem generic to most PAs in India). The provision of the field staff was considered inadequate compared to their workload as they considered themselves ill-trained and often outnumbered by poachers and 'miscreants' and without adequate amenities (FD, 2000). Apprised of the situation, the planners of ecodevelopment had suggested provisioning or recruitment of additional staff rather than entrusting the project responsibilities to the regular staff. Besides, recruitment of additional staff was also not feasible as in terms of policy it would not be possible to sustain them beyond the project period. With the regular policing and tourism activities ongoing in the Park, the staff was already under tremendous pressure dealing with existing management problems. For instance, in the year 2000, the Deputy Conervator of Forests in charge of the Park had been compelled to fire shots in the air to prevent the forcible entry of cattle herders. Protest from the people had ensued and the issue had become a concern for the State Government (Rajasthan Patrika, 12 August 2001). Added to this was the enhanced tourism attraction of the Park following the visit of the then President of the United States of America, Bill Clinton in March 2000. According to the DCF (Core), extrapolating from the statistics of a single month, the people visiting the park had gone up from 4,000 in the year 1999 to 10,000 in the year 2000.

Along with handling these pressures the existing staff was expected to handle implementation of IEDP activities, that too at a formidable pace. The FD was under pressure to meet the financial expenditure targets of the Project, which had already fared badly following the initial delays. The Chief Wildlife Warden of Rajasthan expressed his concerns as follows –

> IEDP has its own problems. Handling the project with the same staff was just not possible. Besides, much of our staff gets involved in fire fighting. This is a project with heavy targets, thus to keep the money going, the staff have almost always been engaged in handling the Project activities. (02/12/2001)

This implies, what the staff at RTR had been hinting at, they could 'either let the management suffer or the Project suffer'. A clear example of this dilemma is evident from the proceedings of a Project-related meeting on what the Bank considers a critical aspect of the Project. As has been mentioned above, the Project was so designed and provided for the FD to engage a number of consultants, undertake research studies and

get technical support for those aspects of the Project that were to enhance the management and ecodevelopment of the Park. The Conservator of Forests, the highest authority at the level of the RTR, however in his words points out the practical difficulties in this aspect –

> Suppose we engage consultants, then each consultant is equivalent to one Forest Ranger. If we engage 30 consultants then the CF has the additional responsibility of handling thirty additional Rangers. It is not an easy task. So it is not feasible to say that just engage consultants and do your job. Besides spending Rs 10 crores[79], a large sum, may just compromise quality. So we execute only that much which is physically possible. We cannot just blindly go ahead and spend the money! (12 August 2000)

Not only was there an acute shortage of staff, but the staff was ill-equipped to comprehend the "complex procedures of the Bank that came with their time bound targets". As the one Ranger (under condition of anonymity) pointed out, "A few days of training was completely inadequate for us understand the Project. Now well into the end of the Project we have not been able to understand even 10 percent of the Project". Unwilling to sound too critical of the Project, the CF summed up the effectiveness of the staff in the following words –

> I won't say that the staff is under-trained. Whatever the objectives were, the staff has been trying to meet them effectively. However, as things change, the way of managing changes and everything else also changes. So there is always a time lag between what we are teaching and what ultimately goes down to the people. The only problem that we are facing is that we are not having any new blood. Whatever staff we have is very old. There is a bit of problem with their education. Whatever they are doing now, they are very good. However, when we have to train them for new skills then their educational qualification creates a bit of a problem. It takes much longer to teach them new techniques. (21 August 2000)

What also the above statement implied was the fact that the forest guards 'who represent the State at the field level'[80] had to shift gears; known mainly for their policing role, they had now to seek the cooperation of the people, which was proving particularly difficult given the existing hostility and mistrust between the two parties.

Problems were also imposed by the Project Tiger Office being non-operational. At the time of the MTR it was found that the office had failed to provide any policy guidance or support to the Projects at the Field level. Thus, as some of the senior staff members of the Department pointed out, they were required to implement the Project without any clear

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[79] A crore is 10,000,000 Indian Rupees or approx. 222,841.23 USD
[80] See Robbins (2003) and Vasan (2002) also Vira (2005).

guidelines. The DCF (Core) rejected the SAR as a guideline as it was essentially an internal document of the Bank. As one of the FD documents submitted to the Bank for Project assessment points out, "In the absence of operational guidelines a lot of time is wasted on sorting out unforeseen situations and devising our own guidelines" (FD, 2001: p3). Implementation was also marred by conflicting instructions from the State Government and the World Bank.

The project practices were also shaped by the differences that existed between the staff at the field level. The CF of RTR, while aware of the 'pragmatic problems' of the project, was still keen on meeting the Bank targets. The Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) on the other hand was criticizing the project openly (see his comments on micro-planning). He felt that the project was too ambitious and explained that there was no point spending just to meet the financial targets. He felt that the Bank was interventionist and adopted 'bullying' tactic in a domain that was best left to the Department. As the DCF pointed out:

> If the WB has investment in the area then they have a say in related activities
> whether or not they fund those activities. RNP has to seek permission from WB;
> it is an important clause in the Project. It takes away the sovereignty of the FD.
> (1 December 2001)

As a result, the CF and the DCF had reached a stalemate. The DCF was seen as 'non-compliant' as he was unwilling to meet the EDC targets. Also he had ensured that the staff prioritized the protection activities over the project activities often leading to the non-availability of staff for training and other activities of the project. The patrons of the Park like Valmik Thapar sided with the DCF, and, since the former had been exemplary in staving off the local population encroaching on the forest area, the CF could not pull rank.

Tiger Politics: The Neglected Sanctuary

In September 2000 when I was making my initial enquiries with senior officials to get a background on Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary, I was actively discouraged from choosing the Sanctuary as my field area. On hearing that I wanted to base my field study in

Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary, the then Director of Project Tiger[81] had remarked, "What a place to choose! You will only get an adverse image…that's no area for any conservation study!" (Sen[82], pers. comm. 12 August 2000). Valmik Thapar, a renowned conservationist who has been associated with RTR for several decades, was equally dismissive about my plans to work in Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary. According to him, "Kailadevi is a Sanctuary for namesake…it is not worth being called a Sanctuary. It has been written off by all those who are associated with conservation and wildlife protection!" (Thapar, pers. comm. 7 August 2000).

According to some of the official narratives, the conservation value of KWS is marred largely by two factors: a) The presence of human intervention; and b) the consequent lack of any significant wildlife population in the Sanctuary area (read tiger). According to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF)[83], Rajasthan:

> Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary was established as a buffer to the Ranthambhore National Park (RNP), even though it was not an ideal one. It was established to take the spill-over of tigers from RNP. However, because of human interference it could never be an ideal place for tigers. (12 February 2001)

The neglect of Kailadevi reflects the institutional politics implicit in big mammal conservation and its tiger counts. Tiger conservation became an important project of the State and central government owing to the big cat's institution as India's national animal. Conservation significance of a place, strategies and funding issues came to be defined by the tiger census. Hence tiger count becomes as issue of knowledge and power. Tiger count becomes focus of much contestation – including the processes by which these numbers are generated. Project Tiger Office remains the source of official figures. Given its institutional imperative, it has always been in the interest of PTO to generate inflated figures of tiger population. As Johari (2007) and Ward and Ward (2002) note, tiger counts are deeply implicated in the incentive and disincentive structures that characterize the

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[81] Project Tiger is an initiative of the Ministry of Environment, Government of India that commenced in the mid-70s and was prompted by the imminent threat of extinction of tigers in the country. It was actively supported by late Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India. Several PAs where the tiger is found have been declared as 'Project Tiger Reserves'. Tiger Reserves are not legal entities, but such areas do receive closer attention and additional resources to aid management. The Project Tiger Directorate of the MoEF oversees the management of Project Tiger Reserves across the country.

[82] Mr. P.K. Sen was the Director of Project Tiger at the time of the research.

[83] In the hierarchy of the Indian Forest Department, the PCCF occupies the highest position. The PCCF is in-charge of all forest areas of the state. In some states, such as in Rajasthan, a PCCF (Wildlife), also known as the Chief Wildlife Warden, is appointed who is exclusively in-charge of PAs while another PCCF is in-charge of all other forest areas.

organisational culture of departments and Project Tiger Office. At the time of the initiation of the Project, KWS was said to have no tigers. The first compilation of animal census was done in the Status Paper submitted to the Bank towards an assessment for inclusion of the Sanctuary in the Project. The census then noted that the Sanctuary had 11 tigers. Although none of the senior official believed these figures, they never opposed it openly as it served to reiterate the importance of the Reserve for tiger conservation.

Following the low significance accorded to the conservation value of the Sanctuary, its management and infrastructure have also been long neglected by the offices of Project Tiger at Sawai Madhopur as well as by officials at the State level. According to the ACF who had been in the area since 1989 –

> Till 1991 the Sanctuary was 'just like that'. It was declared a Sanctuary but in terms of facilities nothing changed. We had no facilities to manage it against the sheep herders, poachers, miners or anybody else! (10 October 2001)

Designated as buffer zone in 1991, the management of the Sanctuary was entrusted to the Project Tiger Office in Sawai Madhopur. While there was some effort to bring into effect some of the wildlife regulations, no additional infrastructure was made available to the Sanctuary. Further, it seemed to lack any serious official attention from Sawai Madhopur. As one of the Rangers had complained:

> Who comes here? We do not get to see the senior officials here. If at all they come, it is once in a blue moon! They have all they need there…they have jeeps, computers, wireless, they have all the privileges! (16 September 1996)

In 1996 though, a position of Deputy Conservator of Forester (DCF) existed for KWS, the concerned officer was reluctant to shift. As the ACF explained, coming to Karauli was seen as 'demotion' and a 'punishment posting'. According to him, since the place offered no challenge, there was not much scope for furthering one's career as one hardly gets noticed by the seniors. He himself had been, as he put it "languishing" in this area since 1989.

The extent and intensity of neglect experienced by the local staff is well captured in Annual Plan Operation (1998-1999), prepared by the office of the Deputy. Conservator of Forest (Buffer):

> The Buffer Division, since its creation in 1991, had its office and headquarters in Sawai Madhopur. However, with the increase in staff at Sawai Madhopur office, the head quarters of this office was transferred to Karauli in November 1997. Thereafter this Division does not have any office building and other

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infrastructure whatsoever. The problem is further compounded by the fact that Karauli is small and undeveloped town and therefore, even rented accommodation and other facilities are hard to find. Hence, while one part of Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve might have strong infrastructure and management tools, the other part (in fact the larger part) is not only poor and emaciated (*sic*) but utterly devoid of infrastructure. So much so that even drinking water is scarce. Students of Psychology and Management will observe that such unequal and un-proportionate (*sic*) distribution of management tools and facilities within one Tiger Reserve may lead to a situation of 'Investment Imbalance Syndrome', which is bound to affect the human resource. Hence, it is imperative to undertake corrective measures soon and create infrastructure so as to bring it at least at par with other wildlife protected areas of India and Rajasthan. (p1)

This neglect was a source of constant rancour between the Sanctuary staff in Karauli and the Park staff in Sawai Madhopur. For the latter the Park was synonymous with the Reserve; the needs and importance of RNP dominated all debates pertaining to the enhancement of the future of the Reserve[84].

The neglect of the Sanctuary is also taken to be symbolic of existing hierarchy and its assertion within the forest bureaucracy. All senior officials at Sawai Madhopur belong to the Indian Forest Service cadre while the staff in the Sanctuary is from the Rajasthan Forest Service. As the ACF often remarked – "[T]hey will obviously get the attention… after all they are from the IFS!" In my many trips to various meetings with the staff of FD, the conversation amongst them would centre on the discrimination in the infrastructure available to them and to their peers in the Park. It would often come down to petty details like petrol allowance.

In the constant refrains of the staff regarding the state of management of the Sanctuary, there is an underlying aspiration to match up to the status of the Park. On several occasions officials at various levels have claimed: Our sanctuary has even better potentials than RNP. They are not giving us an opportunity to show it!

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[84] In September 2000 an *International Symposium on Tiger Habitat Conservation: Vision 2000 and Beyond* was organised by the Project Tiger office in Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve and an NGO called Tiger Watch. Although the Symposium was to focus on tiger habitats all over India, other than the specific presentation by participants, most informal discussion ended up focusing on RTR and that too on RNP alone. On the last day of the Symposium, the Deputy Conservator of Forests (Core), a recipient of several conservation awards for efficient management of the Park, even went as far as to suggest, "It would be valuable if the participants gave their suggestions for the better management of *Ranthambhore National Park*. He was however checked sharply by the representatives from Tiger Watch that the management plan pertains to the "whole of RTR and not just the Park alone". His apathy to the buffer zone was clear. Doubting the very basis of the existence of the Sanctuary, he states, "KWS, physically or in reality, does not function as a buffer for RTR."

IEDP: System Goals

It is against this background of neglect, paucity and aspirations that the extension of the IEDP to the Sanctuary had assumed an all-pervading importance for the long-term staff like the ACF. It offered an opportunity for the local staff in KWS to wrest for itself a reputation as good as RNP but also independent of it.

The extension of the IEDP to KWS significantly improved its infrastructure. The table below (FD, 2001)[85] indicates the assets built under the project:

The work done under the provision for 'Improved PA Management' (Table 107)

Construction of Building	31
Ordinary Roads	5
Wireless Tower	4
Fire Watch Tower	7
Soil Conservation Activities	4
Core Breeding Centre	1

A deluge of attention also accompanied the infrastructural boom. The CF and other staff from Sawai Madhopur now visited the Sanctuary regularly. Local staff took great pride in the fact that the Sanctuary was visited not only by officials from Sawai Madhopur and Jaipur but also "big people" from the World Bank. As discussed below, the then State Minister of Forest and Environment also had an opportunity to visit the area. Owing to the visits of Ministers and Bank officials as well as to the setting up of the district level committee, the social standing of the local FD staff among the district administration was considerably enhanced. The ACF and DCF regularly interacted with the local politicians who also had to be a part of the six monthly project public review meetings.

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[85] This is a translation of the original document that is written in Hindi. It had been prepared as an internal note to be submitted to the Project Tiger Office in Sawai Madhopur for inclusion into the Progress Report of the Project,

With the opportunities made available by the projects, the ACF and some of the Foresters felt vindicated. In fact encouraged by the rapid investments and constructions in Kailadevi, the local staff aspired to make KWS equal to RNP, if not better –

> You will see Priyaji, one day when you come back you will be surprised at how the Sanctuary would have tuned out!! It will leave Ranthambhore National Park far behind. Now nothing can stop us. Once we control the pressure of the people on the Park, we are bound to get back our former glory. This place will have many more tigers than Ranthambhore!

The underlying desire to pit the Sanctuary against the Park is also manifest in the operations at the field level. A 'Nature Interpretation Centre', constructed under IEDP, has become an object of pride amongst the local staff[86]. The DCF and the ACF who took a personal interest in the construction of the building have, by their own admission, sought to design it along the lines of Jogi Mahal[87]. Aspiring for a similar setting for the Centre, plans were afoot in Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary to build an artificial lake and to nurture a 'deer park' in its vicinity.

Co-opting Kulhadi bandh panchayats

Under the 'Village Ecodevelopment' component of IEDP, each protected area was expected to set up village-level ecodevelopment committees or 'EDC'. Describing the need and efficacy of such committees the project document states –

> The project would operate at the level of a single village or hamlet constituted into an Ecodevelopment committee (EDC)…as the best units for planning and community action. (World Bank, 1996a: 118)

These committees were constituted in accordance with State Government circulars specifically issued to enable project requirements. Typically in all EDCs, Foresters are appointed as the member secretary, while people from the communities fill other positions. These committees were deemed responsible for the formulations of the site-

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[86] The State Minister for Environment and Forests inaugurated 'Nature Interpretation Centre' amidst much pomp and show. An interpretation centre is symbolic of the growing ecological significance of a nature reserve and is also available only in the better known PAs in India.

[87] Jogi Mahal was a rest house of the erstwhile rulers of the Jaipur State used during their hunting expedition to Ranthambhore. It is now used as the forest guesthouse reserved exclusively for guests of the State and key people associated with the conservation of the Park. Located at the border of the Lake and shaded by one of the oldest Banyan tree in the region it serves as a great tourist attraction and adds to the scenic beauty and symbolic status of the Park.

specific micro plans, supposedly a participatory approach to planning and decision-making.

Benefits from the project could accrue to individuals (through income generating activities, energy saving devices, etc.) as well as the whole community (such as soil and water conservation structures, enclosures, approach roads, community halls, etc.). In Kailadevi the main focus has been on construction of soil and water conservation structures. In return for these 'benefits' being provided by the Forest Department, communities had to make 'reciprocal commitments' to generally assist the Forest Department in conservation and protection of the forests. It needs to be reiterated that the Village Ecodevelopment component attracted almost 55% of the project funding (World Bank, 1996), as it was the embodiment of the project's commitment to involving 'people' in conservation, an apparent remedial measure to the earlier exclusionary approaches to Protected Area management.

In this section I focus on how the *kulhadi bandh panchayats* initially dismissed as insignificant, was gradually, through discursive practices were co-opted to render the ecodevelopment initiative at the village level a "success", which in turn afforded a certain level of "success" to the IEDP itself. Aligning *kulhadi bandh panchayat* with EDC, the official mandate for institutionalizing local participation, allowed for the popular narrative of *kulhadi bandh* as a community practice to be appropriated within the institutional context of the project, thereby enabling it to be claimed as a measure of "success" in community mobilization. When analyzed in the context of the politics inherent in externally aided, multi-layered and multi-organisational projects, the gradual co-option of *kulhadi bandh panchayats* as project achievement is informing.

As Mosse (2004) concludes in the context of a British government aided project in rural India, representing "success" of projects and policy models (even when practices sustaining such representations of success run counter to the very policy models) remains vital to serving the multiple and often contradicting needs of the multiple actors involved. *Kulhadi bandh panchayats*, made popular in the post-IIPA research context, as effective and successful community-based forest protection and as an embodiment of people's participation, remained crucial at many levels. In the course of IEDP its proponents (especially World Bank and state Forest Departments) increasingly came under criticism

for the "failures" of the project at some sites (Kothari *et al.*, 1998; Kothari *et al.*, 2000; Baviskar, 1998; Karlsson, 1999), especially vis-à-vis the reported alienation of local communities. At this juncture, practices like *kulhadi bandh panchayat*, an ideal of community-based forest protection, was represented as a reciprocal commitment made by them in lieu of receiving project 'benefits' and was seen as a popular vindication of the project ideology.

For the Forest Department, representing *kulhadi bandh panchayat* as a part of the popular appreciation of the village ecodevelopment component served several agenda that it had with the World Bank and within its own bureaucracy. Co-opting the institutional structure enabled them to claim a degree of effective implementation of the project, especially at a point when Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve and the Government of Rajasthan had been criticized by the Bank for poor performance and threatened with the possibility of premature termination (as discussed previously). The narrative of *kulhadi bandh panchayat* as a community-based practice served to represent the Department's ability to meet with the IEDP need for bringing about "attitudinal change" amongst Forest officers towards a more 'participatory' and 'inclusive approach'. Thus in the official discourses on *kulhadi bandh panchayat* there is a sustained attempt to give the Department credit for the initiation and maintenance of the practice.

At the Sanctuary level, presenting *kulhadi bandh panchayat* as a "success" story of IEDP was important to for its 'system goals'. Presentation of *kulhadi bandh panchayat* as a project achievement helped sustain the unprecedented and much desired investment in infrastructure development of the Forest Department for the Sanctuary as well as opportunity for advancement of personal career goals of individual officers.

*Kulhadi bandh panchayat*s provided the Department with an almost readymade village level institution that complied with all the requirements of setting up ecodevelopment committees as mandated by IEDP. These panchayats were significant not only because they had their origins in the community but also because the idea of a ban-axe lent itself easily to being defined as a "reciprocal commitment". The co-option was gradual, coinciding with an increased understanding of what is defined as people's participation and the compulsions to demonstrate success.

Prior to the commencement of IEDP in 1996, the targets of the Forest Department, as per the orders of the Government of Rajasthan, were very different. As an extension of the participatory approach embodied in Joint Forest Management (JFM), the State Government had mandated the formation of *Van Suraksha Samitis* (Forest Protection Committees) in the parks and sanctuaries that were still inhabited by people[88]. In 1992, Kailadevi Sanctuary was brought under the direct supervision and control of Field Director, Project Tiger Ranthambhore with the creation of a Buffer Zone Division headquartered at Karauli.

During my fieldwork in Kailadevi Sanctuary in 1996, it was clear that the Department's attempt to establish these *samitis* had met with little success, having succeeded in setting up only six *samitis* in a Sanctuary of over 30 villages. The Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF), a rank below that of the DCF, was the main person in charge of the Sanctuary[89]. The ACF was keen to show himself as an effective officer, to be considered for a promotion as well as a chance to be transferred out of the Buffer Zone Division (see previous section). Since these *samitis* were a Department mandate, the ACF was determined to promote them as against any other initiative. Consequently, he was dismissive of the existence and efficacy of the *kulhadi bandh panchayats*, which, following IIPA's research, were receiving popular coverage. As he had stated to me in a conversation in 1996[90] –

> You are confusing the ideas. There are *Van Suraksha Samitis* that have been established by us (the Forest Department). The *kulhadi bandh panchayat*s are the peoples own *panchayat*. It must be a part of some internal issues of the village. *In fact, it is of no real significance* (12 September 1996)

In 1997 when IEDP was extended to the Sanctuary (after initially being proposed only for Ranthambhore National Park) the local Forest Department was required to undertake project preparatory activities i.e. mobilize people for setting up EDCs. During this phase in order to substantiate their official claim of success of their previous program, the

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[88] JFM works through the formation of village level Forest Protection Committees. These FPCs undertake forest protection activities and in return are entitled to some benefits from the forest that they protect. However as mentioned in Chapter 2, the extension of the JFM principles to PAs is limited to the formation FPCs and forest protection..It did not entail issues of resource use and benefit sharing.

[89] In the same year, although a Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF) had been assigned to Kailadevi, the officer continued to operate from Sawai Madhopur.

[90] Even in 1995 when the first written acknowledgement was made of people's initiative at forest protection in the Sanctuary area, the FD had claimed that it was being done through VSS that the FD had established in the villages. (Sachdev, 1995)

Department first attempted to rename all the existing *kulhadi bandh panchayats* into VSSs. This was clearly evident in meetings that took place in February 1997. The local NGO had convened a meeting of the *kulhadi bandh panchayat* in village Nibhera. At this meeting the ACF, disregarding the basis of the forum, said that the government had sanctioned a sum of money for the benefit of the people but the villagers could take advantage of it only if they were willing to organize themselves into *Van Suraksha Samitis*. When the NGO interjected that the village already had a *kulhadi bandh panchayat*, and that this was a meeting of the very institution, the ACF stated –

> We will not henceforth call it *kulhadi bandh panchayat*. We will now call it *Van Suraksha Samiti*. (11 February 1997)

Following this meeting a VSS was established in Nibhera. However, as the village register shows, a month later it was once again converted into an Ecodevelopment Committee. It seemed at that time that the idea of *kulhadi bandh panchayat* did not appeal to some of the Department staff because it did not reflect their involvement in any identifiable manner. Unlike the VSS where a Forester was to be the member-secretary, the *kulhadi bandh panchayat* had no scope for the involvement of the Department. When I visited Nibhera in June 2000 keen to know how the *kulhadi bandh panchayat* was functioning, the ACF had stated, "[T]here are no *kulhadi bandh panchayats* now. They have been converted into EDCs."

Perhaps at this point the local officials failed to appreciate the appeal a practice like *kulhadi bandh panchayat* had in the broader discourse on people's participation that formed the basis of IEDP. It probably missed the 'indigenous' and 'local' nature of the practice, the usage of which often lends legitimacy to 'participatory' approaches. However the lessons were learnt fairly quickly, as within a span of 6-8 months the whole discourse on *kulhadi bandh panchayat* had changed once again.

Therefore, towards the latter half of 2000 and in 2001, the existence of *kulhadi bandh panchayats* in Kailadevi was no longer being denied; in fact it was spelling the success of EDCs and the efforts of the Forest Department! In an international symposium co-

organized by RTR, in September 2000[91], the only significant mention the Sanctuary received pertained to "…the exemplary achievement of the project", i.e. the *kulhadi bandh panchayats!*[92] In their narrative, the Forest Department, the more powerful agent, had systematically albeit subtly, reconstructed the agency and history of *kulhadi bandh panchayats*. While the people were credited with the onus of having taken up such a practice in their Panchayat, the Department reserved for itself the credit of initiating and mobilizing the people towards it. *Kulhadi bandh panchayats* were now projected as "reciprocal commitment" made by the people in lieu of the benefits received from IEDP.

> When the efforts were made at stopping the sheep herders, a promise had been taken that they would be stopped only if the local people promised not to cut the forests. Until then it was common practice to cut a *dhok* trees 4-5 feet from the ground to use the leaves for fodder, while having no use for the wood of the tree itself. Then they were made to understand that if they broke the leaves with their hands rather than cutting the tree it would give a lot more leaves for a much longer period. If the tree is not cut down then it is possible to get fodder for the whole year. People began to understand this and when they were convinced that the FD authorities had stopped the sheep herders from entering into their area, they also decided to keep their promise and agreed to form the *kulhadi bandh panchayat.*" (Tyagi and Singh, 2000: 4)[93]

In the official discourse, the origin of *kulhadi bandh panchayat* was traced only as far back as 1997, to a specific meeting held in Rahar, a village where IEDP was being implemented. Such (mis)representations of the *panchayats* served many strategic needs including addressing the concerns raised by the World Bank in its Mid-Term Review in May 2000 –

> It is important that Park staff clearly establish reciprocal action by local communities toward conservation in lieu of benefits provided through water conservation or else there is a strong possibility that the community could not perceive the objectives of the program. (p2)

In the subsequent supervision report, the Bank found that 'the Ecodevelopment component had made satisfactory progress' (Work Bank, 2001: 2).

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[91] As a part of the ongoing IEDP, Project Tiger office in Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve along with Tiger Watch (a Delhi-based NGO) organized an *International Symposium on Tiger Habitat Conservation: Vision 2000 and Beyond* in September 2000 in Sawai Madhopur.
[92] From this time on the signposts on the work undertaken by IEDP in the sanctuary celebrated the presence of *kulhadi bandh panchayats* in the area through catchy rhymes like – *panchayat ne ki prabandh, logon ne ki kulhadi bandh!* (Through the restrictions of the Panchayat, the people have shunned the use of the axe!"
[93] This is translated from the original document in Hindi. Also see article at http://Karauli.nic.in for a similar narrative and claim

The official discourse was also used to earn an extension for the project in 2001. In July 2001 at a public review (part of the project requirement) the Minister of Forest for Rajasthan was invited to inaugurate the Interpretation Centre and address a gathering of villagers. Although the meeting was the mandated public review of IEDP, the occasion was organized at a grand scale and referred to as '*kulhadi bandh sammelan*'. Present at the meeting were also the district officials and most EDC heads. Two notes dominated the various public addresses: one was that of paying glowing tributes to *kulhadi bandh panchayats*; and the other was a need for the extension of the IEDP in the Sanctuary. As a Forest officer present explained, "The Minister has been called primarily to take note of the good work that the people are doing here. It is important that he lobbies for the extension of the programme!"

It was also no surprise that the flurry of activities undertaken to raise "awareness" regarding *kulhadi bandh panchayat* and the project coincided with the end of the first phase of the project when the negotiation for an extension was at a crucial stage. The Department conducted a week long *padyatra* (awareness walk)[94] starting the 14th of September. According to the Department the walk was undertaken to create a "sense of ownership" of EDCs, especially the ban-axe component, among the villagers. It was only towards 2002 that the Forest Department reluctantly acknowledged to me on record that *kulhadi bandh panchayat* had been present earlier, i.e. long before IEDP (FD, 2002 pers. comm.), but qualified it by stating that pre-IEDP *kulhadi bandh panchayats* were mostly dysfunctional. The corollary to this was that the Department's interventions enabled by IEDP were instrumental in giving the required direction and thus strengthened *kulhadi bandh panchayats.*

People, Participation and Conservation

This section examines the implications the project and its activities for community participation and conservation. The section concludes that demonstrable participation was achieved by employing non-participatory processes and further consolidated the position

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[94] Events like the *sammelan* or *padyatra* are comparable to what Baviskar (2007) in her study of the State Watershed Project in Madhya Pradesh describes as 'attempt to manufacture consent through public performance of spectacles and the purging of politics from development project'

of the state in the Sanctuary. By establishing 'proto laws'[95] the participatory elements further illegitimatised the resource-use and access by the people. In essence, by camouflaging and legitimising the use of power, participatory processes ended up 'harming those whom they are meant to empower' (Cook and Kothari, 2001). In terms of conservation, the project only diluted the forest protection activities of KBP.

Participation: Discourse and Practice

People's participation in the project in Kailadevi can be identified with three 'types' outlined by Nelson and Wright (1995: 6) – as expected 'beneficiaries' of programme with preset parameters; as contributors of casual labour to help a project achieve its ends; and as politically co-opted legitimisers of a policy. The Project does not define participation but through its many directives prescribes the modes of participation – local institutional building, benefit sharing and contribution of labour.

Much like the experience in JFM[96], participation as envisaged, understood and implemented in the project did not really challenge the core precepts of the exclusionary positions or the structures of power of the department. The senior officers are clear on their notions on people's participation. The dominant idea is of "cooperation"; benefit sharing extended not to resource-sharing but to 'incentives' facilitated through aid. As the ACF of KWS put it –

> In my understanding participation can be there in equity and benefit sharing. However in this case (a PA) there was very little opportunity for sharing therefore it just means cooperation with the work of the Department and that's what the Project is attempting to do (18 November 2000)

Ironically, for the DCF (Buffer), people were incapable of participation; participation served the department's need of making people aware of conservation –

> People are capable of very little. What can they do with participation? They are illiterate. They don't have the time to come for the meeting. They are happy that now they get benefits from the Forest Department through the ecodevelopment

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[95] According to Randheria (2003) proto laws refer to the concepts and principle that are introduced by international organizations like the World Bank that have no formal status of law but in practice often obtain the same degree of law. The 'reciprocal commitment' clause in the eco-development component that made it obligatory for people to sign away some of their resource access rights in return for the investments made in EDC can in my opinion be seen as a 'proto law'. Once the community members signed away the right to collect fuel wood in exchange of obtaining gas cylinders at a subsidized rate, its extraction from the forests thereafter was deemed illegitimate.

[96] See Jeffery and Sundar (1999) and Jeffery *et al.* (2001)

project. The best achievement so far as participation is concerned is that they have become aware of the conservation significance of the Sanctuary. (20 November 2000)

Participation as envisaged in the project comfortably keeps its purview well within the boundaries that is comfortable to senior level management. According to the CF –

Participation is of two kinds – direct and indirect. Speaking strictly about management issues, participation is not necessary. However, broadly defined, in terms of people being people, seeking their co-operation, engaging in dialogue or micro-level indirect involvement as is being enabled by ecodevelopment, such participation is essential. Direct involvement in management has to have sanction – legal sanction. (23 November 2000)

However as he clarified later, 'direct participation' was not possible because "democracy should not turn into anarchy. Participation is possible when we have responsible citizens" (ibid). Thus as evident, the discourse on participation, that equates it with incentive and co-operation, keeps out of its confines issues of decision making or power sharing.

In terms of practice, the Department attempts have largely been to create what Vira (2005: 5074) terms as 'bureaucratic participation'. According to Vira (op. cit) Bureaucratic Participation "uses standardized, administrative formats; communities are treated as homogenous; while commitments to participation is strong in rhetoric, it does not extend to the actual consultation of the affected stakeholders prior to the initiation of the new programme; bureaucratic procedures are created and targets set up which the functionaries of the state diligently set out to meet and where the state is unwilling to relinquish control over resources."

Although the project documents drew attention to participation as a "process oriented approach", in practice participation had been reduced to visible and measurable items – establishments of EDCs, micro-plans, 25% contributions by communities and reduction in registered forest offences.

It is fair to argue the project of rule in this case promotes adoption of non-participatory means. Although the senior forest officers acknowledged that "IEDP was too complex and wanted to achieve a lot in a short period of time" and believed that the "targets" were impossible to achieve in the given time span, they demanded the same from the lower staff. Thus, the brunt of the pressure for performance actually lay on the shoulder of the

lower level staff, buttressing Quarles Van Ufford's (1988b:34) claim – 'the weakest levels tend to receive the burdens the more powerful cannot cope with'.

Hence how participation in terms of 'bureaucratic procedures and targets' unfolds is dependent on the department's 'frontline staff' – the rangers, the foresters and the forest guards who are the link between the State and the people[97].

The Staff at this level has the least of facilities, perks and equipment. They are embedded as much in their institutional/professional base as in the society – the village communities they regulate but are also dependent on both for hospitality and meeting of their professional targets. Thus as Vasan (ibid: 4130) writes, "There is a constant interplay of power, dominance and acquiescence in relations between the forest guard and villagers." Quarles van Ufford (1986) points out from his own study in Indonesia that it is difficult to generalize on the relationship between the field level staff and the people; the lower level staff could either be weak or stronger in relation to the people. In India most studies seem to suggest that because of their locally embedded, weak social and professional position, the field level staff tend to work more in favour of the people than the State (Vasan, 2002; Saberwal, 1999). In the case of Kailadevi however the lower staff, largely worked to maintain their position within the bureaucracies and subscribe to isolationist conservation view. Although, mostly susceptible to bribes, hospitality and support in conducting their local level activities, the frontline staff did sometimes overlook several 'offences' committed by some favoured individuals and groups, those favoured usually being among the more powerful in the communities.

With a mindset no different from the senior staff, the impossibility of turning an hitherto hostile relationship into an amicable one while undertaking prescribed participatory measures and the need to 'deliver' on time, the frontline staff largely focuses on the 'end' and not the means. Consequently itemized targets of participation are achieved by employing non-participatory means, including fabrication of data, scuttling of processes,

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[97] See Vira (1999; 2005); Vasan (2002; 2006); and Robbin (2000a; 2003)

invoking of existing power relationships (between the people and the State), and reinforcing the power differentials that exist among community groups[98].

Although EDC was used synonymously with KBPs, it was a separate and a project-prescribed structure, sanctioned by GoR orders. It was to be established at the village level. A man and a woman from every household had to be its member and comprise the general body. The executive body was to be formed by seven members who were to be elected by the general body. The executive body had a 33% reservation for women. The project document specifies the formative principles of EDCs –

> The formation of groups should reduce heterogeneity within, thus enabling the representative to speak for the entire group, while encouraging heterogeneity within groups' negotiation and conflict resolution to take place between groups. However equity considerations require that ecodevelopment committees are composed of all members of the village/hamlet and include women representatives from each household as well as men.

In practice this has translated into the co-option of the traditional leadership of the village. Owing to political expedience of enrolling collaboration in sustaining representations of 'successful' EDCs as well as the administrative expedience of establishing target number of EDCs within a given time frame, the official EDCs typically embody what Sundar (2000) refers to as 'constructed communities'. Most committees comprise of village leaders who have a long-standing relationship of patronage with members of the local Forest Department and who also command loyalty of a small coterie of village elders. Formed by selection and preferences in stage-managed elections, there is little dissent amongst the executive members of the committee. Such constructions of "community", underpinned by the need to co-opt consensus, also reinstates the existing power hierarchies and authoritarian structures of the village.

Thus in *all* EDCs, the head or the *adhyaksh* of the committee are always *patels* from dominant communities of the Gujjars, Brahmans or Meena. In many instances the position was occupied by politically active *ex-sarpanch*s. Given the large sums of funds involved and scope for corruption through specific contracting favours, the leadership of

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[98] It is important to state that I suggest that frontline staff bear the sole onus for lack of adoption of participatory practices. The seniors are aware of this but prefer to overlook it as long as they are getting the right kind of reports. It is a case of what Chambers (1992 as cited in Vira, 1999) the 'self-deceiving state', perpetuated by, according to Vira (ibid), the zeal for achievement of impossible or unrealistic policy/project targets by the field staff.

the EDC in some places was hotly contested between the politically attuned and powerful elite of the village. The executive members almost always comprised the *patels* of the other castes. In some cases members of the lower castes like the Nais or Doms without much political clout formed a part of the executive body because of their proximity to the *adhyaksh*. Typical of the village *nyaya Panchayats*, these committees almost never included anyone from the Bhangi community, notwithstanding that the Bhangi with the largest herd of goats were seen to pose the greatest harm to the forests. They are blamed for lopping down trees to enable their herd to graze on the fresh leaves on the upper branches of the tree. Locked into complex forms of power relations (debt, patronage and political support), the *patels* of the less dominant communities usually tend to consent to the decisions of the *adhyaksh*. Since EDC activities are seen as a government process and of not much social significance, disagreement between the caste groups are kept to the minimum. Besides, the lower caste, most dependent on wage labour, hardly objected to the EDC process as in a period of extended drought condition, the EDC held the hope of providing them opportunities to earn wages.

In fact, the much-critiqued practice of allowing village elites to represent their community is, officially encouraged. It is seen as effective participation as it rules out the possibility of conflicts within the committees or the village. When asked about how elections are held and whether there are conflicts among communities in the EDC, the Deputy Conservator of Forests, Buffer Zone suggested, "…there is no question of conflict. Every village has a dominant caste and usually their leaders come up for election". The rules mandate that the committee head be elected every year. However, the politics of dominant castes is evident from the fact even in 2002 there had been no change in leadership in any of the EDCs since the heads were first elected in 1999-2000.[99] The election process – primarily a public gathering – involved announcement of names of the members already selected. The gathering was given the option to "oppose" any of the candidature included. However, as is well known (Mosse 1994), publicly conducted 'participatory' processes are even more strongly informed by the underlying power

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[99] Villages like Morechi, where the Department was unable to enroll all the dominant groups because of party politics and factionalism within the groups, were dropped from the project.

structure of the groups. Thus despite their desire of some groups to do so, nobody opposed the selection made by the FD.

So far as issues of gender equality are considered, the *kulhadi bandh panchayats* had decidedly restricted the participation of women. They were kept out on cultural grounds, arguing that traditionally women were prohibited from speaking in public and political spaces considered to be the domain of men. In contrast the EDC circular mandated 33% representation of women. Thus every executive body of seven was required to have a woman member. In practice however in almost all EDCs their presence was merely on paper and they never formed a part of any meetings. Most officially designated woman members I encountered or interviewed were not even aware of their membership[100] It is interesting to note that the only time women's participation was encouraged was when they had to be 'educated' on the use of gas stoves and cylinders provided under IEDP. Thus as seen in Kailadevi Sanctuary, the processes of institutionalising participation by 'building on existing local institutions' through imposition of uniform structures are akin to what Scott (1998) refers to as the 'simplifications' technique of modern statecraft wherein complex social processes through crass simplification and selective representation, are made more legible and thus more controllable by the State.

As for the senior management, the issue of intra-community discriminations or inequity was not even a consideration. According to the rules of EDC, the position of the head of the executive committee comes up for elections every year. When asked about how the elections were held and whether there were conflicts among communities in the EDC, the DFO (Buffer) suggested that "there is no question of conflict. Every village has a dominant caste and usually their leaders come up for election".

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[100] A lot seems to have changed since then. As I learnt in 2003, the EDCs have been restructured in accordance new state government circulars. The membership of the executive body has expanded and now each committee is required to have at least three women members. Special woman Ecodevelopment Officers have been employed in some parks. However restricting women' participation on cultural/traditional grounds, dismissing the significance of their agency or reducing their participation to tokenism has been a common practice in most of the current trends in decentralised or participatory approaches to the management of natural resource management as discussed in Chapter 2.

Thus the project's need for reduction of heterogeneity led to enrolling the dominant groups and enabled the co-option of consensus. This enabled the local staff to scuttle several prescribed processes of participation and yet get an endorsement of the same on paper. This suggested how the staff meets their near-impossible deadlines. Asked about the effectiveness of EDC and micro-plan the DCF (Core) remarked:

> You should be questioning the process of making EDCs. Where are the guidelines for making the micro-plans? How do we do them? They (the lower staff) were literally asked at gunpoint to do them, so they went through with the process. The next important question is to find out was who all were involved in the making of the micro-plans? Is it a process of making a wish list? Go ask for the PRA exercises that were done for Nibhera? In most cases there have been no PRA. The question to ask is what came first? Whether it was the PRA first or the micro-plan first? (21/06/2001)

I witnessed the scuttling and manipulation of the process in all key activities that were meant to realize the participatory ideals of the project – the most important being the Participatory Impact Monitoring. The project required department staff to assist community members in assessing the project impacts and its activities with the aid of a questionnaire specially designed for the purpose. In Nibhera the initial few forms were filled out again by the forest guard with the able assistance of Govind and his coterie of loyalists in the village. The rest of the forms were filled out by the two guards themselves with changing a few words here and there[101]. Majority of the villagers had no knowledge either about the forms or its requirements.

As is evident from the above statement of the DFO (Buffer) micro-plans were drawn up primarily to coincide with the departmental targets in its work-plans – building water bodies and enclosures in the long-term interest of creating prey base and watering holes for wild-animals. It was made to coincide with the need of the people in a 'drought prone' and 'fodder scarce region'. The villagers did not really resist these pre-designed plans because as Mosse (1996) points out elsewhere, even where PRA processes are held, villagers tend to voice "their needs" in accordance to what they believe the project can or intends to deliver (made amply known to them by the project implementers of course, either directly or subtly).

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[101] This was done in September 2001. I have to admit that by then I had stopped expressing any objection to these incidents. It was by adopting a nonchalant attitude that I was able to witness these processes. My earlier insistence on seeing EDC registers, questioning certain practices or insisting on being present at meetings had led to staff becoming extremely guarded in my presence and evasive of me.

Enrolment of key community members mentioned earlier is especially valuable for affirmative endorsement of the project in public forums. Presidents of the EDCs were always summoned to represent 'the people' who authenticated the 'participatory' nature of activities and 'success' of the project to evaluating, visiting or mission teams. Thus, a trend witnessed in other studies of participatory development practices (Li, 1999; Mosse, 2005), much care had been taken to choose EDC heads that could represent an ideal beneficiary – articulate, literate, and familiar with the department, the project parlance and understood the concept of "reciprocal-commitment"[102].

It is important to note the role of 'incentive' or 'aid' in sustaining this participatory charade and posturing. The implications of aid for accepting and executing unrealistic and unacceptable project goals has been discussed for the higher levels of bureaucracies in the earlier sections. At the field level, incentives, especially in terms of cash (earned primarily as wage labour) or items, like gas burners, is used mainly as 'bait'. As per the GoR orders, the EDC meetings were to be held every 6 months and the working committee had to meet every month. Since these meeting, more importantly the presence of the records of these meeting, served as indicators for assessing the 'participative' aspect of the programme, they *had* to be held, especially if senior officials were to attend. As for the committee meetings, all the necessary paperwork was completed between Govind, the Forester and the guards. Reflective of the interest the villagers had in EDCs, the bigger meetings often remained unattended. As the Forester put it –

> Meetings with the working committee are no problem. It (the problem) is amongst us – amongst people who know and understand. The 'general public' is difficult to gather for the six-monthly meetings. We have to persuade and tempt a lot. Its only when we tell them there is work to be had that there is some interest in the meetings.

He used the idea of the incentive effectively. In a meeting held on the 18 June 2001, the Ranger was presiding over the EDC. For the Forester it was important that there was a reasonable turnout of people. No work was to be sanctioned in this meeting. The Forester however spread the word around that use of gas stoves would be demonstrated (a part of the package that the FD was offering as an incentive to reduce the pressure on the forests). When Govind, the head of the EDC, enquired as to why the Forester had not mentioned

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[102] This is most evident in the public review of the projects, where the seating plans are made such that the EDC heads favoured by the department are made to occupy the front rows and are often called by names to report on the progress of the project.

this to him earlier, the Forester clarified that "it is just a trick. How else will the people show up tomorrow? The Ranger is going to be here. The idea of gas stove will also attract women to the meeting". He reminded Govind of the flak he received when for a meeting held in October 2000 attended by the DFO very few people had turned up and the meeting had to be cancelled.

Aid was also used as a bait to persuade people to register participation and prevent them from publicly airing their dissatisfaction with the local FD staff. Prior to the visit of the State Minster of Forests, Government of Rajasthan, to the Sanctuary, a meeting was called by the CF of all the EDC working committees. The following statement describes how aid was used to arm-twist villagers into compliance –

> You may have a lot to complain about local staff. But remember that if you make these complaints in public it serves no end. You will definitely kick the stomach of the poor guard or whoever but you will also kick your own fate. If you complain then we will not be able to ask the Government for extending the Project and we can no longer provide for the work that remains to be undertaken at the village level.

To this the DCF (Buffer), who was also present in the same meeting, added –

> You all must show up in big numbers. The Minister has to see that there are a lot of people being benefited, only then will he understand that we need more money and will ask for this to be extended.

An understanding in the Department that amenities and material incentives are the primary enablers of people's participation (that is willingness to cooperate and participate in departmental agenda) is best demonstrated in the reasons the FD puts forward to explain the relative failure of EDCs in the Park vicinity. According to the ACF of Kailadevi:

> Ecodevelopment has not been a success in Ranthambhore (National Park) because incentives are no longer attractive to the people as a lot of other amenities have already been built there for the people in the past. They have many more opportunities. In Kailadevi this was the first time where some work was done for the people, thus they have shown greater interest.

The availability of aid reinforces the Department's position of authority vis-à-vis the people even further (cf. Vira, 2005; Baviskar, 2003). Because of the misconceptions that have been spread, mostly by the guard, the people believe that the construction work that is being sanctioned by the FD is a form of consolidation of the Department's claim on the land. The fears of relocation and disinheritance for villagers has become more real now

than before and thus prevents the people from either refuting the FD or getting into confrontation with it.

The Conservation Agenda

One of the key aspects of conflict in the debates on wildlife conservation has been between the scientists and pro-people conservationist, thus, in turn between scientific and indigenous knowledge. As mentioned in Chapter 2, much of the conservation agenda of the state has been justified by scientific arguments. However as wildlife scientists acknowledge, much of the justification is what Stott and Sullivan (2000) call the big talk of science i.e. science in talk alone and not in practice. The scientists point to the marginalization of use of scientific research and findings in the management of the park (See Saberwal and Rangarajan 2003). In fact, as some scholars point out, the statist agenda of exclusionary management is based less on ecological grounds and more on wildlife legislations that deem all resource-use activities in PAs as necessarily harmful and unsustainable for wildlife conservation.

The conservation significance of Kailadevi was established on the basis that it was the buffer area of Ranthambhore and that it would accommodate the tiger spill over from the Park. Although the declaration of Kailadevi as the sanctuary has restricted the resource-use practices of the people significantly, no studies have been undertaken in the Sanctuary to establish the extent of impact this has on the habitat. This notwithstanding, the use of terms like 'biotic pressure', 'threshold pressure' and 'carrying capacity' are commonly used to justify the restriction imposed on resource use. Also, so far as the Department was concerned, 'conservation' as an idea is a preserve of the 'scientific' domain. This implicates the residents of the Sanctuary in two fundamental ways. First, the idea of conservation as a science is incomprehensible to them, as they are mostly "illiterate". Second, the presence of people is detrimental to conservation. Thus, within this framework there are many patronizing narratives of "sitting down with the people and making them understand the benefits they would get from the protection of the forests".

While the higher level officials rationalise conservation in terms of "biotic pressures" and "thresholds" for wildlife, the narratives at the field level are telling of the dominant

compulsions that set the conservation agenda. The Sanctuary sees as its end objective an idyllic conservation resort and as a site for eco-tourism. This lies at the centre of the ACF's desire to "make the Sanctuary an even better place than RNP". The idea of Kailadevi as a conservation resort also feeds into the development aspirations of the region as a whole. The Collector address during the Public Review Meeting of the Ecodevelopment Project that took place in KWS in January 2001 resounds with these aspirations:

> Most importantly, we must make this place very beautiful and along with that, if we can increase the wildlife or release wildlife into this region it will be very good. There are suggestions for making a Deer Park. I have been told that this can be done easily. We can use the funds available in the Project. Some money can be made available from the FD, the district administration or even the State. The park can be an important attraction for the people who come to see the temple[103]. During the temple fairs nearly 30-40 lakh[104] people come. Even if we collect a token fee from them for the Park we will be able to generate funds for the maintenance of the Park without incurring additional expenditure on our part. Additionally, this will also serve as a good attraction for our region as well. Also, if the specialty of our forests can be enhanced we can display it on the Internet through which we will be linked to the rest of the world. Through the Internet, the Deer Park can be advertised as an important tourist site and through the Internet we can easily promote tourism in relation this site. (24 January 2001)

So what is the local context of conservation? The following conversation between the Forest Guard in charge of the Nibhera Forest Block and me offers a glimpse into what conservation means to the frontline staff that deals with the villagers on a daily basis and form their main source of information on state strategies.

> Me: What was the need for the Sanctuary? This was a Range earlier. Why was it made into a sanctuary?
>
> FG: For protection and conservation. There won't be any pollution here. There will be plants and wild animals. There will be oxygen. That is why they are getting money from there – Britain Sarkar. The air from here goes there. The oxygen goes there.
>
> Me: I don't understand?
>
> FG: The wind from here goes there, into their atmosphere and cleans it up. That is why attention has been given to it. That's why they made the Sanctuary here.

For the FD the agenda of conservation are also subject of the larger institutional dynamics. For the DCF (Core), the presence of humans cannot be reconciled with the imperatives of conservation. By that token he feels that the staff at KWS has

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[103] Kailadevi temple, after which the Sanctuary is named, is located just outside the Sanctuary and is a well known pilgrimage site and has several annual fairs.
[104] One Lakh =100,000

compromised the conservation significance in attempting make the ecodevelopment program a success. Contending the success of EDCs in the Sanctuary he states –

> KWS is being maintained for rights and concessions. As for conservation, we have done nothing there. We have done nothing for the Sanctuary. It is because the objective of conservation has been compromised and people are being allowed rights and concessions they are now emphasising doing KBP. KWS people don't have the courage to stop human interference. There is no priority for animals in that Sanctuary. What have we done for wildlife? (20th December 2001)

In order to stave off such accusations and prove its "conservation worth", the field staff engages in manipulating the animal census. The "worth" is bestowed by the presence of the Tiger. Thus every year new claims are made about the number of tigers present in the Sanctuary. In the initial status report on Kailadevi submitted to the Bank, it was claimed that the Sanctuary has 11 tigers. There was no basis for this and there had been no sighting of tigers for years. The first and the only tiger was sighted in the early days of the project. It was believed that the tigress had wandered out of the Park and into the Sanctuary.

So what did the Project achieve in terms of conservation? The project did little to change the isolationist ideologies of the Department. As evident in the above statement by the DCF (Core), resource use and conservation are irreconcilable for the Department. Also, the ACF believed that ecodevelopment was only a gestation period; only aimed at temporarily reducing the pressure on the PA. According to him Ecodevelopment was certainly not the answer to the problems that PA management faces. Eventually it has to be the relocation of the people.

The project enabled greater penetration of the State and its vigil into the forests. This is evident from the following excerpt from a speech made by the DCF (Buffer) at the EDC *sammelan* held in July 2001:

> The primary objective of the project was to enhance the management and administrative capacity of KWS. In order that our staff can do the rounds of the village more easily, keep greater vigil over the forests and protect wildlife more effectively we have constructed several *naka*s, *van pal chowkis*, range office etc. Some roads have also been constructed and wireless towers have been built. Now we have a better reach and control over the area. (5th July 2001)

While the project did not really add to strengthening the ecological aspects of the area, its activities it seems may have posed a threat to it. As implied by DCF (Core) and the Mission team the civil works and construction activities undertaken for improved

management lacked any scientific basis and may in the long run actually adversely affect the ecological base of the area. The Department both in the Park and the Sanctuary constructed several water reservoirs. In order to prevent domestic cattle straying into the forests for water several water bodies were built close to the habitats. Several others were also built inside the forests as drinking holes for the wildlife. According to the critics, by constructing so many water bodies the FD may cause the semi-arid habitat to change to a wetland.

And finally, the co-option of *kulhadi bandh panchayat* put paid to whatever efforts were being made towards forest protection. As discussed in the previous sections, the department by enforcing a literal ban on the cutting of trees in the forests rendered the moral authority of the panchayats redundant. Consequently, the panchayats were no longer able to regulate the indiscriminate felling of trees. Also, in order to project the success of the EDC programs and the reciprocal commitment it had taken from people, the department reduced its vigil on felling activities of the villagers. Reduction in the numbers of registered forest offences was shown as an indicator of the success of the programme.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the IEDP project and the practices of its implementation by the forest bureaucracy in Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary in particular and Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve in general.

In terms of the discourse, although IEDP professed to provide a participatory approach towards addressing the negative impacts of conservation on people, in essence the underlying assumptions of the identified "problems" were no different from the Statist position. Problem formulations and solutions were underlined by the fact that people and their resource were the sole threat to PA and their conservation values. As an approach IEDP failed to acknowledge the history of PA management and its implications in generating the people-wildlife conflict. It also failed to focus on the complex nature and inherent institutional problems of the forest bureaucracy. Although the project made heavy demands in terms of the project components and attitudinal changes from the

Department, its implementation was meant to be undertaken in continuance with the existing policing and patrolling functions of the Departments.

Consequently, although the project was readily accepted by the Governments and the Forest Departments for the monetary advantages it brought to solving some of the institutional needs of the departments, the project prescriptions remained incompatible with the PA management agenda. Thus, rather than reforming, the project implementation was assimilated into the working practices, agenda and culture of the forest bureaucracy and the larger organisational networks of the State.

Consequently, the IEDP that already had received heavy criticism for its faulty implementation in other States ran into several problems in Ranthambhore as well. The project suffered from the bottlenecks created by Government of Rajasthan in terms of delayed fund flows and lack of sanction of many of the project requirements like hiring of consultants and creation of other infrastructure. As a result, the Departments in prioritizing their traditional role and functions used the projects funds selectively and largely to meet only the needs that facilitated the performance of the same. The project and funding opportunities were also used in service of inter and intra-departmental differences and politics, a part of the larger cultural politics of tiger conservation in India.

Hence while the rhetoric of participation was adopted by the Departments, the practice completely belied its principle. The implementation of the participatory components, considered too complex and impossible by senior staff was left to be delivered by the frontline staff of the Department. The impossible targets at this level were achieved primarily through participatory charades and posturing with effective enrolment of the privileged and favoured individuals and groups in the communities. Participation was reduced to achieving itemized, measurable achievable goals like establishment of local institutions, infrastructure development and contributions. The achievement of the same was made possible by scuttling all participatory principles and reinforcing the existing social hierarchies and exclusionary practices among community groups.

Co-option of a community initiative like *kulhadi bandh panchayats* (KBP) was of high strategic and symbolic advantage in the complex machinations and manoeuvrings between multiple agencies and different layers within the forest bureaucracy and served

to vindicate the positions of the respective organisations and propping up the "success" of the project.

To sum up, the process of co-option of the KBPs into EDCs brings to the fore the compulsions and disjuncture that governs the current preoccupation with participatory conservation projects in India. Projects like IEDP come with an ambitious agenda – to reform management, provide alternative sustainable livelihood, and bring about attitudinal change in the Department (which has an institutional culture of over a hundred years). This agenda was expected to be achieved within five years with little change in any existing policy and institutional framework, including non-addressing acute staff shortages in most Protected Areas. However, acceptance of the participatory principle within the hierarchical, control-and-regulate and preservationist structure of the Forest Department has become a key requirement because of their dependence on the funding enabled through such projects.

Thus it is not uncommon for institutions like the Forest bureaucracy to easily adopt the rhetoric of participation and manipulate opportunities offered by community-initiatives like *kulhadi bandh panchayats* to demonstrate evidence of their commitment to participation. However, in so doing, they not only undermine a local initiative but impose state rationality on forest protection.

Chapter 5

NGOs: Role Playing

Introduction

Since the 1990s NGOs[105] have been encouraged for their potential to engage with
sustainable development projects that are 'innovative, participatory and offered
sustainable solutions to environmental problems' (Vivian 1994). These NGO
interventions have resulted in certain broad generalisation about their abilities, strategies
and activities not just of the NGOs themselves but also donor agencies that actively
support them. They have become inextricably associated with key terms like participation,
empowerment, local and community (Fisher 1997)

Environmental NGOs working at the grassroots level in India have been instrumental in
pushing forward agendas that have attempted to ensure the livelihood rights of
communities while also trying to address environmental degradation threatened by larger
commercial interests (Bryant and Bailey 1997; Sundar 2000). Owing to their success in
lobbying for 'joint' agendas for management and conservation, environmental NGOs,
almost by definition, are attributed certain roles[106] in this area. As Sundar (2000) points
out, the Joint Forest Management (JFM) policy of 1990s represents the recognition of the
role of NGOs as 'legitimate brokers with villagers'. Others see them as the 'third
dimension' of conservation programmes (Vira 1999). In India, these organisations are
also seen as playing a significant role in catalyzing 'community-wildlife management'
and addressing 'people-wildlife conflict' (Kothari *et al.* 2000).

The India Ecodevelopment Project (IEDP), by design provided for the involvement of
local level NGOs, expecting them to play a significant role in facilitating the participatory
component of the project, to bridge the divide between the Forest Department (FD) and

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[105] The definition of sustainable development outlined by World Congress on Environment and
Development (WCED) for instance provides a key role for civil society in enabling more equitable and
sustainable practices of resource management. See Colchester (1995).
[106] The concept of NGO in conservation and forest management includes a diverse range of orgnasiations
with different roles, capacities and scale of operation. Here I use the term NGO to refer to local NGOs that
play a facilitative role and work directly with local communities (See Jefferey and Sundar 1999).

the local communities. They were expected to facilitate the establishment of the Ecodevelopment Committees (EDC), train Forest Department staff to adopt a participatory approach and also ensure, to the extent possible, that IEDP did not negatively impact the customary rights and livelihood issues of the communities (World Bank 1996; Mott 1996)[107].

In Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary there are two NGOs - Society for Sustainable Development (SSD) and Tarun Bharat Sangh (TBS) - that are operational in the villages within and surrounding the Sanctuary. While TBS has no formal collaboration with the FD, SSD has been enlisted in some of their implementation programs. SSD considers itself as the "only local NGO" as it started operating in this area way before TBS and has its main office in Karauli, adjacent to KWS. It also has two 'field offices' in the Sanctuary area, one of which is in the village of Nibhera, the subject of study for this thesis. TBS on the other hand, its main office located in Bhikampura, Alwar District, and considerable distance away from KWS. Its operations within KWS are mainly co-ordinated from an office located at Rewali, adjacent to Karauli district.

Both organisations have a stated agenda of 'sustainable development' as well as that of upholding conservation values of the 'Protected Area' (PA) where they find themselves. Their primary objective, however, is securing livelihoods of the local people. Consequently they focus largely on 'natural resource management for sustainable development'. Their efforts are towards making the broad agenda of 'people-oriented' or 'participatory-conservation' a reality.

Following the increased emphasis on involving NGOs in development efforts, there is a body of literature that has critically examined the abilities of NGOs to be the effective agents of changes (Tendler 1982; Clark 1991; Fowler 1991; 1993; Farrington and Bebbington 1993; Edwards and Hulme 1992; 1996; Sen 1999). As Edwards and Hulme (1996: 961) rightly point out the emphasis on the role of NGO 'rests more on ideological grounds rather than empirical verification'.

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[107] Give some details about how the project afiled to recognize the diversity of organsiations and restricted role to faciliatation and implementation. Refer to the previous chapter.

Drawing on the above literature, the principal aim of this Chapter is to put into perspective the two NGOs operating in Kailadevi and analyse the roles they play in participatory conservation in the Sanctuary. Focusing on the processes through which the NGOs interact with, and respond to, other interest groups the Chapter raises critical issues with regard to the role of NGOs in collaborative management. It questions assumptions regarding the NGOs ability to enable better participation, undertake advocacy in favour of community resource rights, resolve equity issues within communities, work for their empowerment and facilitate collaboration between the communities and the State.

The Chapter primarily argues that in Kailadevi the assumed abilities of NGOs and the external support for participatory conservation, has enabled individuals to opportunistically establish themselves in the 'business of NGOs'. Dependent largely on donor and government funding, they have been involved primarily in service delivery and implementation, with personal and organisational survival as the main objective. With no real stake in IEDP, their survival as 'environmental NGOs' has also been critically dependent on their ability to maintain the representation of being people-oriented to the support organisations.

Consequently, in attempting to maintain their multiple and contradictory self-images for different audiences that sustain their survival, they often resort to 'role playing.' This kind of role playing, that rides on the NGO's assumed proximity and ability to work with communities, leads to a less than democratic relationship with the communities. Maintaining its images of being community-oriented and community-based where 'the rhetoric of which far exceeds reality'[108], the NGOs resort to manipulative control of the communities, misrepresentation and co-option of initiatives like *kulhadi bandh panchayat*.

Formalizing KBPs

At the local level, both TBS and SSD have been critical of the Forest Department's handling of the IEDP, particularly of the role of ecodevelopment committees (EDC). They label the programme as corrupt and the committees as ineffective. SSD has also

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[108] Farrington and Bebbington (1993)

accused the Forest Department of appropriating the credit for the practice of *kulhadi bandh panchayats*. Interestingly, however, the NGOs too tend to co-opt these panchayats, but in a less deliberate way. In fact, the co-option is not only more subtle but it is done with a sense of moral legitimacy and as part of their 'appropriate' role for enabling effective community participation and empowerment.

SSD has justified its intervention for 'sustainable development' in Kailadevi through the pre-existence of *kulhadi bandh panchayat*. According to the Executive Director, the presence of these panchayats attests to the villagers' ability to look after their forests and justifies the case for a participatory approach to sustainable and effective management of the Sanctuary. The organization claims to have 'strengthened' the *kulhadi bandh panchayats* in the area by effecting minor modifications.

SSD undertakes a range of activities in the region including natural resource management, agriculture, poverty alleviation, local governance, micro-finance systems,[109] health, and environment education. The organization operates in the village through establishing Village Development Committees (VDC) which are an important aspect of the organization's intervention strategy, but the ownership of which is expected to lie with the people. According to the Executive Director:

> We are just a means. They (the villagers) are the main concern here. All the work that we do is for them. It is ultimately their development and thus, they have to decide how to proceed. The VDC is their organization, for them to decide on what development they want and how they want it implemented. It is formed by, and for, people's participation (*sehbhagita*).

SSD validates the 'people-centeredness' of the VDC by pointing to its intrinsic connection to *kulhadi bandh panchayats*. While it accuses the Forest Department of appropriating community initiatives, it sees its own intervention through VDCs as a means of strengthening existing local institutions to deal more effectively with development and conservation issues. On one occasion the Executive Director stated:

> VDC is nothing else but their existing institution of KBP, another kind of informal panchayat. Earlier these panchayats used to talk only of KBP. We used to think (because we lacked the knowledge) that we could directly assist these villages through these institutions. Then we realized we have to give them the shape of Village Development Committees. Essentially, we have formalized KBP's into VDCs. Now all KBP issues are discussed within VDC's. (4/6/2001)

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[109] A number of self help groups (SHG) or *samhu's*, as they are locally called, have been established in the area.

Notwithstanding the NGOs claim, the VDC's or the 'formalized KBP' are essentially institutions that have been formed at the instigation of the NGO, as per the prescription of the NGO and are entirely identified with the NGO. It actively seeks the villagers' attendance and participation in the VDC's. The reality is that discussions of the *kulhadi bandh* issues in VDC's are *incidental* while the KBP continues to be convened irrespective of the existence of the VDC.

Tarun Bharat Sangh (TBS) is the other NGO present in the Kailadevi area. TBS is an internationally recognised NGO for exemplary achievement in water conservation through community involvement in the revival of *johads* (village pond) and dry streams in Rajasthan. It is also recognized for initiating a community-based democratic process for water management through establishing *pani panchayat*s (water councils). In acknowledgement of these achievements, the organisation's founder was honoured with the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership in 2001. Apart from its water-related initiatives, TBS is also credited for working in the Sariska Tiger Reserve (to the north of Kailadevi), enabling the establishment of a 'people's sanctuary' Bhaonta-Kolyala Wildlife Sanctuary.

Unlike SSD, TBS does not work through any village-level institution, preferring instead to appoint a village community worker. TBS has been working in the Kailadevi region since 1997 at the behest of SSD, but eventually the two organisations fell out. Since then TBS has consolidated its activities in a few villages located at the outskirts of the Sanctuary area where it undertakes activities including education, micro-credit and watershed management. During the time of my research, its activities in these villages were largely confined to the repair and deepening of private and communal *pokhars* (water reservoirs)

In June 2001, TBS undertook a *kulhadi bandh panchayat padyatra* (march to ban axes) in Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary. The stated purpose of the *padyatra* was 'to initiate *kulhadi bandh* practices among the villagers'. The seven-day march culminated in a public gathering which seemed more akin to a 'promote Tarun Bharat Sangh' campaign. For the first half of the meeting, the workers of the NGO and the villagers chosen by them praised the organization for its efforts. The second half was devoted to seeking a public pledge from the participating villagers that they would no longer use axes in their forests,

thus firmly put in place the practice of *kulhadi bandh*'. Summing up the meeting, one of TBS leaders declared that through the *padyatra* the organisation had initiated the practice of *kulhadi bandh panchayat* in 23 villages of Kailadevi. Given its formidable reputation in involving communities in natural resource management, few would refute their claim of initiating *kulhadi bandh panchayats* in Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary.

While TBS with a single stroke obliterated the history of people's efforts at initiating and sustaining these *panchayats*, SSD distorted the original institution rendering it largely ineffective and therefore in need of intervention.

Mission or Opportunism

The interest of NGOs to be associated with an agenda for community-based conservation and initiatives like the *kulhadi bandh panchayats* needs to be understood against the changing profile of grassroots civil society involvement in PA management in India. The initial phase of the debate on conflict in parks and sanctuaries between wildlife and people saw battle lines firmly drawn between such organisations (like TBS and SSD) and pure conservation organisations (like World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI)) and other conservationists. Most NGOs at the local level were opposed to conservation and in favour of people's livelihood and rights. However, over the years, donors and other agencies keen on attempting participatory conservation of PAs, have been directing their attention towards NGOs that demonstrate a combined concern for 'ecological conservation' and 'community participation' and also willing to work with the State.

Consequently, there has been an evolving trend among NGOs to broaden their agenda to include 'ecological conservation' in addition to those of community livelihood rights. TBS for instance was initially widely known as a crusader of people's right to access resources supported by organisations like Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) in Delhi and funding from Ford Foundation and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
However, in September 2000, at a workshop conducted in Sariska Tiger Reserve, TBS added *jangal* (forests) and *janwar* (wild animals) to its existing motto of *jan* (people), *jal*

(water) and *jameen* (land). This workshop was considered 'historic' for bringing together NGOs, communities, social activists and Forest Department officials and the ensuing decision to form a Sariska Tiger Reserve Management Committee that would include villagers, officials and NGOs (Kothari 2003). As Kothari (ibid: 2) states:

> What happened in Sariska is the cutting edge of a silent revolution that is taking place in the way that conservation is envisioned and practiced across South Asia. From a centralized, elitist strategy, it is becoming decentralized, participatory, and mass-based. From a sole focus on wildlife protection, it is moving towards more holistic biodiversity conservation, integrated with livelihood security of communities, and stretching across landscapes.

While for Tarun Bharat Sangh it was an opportune broadening of agenda, the emergence of Society for Sustainable Development was more directly linked to the viability of a notion like sustainable development. The idea has been carefully cultivated upon to take advantage of situations that enable the setting up of such NGOs. The assumptions and generalisation regarding the role of NGOs and their abilities in facilitating community participation in arrangements for addressing resource conflict issues is what creates the 'niche' for individuals to establish themselves in the NGO business.

Like any other government or corporate sector there also exists a 'system' within the NGO sector that enables grassroots level NGOs with an agenda for sustainable development to establish itself. There are donor agencies keen to support such endeavours, there are NGO support network that can be tapped to scale up the capacity of organisation to avail of donor funding and implement projects and then there are individuals who lend their names to such organisations in order to legitimise its authenticity. It is not necessarily a social cause that motivates an individual to set up a NGO; quite often it is the desire to set up an NGO that can drive an individual to find the opportune/ appropriate cause.

For the Director of SSD, the agenda for 'sustainable development' was the opportune cause. The Annual Report of SSD (2000-2001:3) states:

> The Director, during his work as a journalist used to visit the Kailadevi Sanctuary Area villages. It was during those visits, that he came across the pathetic condition of these villages. He was deeply moved by the abject poverty of this area and hence decided to endeavour for ameliorating the conditions of these villages… thus Society for Sustainable Development was born.

This directly links the origin of the NGO to the needs of the villages of the Sanctuary thereby justifying the agenda for sustainable development. However, as an earlier

interview with the Director (conducted in 1997) suggests, the idea of establishing an organisation had preceded any involvement in the Sanctuary area. According to him his initial interest in the social sector evolved with his involvement as a volunteer in a government run program called 'Jan Kalyan Samiti' (Committee for Peoples Welfare). The Jan Kalyan Samiti did charity work in the area outside the Sanctuary and the Director of SSD worked with this organisation as a Secretary cum Treasurer. It was then that he was inspired to set up his own organisation. As he himself states, although he applied for registering an NGO, he was not aware of its 'mode of operation':

> I decided to get some exposure into the NGO world. What is an NGO, how does it work, what will it do? What will be its aims and objectives? I applied for a job with Centre for Environment and Education (CEE) and started working with them in 1992 February until about May 1995. While I was still at CEE I suddenly received a mail from the Registrar of Societies stating that my organization has been registered. (2/10/1997)

In the early 1990s CEE was working in the area in and around Ranthambhore National Park in an ecodevelopment program that included education for conservation awareness, introduction of technologies to make local resources more productive with a view to reduce dependence on the forest resources, training people in improved technologies and practices, liaison with the Park management, government departments and other NGOs. The Director of SSD, then considered as a 'local person', functioned as their Field Officer. It was his involvement with CEE and the wider network of NGOs with which he interacted that led him to change the focus and agenda of his own organisation. As he stated in the interview conducted in 1997:

> By the time the registration of the organisation came through I had reviewed my focus. Having learnt the potential role of an NGO in conservation, I had started taking interest in the Sanctuary area (02/10/2007)

During his work with CEE, the Director of SSD had understood the issues of people-wildlife conflict and the significance of the idea of sustainable development. His organisation SSD started to acquire the popular trappings of an environmental organisation. It adopted as its logo the insignia of an earthen pot which was a slight variation of the eco-mark insignia developed by CEE for Government of India to identify environment-friendly (or sustainable) products.

In 1995 the Director got acquainted with the team from the Delhi-based Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) (of which I was a part) who were to undertake their research in Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary. The profile of SSD gained significantly from the

Director's involvement in the IIPA research project, the focus of which was to document the process of *kulhadi bandh panchayat* and explore possibilities of collaborative management in the area. As a part of this research the Director of SSD had assisted me in meetings with villages and with the Forest Department. Although the Director had only facilitated the IIPA research agenda, he was to later claim the same agenda as being of his own making. Through these activities SSD was able to claim a knowledge base of the area and present itself as an organisation that was committed to the livelihood needs of the communities as well as the conservation of the Sanctuary. In an interview he commented:

> The FD considers the people as a problem for conservation. While I agree that conservation is important I don't agree that people are at fault. It is therefore my intention to prove that the needs of people and the environment can be reconciled. If the people acquire good livelihood why should they depend on the forests? (4/10/2001)

Through the network of association with IIPA and CEE (and by extension to influential individuals associated with these organisations), who strongly believed in the cause of promoting grassroots level NGOs that worked towards resolving people-wildlife conflict, SSD was able to get its first project funded by Action Aid. Subsequently, it plugged into the Rajasthan NGO support network that over time promoted the skills, growth and establishment of the organisation. By the time of this research in 2000-02 SSD was working with several funding agencies like the Aga Khan Foundation, Inter Corporation, Action Aid, Sir Rattan Tata Trust and UNDP. Much of its funding support was predicated on its claims of working with *kulhadi bandh panchayat*s and working on alternative livelihood options. Both these claims vindicated its position as an 'environmental' NGO aiming to reconcile the livelihood needs of the forest dwelling communities with the conservation imperatives of the Sanctuary.

Impacting People-Wildlife conflict

Notwithstanding SSDs claims, its operations at the field level raise several key questions regarding its role and ability to address the basic issues of the people-wildlife conflict. Did the field projects, supported by multiple funding agencies, actually serve the broader issue of reconciling the livelihood needs of the people and the conservation imperatives of the Sanctuary? Even at face value, did these projects actually deal with any of the key

issues such as dependence on forest resources, threats to life and property from wildlife, issues of rights and access and most importantly the threat of relocation from the Sanctuary?

SSD worked largely on promoting livelihood through improving agriculture and animal husbandry activities. When we analyse the actual practice of these activities it becomes quite evident that the organisation functioned mainly on a project-to-project basis and took up projects without factoring in the needs of the people and the conservation significance of working in the Sanctuary. It adopted standard and formulaic projects designs for addressing the issues, suffering typically from what Vivian (1994) refers to as the 'magic bullet syndrome-looking for simple and neat solutions to a development problem'. However, as she argues, unless the deep seated ecological and social complexities are not accounted for these solutions will, eventually, prove counter-productive. I take the example of SSDs intervention in agricultural development to highlight the disjuncture between project activities and livelihood needs of the people; especially those affected by the establishment of the Sanctuary.

With the decline in pastoralism and traditional caste-based occupation, agriculture had become a primary source of livelihood for the villagers in the Sanctuary area. A major issue the people faced was the unavailability of arable land and the FD's refusal to allow any further diversion of the forestland for the same. The available land was scarce, of poor quality and low yielding. The solution, proposed by SSD with the support of the government agricultural extension worker was to promote fertiliser dependent, high-yielding seed varieties to the local farmers.

The implications of such an approach were multi-fold. First, as the people pointed out these varieties were unsustainable in the long run. Despite a shorter growing cycle, the new varieties required more water, already a scarce commodity in the Sanctuary. The villagers were also not sure the extent to which they could continue to afford the fertilisers. Second, these strategies did not appeal to small-scale farmers, as they could neither invest in fertiliser nor in better means of irrigation to make up for the additional water demand. Third, the organisation preferred prioritising soil and seed quality over issues of land rights. It preferred not to challenge the FD's policies on land issues.

Further, while the Director, SSD liberally criticised the FD's use of scientific jargon like 'carrying capacity' to impose regulations that disadvantage communities, the organisation scarcely researched the basis of its own intervention in terms of ecological sustainability. Also, the basis for the claim - that people can co-exist with wildlife - was largely borrowed from popular rhetoric found in the activist and NGO literature that rally against the relocation of people from Protected Areas (Kothari *et al.* 1996)

SSD's commitment to the idea of sustainable development, which was generously used in project proposals to justify its intervention in the Sanctuary, did not seem to pervade the working culture of the organisation that comprised of several rural development professionals. While the Director spoke of the need for sustainable development for enabling the co-existence of humans with wildlife, the organisation's supervisors were often explaining their activities as attempts to 'make the villages become like cities.'

These comments were not out place for the project supervisors, since from the time they were employed (2000 October); to the best of their knowledge they had been working for 'development and natural resource management.' SSD management did not invest in sensitising them on working in an area protected for conservation. They were not aware of the 'do's and don'ts' of working in a protected area. Only when a funding agency visited the area to enquire about an ongoing controversy between two villages in the Sanctuary where SSD worked, was there an attempt made to recognise the rules of the PA and their implications for field operations. The funding agency was keen to ensure that SSD had not violated the rules of the FD especially since local communities accused it of encouraging the encroachment of forest land. The Director, SSD (who had, in fact, indirectly encouraged the encroachment of forest land) was keen to impress upon the funding agency that SSD was a responsible organisation and fully respected the government-imposed sanctity of the Sanctuary. Thus, he felt it necessary to ensure that all the workers involved in the project were aware of the rules, lest the visiting members of the funding agency should question them on the same.

NGOs are seen as crucial in addressing the problems that arise from people-wildlife conflict and affect the management of PAs. In the world of development and conservation an assumed, superior understanding of the people-wildlife conflict and genuine concern for the concerns of people is attributed to NGOs, more than it is to state agencies. Such

attributions have led to NGOs, for no reason other than that they are NGOs, to assume abilities and quickly settle down to role-playing. They pre-occupy themselves with seemingly significant work towards the longer term objective of sustainable development, without necessarily having to spell out the specifics.

Networking Survival and Peoples Agenda

Typical of most NGOs[110] involved in 'peoples struggle for resource rights', SSD sees its role in bridging the gap between the FD and the people that has been created through a history of FD's oppression of the local communities. It projects itself as the champion of people's access issues and rights pertaining to resource use. In practice however the interaction between the FD and the NGO are contingent less on the 'people's agenda' and more on the political dynamics of the organisational networks of which they are a part. As Quarles Van Ufford (1988) suggests, in development bureaucracies, an 'intermediary organisation' has to simultaneously appeal to two 'publics'. One is that of the donor organisation that makes the funds available and the second is that of the community whom the funds are supposed to serve. For an NGO like SSD there are several 'publics' it has to appeal to simultaneously- the Forest Department, other Government Departments, support organisations and individuals and donor agencies.

In the case of SSD, the NGOs charter pertaining to the conflict over resource use practices between the people and the FD, and its ability to deliver on this charter have to be analysed within the context of the multiple agencies that it operates with, the compulsions born of the inter-agency interactions, and the expectations these agencies have of the organisation. The NGO's interaction with the FD whether of compromise, confrontation or cooperation, is contingent on what Quarles van Ufford (ibid) terms as the 'development context' within which they operate. A context defined by the relationship that the NGO has to maintain with the larger network of its funding and support

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[110] Sundar (2000) points out that most decide their agenda for joint management on an assumed 'historical dichotomy between the civil society and the state, as if the villagers and the forest departments previously existed in water tight compartments, locked into mutual antagonism'. Against such assumption Sunder (ibid.) argues the recognition of community management and control of forests, being hailed as a new phenomenon-'a manifestation of civil society work' had been part of state practice in some pockets even in the colonial times.

organisations, the relation of these organisations share with the FD, its own power dynamics with the FD. Although the real issue is of people and their access to resources, the NGOs desire to address these issues are underpinned by its own agenda for project 'performance', sustained funding, maintaining solidarity with support organisation and future opportunities for work with the FD.

Consequently, the NGO is unable to provide any real solutions in terms of facilitating a collaborative approach or ensuring the resource rights of the people. As some scholars point out this kind of dependency cause NGO's to tailor their activities to funding agendas and lose out on certain areas of their stated mission. One of the key areas affected by this kind of dependency is the organisation's ability to take on advocacy issues (Edward and Hulme 1992; 1996). NGOs willing to work with the FD enabling a 'participatory approach' have greater currency with funding agencies than do organisations that have a radical anti-FD approach (cf. Sen 1999).

In 1996-97, when the FD was given the task of formation of Ecodevelopment Committees (EDC) in the preparatory phase of IEDP, the organisation actively assisted the local Forest Department officials in conducting meetings with the communities and in persuading them to establish EDCs. By design, IEDP had scope for the involvement of NGOs and consultants. In Ranthambhore while there was some initial attempt by the FD to call for bids, the process was stalled at a later stage. SSD was keen to bid for a role and thus invested in building a good relationship with the local FD staff. The organisation publicised the Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) efforts at organising these meetings in organisational publications.

In time however the relations between the Director, SSD and the ACF, who was the key official prior to the establishment of the more senior post of a DFO, soured considerably. The Director had refused to include the ACF's wife as a member of its governing body. In retaliation the ACF, in a key meeting of the project with the local legislative assembly members, did not recognise the presence of SSD in the Sanctuary, much to the disappointment of the organisation that was keen for official recognition. Apart from these instances of personal differences, SSD was also discontent at the way the FD has conducted itself vis-à-vis issues pertaining to the Sanctuary. In conversations with the Director, SSD I was constantly reminded of the 'unethical and corrupt practices' of the

FD. Notwithstanding its obvious issues with the FD, the NGO has nevertheless preferred a non-confrontationist approach.

The non-confrontationist attitude is more an issue of strategy, than desire for the organisation as it also has to maintain its relations with the FD. Given that its working area is inside a Sanctuary, the organisation is aware of the need for approval of the FD to work in the area. Therefore, it prefers to avoid making any anti-FD issues public at the local level. On the contrary, the Director, SSD is almost subservient in his attitude to the senior officials of the FD. His offensive against the FD is largely confined to the ACF (considerably low in the hierarchy of the FD). On the other hand, relations with the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) who is more senior in the hierarchy, was kept cordial and even actively cultivated.

Maintaining a good relation with the FD also conveys an image of the organisation being "government friendly" (a term that a local district official had used to describe SSD). Such an image not only helps its future prospects with the FD but also enables the organisation to take on the agency function of the other district administration departments. Government officials, unpopular with the people and unfamiliar with the terrain, extensively use the NGOs reach amongst the people to carry out their activities. This simultaneously strengthens the position of the NGO with the district officials as well as with the people. Departments like Animal Husbandry and Agriculture are able to conduct their workshops and vaccination camps among the people more frequently with the assistance of the NGO enabling them to meet their annual targets.

The other significant reason for its non-confrontationist attitude is because of the aid conditionality imposed by most of the funding agencies for undertaking activities in a legal entity like a Sanctuary. None of the organisations that fund SSD want to get entangled in legal issues pertaining to the FD's jurisdiction over forest land. In the event that the NGO does get embroiled in such a situation then it not only has to answer to the FD but also to its donor agencies. Negotiating its survival through working with these complex networks of dependency, conditionality and expectation, often leads to complex manoeuvring with the communities bearing much of the brunt.

In one such instance, SSD and a donor agency wanted to initiate pastureland development in village Chauria Khata located inside the Sanctuary. This involved building an enclosure wall around the identified land. In the process the villagers also encroached on some forest land and included it within the enclosure. This forest land, though within the boundary of Chauria Khata, was in fact being used as a grazing pasture by another village. Once the enclosure was built Chauria Khata refused to permit its neighbouring village to graze within the enclosure. In protest, the neighbouring village made several attempts to break down the wall of the enclosure. The conflict snowballed into physical brawls between the villagers followed by life threats, with the issue eventually being brought to the notice of the FD. The ACF was quick to take advantage of the situation using it to condemn the operation of SSD inside the Sanctuary. It accused SSD of not only interfering with the 'traditional rights regime' of the people but also of violating forest regulations by encouraging villagers to enclose forest land.

Unfortunately for the NGO, a young ambitious 'technical expert' who at the time of the conflict was assisting the NGO, made this conflict public and bringing it to the notice of the donor agency. The donor agency in turn, working on an agenda for understanding issues of 'conflicts' over natural resource management, saw this as ideal case study. However, as it turned out the greater interest it took in the case the less sympathetic it was to the role of the NGO. In their view the NGO had a key role in initiating the conflict as it failed to take an inter-village consensus prior to building the enclosure and it also failed to inform the FD about enclosing forest land. The NGO was instructed by the donor to settle the case as far as possible within the framework of the given regulations. With little support the NGO was left to settle the issue on its own.

Under such circumstances, the good relations with the FD resulted in an amicable settlement for the NGO. SSD, keen to pursue its agenda for the enclosure ultimately settled its problems with the Department by negotiating a strategy of 'mutual benefit.' Under IEDP the FD had undertaken the construction of several enclosures for pasture development inside the Sanctuary, though they served little purpose for the local community. SSD promoted its case with the Department by proposing that if the FD gave the NGO permission to continue with the enclosure in Chauria Khata it would be an example of community-initiated participation in the agenda of the FD. Finally, it was decided the FD would allow the enclosure to continue on condition that the village

organise itself into an EDC and execute the task as a part of the EDC agenda. The NGO and the villagers immediately took up the offer and thus were allowed to continue with the construction. The FD gained popular mileage for expert handling of a conflict issue. In its report to the World Bank the FD reported that the people, inspired with the success of the EDC, had voluntarily taken up the tasks of building enclosures and promoting pasture development.

The case also served the 'people's agenda' for the NGO. The Director of SSD was elated at having convinced the FD to allow the people to build an enclosure for the pasture. The Director stated that this was an "ideal example of how with cooperation and persuasion the FD could be brought to work with the people. This is the role that the NGO should play". This was a "victory of the NGO to get the FD to recognise the rights and needs of the people". Adopting a 'people's agenda' is important for the NGO to strengthen its credibility with the community by being seen to oppose the FD. At the same time it is also important to retain the support of the organisation and activist groups that support a people-oriented conservation approach and rely on NGOs at the 'grassroots level' to champion the cause of the communities against the 'unfair practices of the FD.' The initial foundation of the organisation was largely built on the strength of such organisations and individuals. Having adopted a non-confrontationist position the NGO pursues these agendas through indirect channels and outside the purview of the FD. It regularly supplies local newspaper correspondents' information on the corrupt practices of the FD. It has also contributed articles that are highly critical of the FD's functioning to research organisations that are interested in issues of 'resource conflicts' and 'community-based management'. In fact it has been sent as a case study on the 'EDC conflict' stating that the people are not satisfied with the FD and thus have an issue of conflict with the FD. Such sources do not have any direct bearing on the operations of the NGO or the FD at the field level and thus does not create any direct conflict between the two.

Notwithstanding the positive outcome of the case as far as the NGO and the FD were concerned, the real tragedy played itself out with the communities. The settlement allowed Chauria Khata to refuse access rights to its neighbouring village. Following the conflict the NGO terminated all its activities in the neighbouring village. Having lost the official battle against Chauria Khata the neighbouring village continued to break the walls

of the enclosure and engage in physical assaults. In 2002 I was informed by a SSD staff member that someone from Chauria Khata had killed a man from the neighbouring village over the same issue.

Representation of 'success' of these kinds, achieved at any cost, are vital for the organisations and are underpinned by the larger politics of funding agencies and aid. NGOs that are dependent on external aid, in order to sustain their viability with the donor agencies, have to continually *demonstrate* their ability to achieve project objectives, irrespective of whatever operational difficulties they may be encountering at the implementation level. As a representative of a middle-level funding agency on a monitoring mission pointed out to the Executive Director of the Society for Sustainable Development:

> You must tell us about the success you have achieved. It is critical that you publish. You have to publish or you perish. Rajasthan is now increasingly unpopular with the donor agencies. They see it as an over-funded state. In order to sustain our support to you we have to justify to them that you are doing successful and innovative work. These are rules of the game you have to play by in order to survive. It is the same for us. We need something to show, something to replicate (March 27th 2001)

Representing Communities

NGOs by definition assume a moral legitimacy about their work and representations of community they make. Unlike that of the State or other agencies the legitimacy of the representations made by NGOs are rarely questioned. However, as can be seen in the case of Kailadevi, NGO representations are framed more by their own organizational needs and strategies, notwithstanding its cost to the communities. These representations are dictated by the need to aggrandize their own role and achievements. Consequently, the communities remain in need of reformation and intervention in order to realize their potential. The added danger of such discourses is that being legitimized by the NGOs they lend themselves to appropriation by the biased state agencies to reinforce their negative stereotypes of the efficaciousness of community-initiatives.

Organizations like Tarun Bharat Sangh, that have already established their reputation beyond refute, are able to appropriate the community with much more ease and

legitimacy, even if it needs to engage in false propaganda. One such example is of Jagdish Gujjar, a resident of Nibhera and a community worker of TBS. In his early days of recruitment he was asked by senior TBS staff to pose as a former illicit liquor brewer for the benefit of a visiting donor representative. The story that was pedalled to the visitor was that Jagdish was a wasted young man who used to brew illicit liquor till TBS found him and rehabilitated him into a community worker. Jagdish was unaware of the legal implications of such fabrication and it was this fear that had brought him to me. Such stories formed a part of TBS strategy to showcase the quality of their efforts. In order to upscale its activities it was keen to add more number to the statistics of villages it worked in.

Both TBS and SSD employ the essentialist discourse on the place and the Gujjars to justify their intervention and display the efficacy of their interventions. Project problems are often explained away by the 'tendencies of the Gujjars.' One often heard explanations like: "they (the Gujjars) are quite lazy, they don't want to work and want everything free" or "one has to be very careful of Gujjars, they're a community you should not trust." TBS has liberally used the idea of the Sanctuary area being a 'dacoit prone region.'

India Today, a popular weekly news magazine, in its June 2002 edition carried an article on Tarun Bharat Sangh. The article claimed that TBS had yet again revolutionized people's lives through their 'water movement.' As an example, it profiled four individuals from villages in the Sanctuary area. In the article TBS had claimed that these individuals were dreaded dacoits in the region who had plundered villages at will. Apparently it was the lack of water that had turned these individuals into dacoits. However, with the coming of TBS to the region and its efforts to revive water management, these men had a change of heart and given up being dacoits preferring to join the TBS-initiated water movement. The article extolled TBS and its founder has the 'modern day messiah.' It falsely brutalized the life histories of these individuals and making them vulnerable to exploits of the local police department. As far as TBS was concerned, this was an attempt to reinforce the reputation it had built by claims of enabling poachers to surrender their weapons in Sariska Tiger Reserve.

The idea of 'communities' or 'people' serve as the principal means of challenging the FD indirectly on a more regular basis. Whether in the case of the conflict in village Chauria

Khata or in Nibhera, SSD has often sought to either challenge or appeal to the authorities by instigating actions amongst the villagers against the FD. In the case of Chauria Khata, when the ACF was seen supporting the neighbouring village, the Director organised meetings in Chauria Khata and decided the strategy the villagers would have to take with the senior FD officials. It would dictate letters and direct action but did not come to the forefront until the point that his intervention was unavoidable. In Nibhera too, on the eve of July 15, 2001 when the Forest Minister, Government of Rajasthan, was to visit the Sanctuary and the FD was caught up in making a best possible case for presenting a 'success case', the NGO staff and the Director instigated a few people to write a petition exposing the corrupt practices of the FD and to hand to him personally at some point during or after the meeting. Even in the meetings of the EDC held in the village the NGO staff made their reservation felt on certain issues by quietly instigating the villagers. They would also employ a similar strategy in dealing with the other government departments.

What I have referred to as the 'indirect' means of intervention is described by the Director, SSD as acts of empowerment: "Our presence has enabled to the people to act for themselves - to stand up against the authorities." While this may seem to be a convincing argument, it becomes questionable when one analyses the processes through which the NGO engages in these activities. Putting the community forward is tactically a non-confrontationist approach. The Director, SSD encouraged the people of Chauria Khata to take on the authorities on the assurance that it would back them up. However, when the event attracted bad publicity the NGO immediately disowned its role in the act. In the case of the Chauria Khata conflict it was the NGO that had encouraged the people to enclose forest land. However, when it was accused of flouting regulations the Director, SSD claimed that it had no knowledge that the villagers were going to enclose forest land. Having disclaimed its role to the officials, it sees its involvement in a situation which, though not of its making requires its intervention to serve the best interest of the people. If however these indirect interventions yield results it is quick to claim credit as it, eventually, did in the case of the Chauria Khata conflict.

Perhaps one can justify the means if the strategy of intervention undertaken by the NGO ultimately serves the needs of the people. It is important however to point out that the issues that the NGO may instigate do not always serve the interest of the communities nor does it have the consensus of the majority. These interventionist strategies may perhaps

serve the needs of the NGO more than that of the communities in whose name the intervention is made. In trying to expose the FD in front of the Forest Minister the NGO took advantage of the differences that exists between the Gujjars and the Brahmans in Nibhera. On the eve of the visit of the Forest Minister, Government of Rajasthan, the Director, SSD dictated a letter to the President of the *Yuva Mandal* (youth group), a young Brahmin boy who teaches at the primary school in a neighbouring village. The letter, signed as 'villagers of Nibhera', exposed what the people saw as the corrupt acts of the FD official and declared the EDC as a farce. The letter was written and attested in the presence of a small congregation of Brahmins who were politically active and also maintained that the EDC was a corrupt institution. However, since Govind Gujjar was its head he was unwilling to expose the FD. The Brahmin men involved in signing the letter had earlier failed to challenge the position that Govind enjoys in the EDC. This was their opportunity to expose the FD and in some sense get back at Govind.

The letter was to be personally handed to the Minister at some point during the public meeting. However, it never reached its recipient as the guards intercepted all villagers who were keen to offer petitions to the Minister. The Director, SSD later claimed that the meeting was well orchestrated to prevent the people from exposing the FD and cited how the 'people of Nibhera' missed the opportunity to hand over the letter. Whether 'the people of Nibhera' really wanted to expose the FD remains circumspect. As I have analysed elsewhere most people in the village that I spoke to were fully aware of the 'corrupt' practices of the FD but did not want to complain because the FD's operations in the village at least gave them wages which was highly valuable at a time when labour opportunities in the area were hard to come by. Shortly after the Minister's visit when I enquired to find out actually how many people were aware of the letter most denied knowledge of any such letter while others said that they would not have bothered with it.

In view of the above discussion and the appropriation of *kulhadi bandh panchayats* discussed in the earlier sections, it becomes clear that rather than the NGOs being the enablers, it is the community initiatives that enable the NGOs to expand and consolidate their standing in the region. Rather than alleviating the community position, NGOs tend to reinforce them in the process of justifying their own intervention or parading their 'success.'

Polarised Participation

In contrast to the eco-development committees, the NGO-led village development committees have a wider social base, with space for debate and negotiation. However in terms of its structure and function the latter is as formalised as the former, underpinned by a prescribed mandate and driven by external agendas. The village development committees are modelled to reflect the popular concept of community-based organisations that have standardised and fixed parameters. The way the community structures manifest themselves within the NGO-led local institution is largely instigated by the organisation itself, whose working at that level is governed by project compulsions.

Through 'streamlining' the existing institutions, the NGOs metamorphose them into 'local institutions' that are mostly incomprehensible to local communities, who subsequently shun its ownership and identify it with organisations that shape them. As I demonstrate, these institutions projected as 'peoples institutions' actually serve as a means for 'instrumental participation'[111] i.e. bases for the NGOs to better execute their projects amongst the communities. Decision-making and consensus are often reached by creating loyal cadres within these institutions, with whom negotiations are reached mostly outside of the institutional context.

Most projects mandate the establishment of local institutions, often in unrealistic time, putting the NGO under pressure to deliver. To set up local institutions, have the consent of its members, and undertake project works, all within a given time-frame compels the organisation to take on board those community members who are willing or already enjoy its goodwill. Thus like in eco-development committees, because 'it's just simpler and faster to work with village elites' (Baviskar 2003), it is mainly the economically and politically more powerful families who dominate the working of the Village Development Committees and monopolizes the benefits. The benefits to the less privileged are governed by the discretion and patronage of the more powerful members.

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[111] Macdonald (1995)

In Nibhera, like in most revenue villages, (see Chronin in Sunder and Jeffery 2000) there already exist several committees (*smaitis*), mostly as a part of the formal Gram Panchayat structure. To add to them are the EDC (set up by the FD), the VDC (set up by SSD) and at least two more *samitis*. In Nibhera the VDC was established in 1997. It was amongst the first ones that SSD set up in any village in the Sanctuary. Subsequently, the NGO has also set up several SHG's in the village, which are referred to as *samhus*. Having gained momentum with funding from Sir Ratan Tata Trust, by the time I left the field in March 2002, there were at least 16 SHGs operating in Nibhera. In 2001 there was another committee added – the Village Development Assembly (VDA). VDA was an outcome of the splitting of VDC. VDC became the executive body with memberships restricted to SHG members while VDA included the general body of the village.

The office bearers of the VDC comprised of a president, a treasurer and a secretary. From the beginning the office bearers of the Nibhera VDC have been Brahmins. When it was started, Kirori Pandit became its head and the treasurer was Jagdish Sharma, the local school teacher referred to as Masterji. Masterji succeeded Kirori Pandit and his cousin brother Radha Raman Sharma became the treasurer. The Brahmin community of the village is seen as the most educated community and one that tends to be most hospitable to outsiders (including people like myself) The two families were the first stops for outsiders (both have been my hosts at different points in time) Both Kirori and Masterji also enjoy a lot of political clout in the village. Kirori is amongst the weighty *patels* and enjoys the confidence of the village elders in being capable of dealing with outsiders. Masterji tends to attract the younger males of the village. Both also have a good rapport with the Gujjars, despite the ongoing conflict.

For the Director of SSD the first point of entry to the village were also these two families. It is through several meetings held in the courtyard of Kirori's house that he established his foothold in the village. Kirori is able to command the support of the heads of the Teli, Nai, and Gaud Brahmins. Thus if he is amenable to the NGO so are these communities. In the manner that the village issues are dealt with, Kirori always consults with Bhanta, the accepted representative of the Gujjar community. It is mainly through the consent of these two individuals and in turn the heads of the some of the other communities that SSD started its operation in the village. There were no separate consultations with the Dom, and Chamar communities. Although these two communities rarely formed a part of the

gathering at Kirori's house, their consent was just assumed. Thus the 'mobilisation' of the 'community' largely took place through acquiring the confidence and willingness of the few powerful members of the village leadership.

Brahmin domination of the VDC leadership meant that the Gujjar *patels* tended to stay away from its meetings. The exception to this was Govind Gujjar. Being the head of the EDC he had always sought the support of Kirori Pandit. The other more powerful leaders of the Gujjar community had to be pleaded with to attend some of the VDC meetings, specifically when their presence considered was indispensable to expediting certain project activities.

For example, the land identified for building a well facilitated SSD, had already been encroached upon by Bhanta's son. The work had been stalled as no one wanted to directly confront Bhanta or his son. The VDC members were also unwilling to start work on the desired date, as they were not happy with the amount sanctioned for the well. The NGO was aware that if Bhanta appealed to the members (especially since Nibhera is predominantly a Gujjar village) not only would his son vacate the plot but the members would also agree work within the sanctioned budget. Thus, despite the unwillingness of the Gujjar leaders to participate in VDC meetings, because of the strategic value, the NGO invited them to represent the village on all important occasions (like facilitating the District Magistrate when he visits the village).

As a consequence of co-option of political elites into the VDC, the inequities inherent in village politics also pervaded the workings of the VDC. The powerful leaders and their favoured people became the first beneficiaries of the NGO-led VDC projects in the village. The VDC did not provide scope for its members to assert their interests or right to benefit independent of the village power equations, The VDC and its decisions were always negotiated between the Brahmans and the Gujjars. Although the members from the other caste groups articulated their reservation in private, they did not openly challenge the decisions taken by these two communities.

This was especially evident is the decision pertaining to the appointment to the post of 'mate' for the well construction project. The role of the mate is to appoint the labourers for the day, maintain the roster and supervise the ongoing work. Masterji canvassed the

case for Radha Raman to be appointed as mate. The NGO workers had reservations regarding the appointment of a paid post but chose to use the incompetence of Radha Raman for raising its objections in the VDC meeting convened to discuss the issue. The representatives of the Chamar community suggested the name of Manphool Chamar for the post. Manphool was considered the most skilled mason in the village. Hoping to raise a dispute between the Gujjars and Brahmins and do away with the post altogether, the NGO suggested the name of Govind Gujjar. Unwilling to get rid of the post the members at the end of the meeting reached a 'consensus' to appoint Govind Gujjar for the post.

After the meeting was over, when I asked Manphool, who is also among the poorest in the village, why he did not volunteer his own name, he said that although he was keen he would not dare to take on the controversy. According to him the Gujjars and Brahmins are aware that he was best suited but still did not choose suggest his name. If he had insisted on including his name it would have created bad vibes between the communities. Buddu Chamar, the Sarpanch of Nibhera, added that these are the 'games' of caste that are played out. As far as the Chamar community was concerned it was enough if they got some opportunities for wage labour. Thus while the NGO continued to justify projects for the 'poorest of the poor' there was no serious attempt to involve them (cf. Farrington and Bebbington 1993). This was especially the case because most projects for individual benefits required a 50% contribution from the beneficiary.

Also, as a 'natural' process, the Bhangi community, the traditional outcastes of the villages, are kept out of the fold of these institutions. The Brahmin and Gujjar expressed their sense of fairness by asserting that they took care of the 'poor Chamar community.' It was understood that it was not possible to include the Bhangis in community work, as the other caste members could not work alongside with the 'untouchables.' Besides as Kirori often justified: "They are a rich community! They don't have to depend on wage labour so they don't show much interest!"

The Bhangi community, as I found out, were not even aware of the existence of the VDC. They knew that a *sanstha* (organisation) worked in the village but were not aware of what its main operations were. What underlies their non-participation is the baggage of discrimination that would accompany their participation. Although they live in the village and abide by its social norms of keeping away from the other caste groups other than the

Chamars, they resent their isolation. Jagdish, a young man from the Bhangi community who worked in Delhi for a few years as a domestic help, was annoyed at the discriminatory practices of the other castes:

> In the cities they don't care where I come from. I worked in homes as a cook but they did not treat me as an outcaste. The people in the village are illiterate and old fashioned. They don't know the ways of the city. I don't care much for them. I keep out of their affairs. We are doing well. They are jealous of us. They know they can't do anything to us. We have won all the fights we have taken up. Now we have access to the village pond and the hand pump. They tried to prevent us but we went to the courts and since then they dare not bother us (6th September 2001).

The participation of women is also contingent to an extent on what the societies permit for their women. Also there was a tendency to equate 'gender' with 'women only' approach. The NGO had initiated several Self Help Groups (SHGs) in the village. Amongst the 16 SHG's functional in the village, 11 of them belonged to women. In some of them some women have managed to remain members despite their husband's disapproval. These women managed to collect their contribution of Rs.10 either by saving from household expenses or their wages. A number of the women SHGs had opened up bank accounts and had received small grants from the governments scheme to promote SHGs. Encouraged by their success in SHGs some of the women had started taking keen interest in other village matters. Their sense of empowerment however remains confined to the women forums alone. They were unable to participate in joint (along with men) decision making in the VDC. The NGO workers, justifying as an act of safeguarding the interest of the women, discouraged women from voicing their opinions in the VDC discussions.

This was evident in the decision that was taken on the construction of the well in the village. In the VDC meeting where the final decision had to be taken over the location of the new well, Halki the wife of an influential Gujjar decided to speak for the women. She argued that since women were the ones who were responsible for collecting drinking water, the well should be constructed according to their convenience. The response from the men present in the meeting was telling. The Gujjar and Brahmin men took offence to the fact that Halki even had an opinion on the matter. The others laughed and jeered at her at which point she walked out of the meeting. The meeting proceeded without any more comments from the other women present. Later the NGO person in charge of the VDC and the SHG in the village went over to Halki's house and called for separate meeting. He

empathised with her and said that it was really unfair of the way the men had treated her. He however also instructed her not to attend VDC meetings anymore and concentrate on her SHG work. The women refrained from attending the VDC meetings held thereafter. They were summoned only to those meetings where wages were to be distributed.

To sum up, although NGOs derive their legitimacy for enabling effective participation of local communities (cf. Korten 1990), their own need to get the communities to participate and deliver by project deadlines compels them to co-opt the existing power hierarchies in the village polity. They promote certain favoured individuals who serve as brokers between the NGO and the rest of the community. Reinforcement of the existing power equations often works to the disadvantage of the poorer and weaker communities. Creating favoured communities in the village who are willing and eager participants in the NGOs activities, enables the NGO to create its 'mission villages.' These are villages where donor missions are brought to display the NGOs ability to work with communities and project the successes of their operations.

Limits to Empowerment

Participation as 'empowerment' is meant to allow the 'participants' to be in-charge to decide the course of their own development. The case of Nibhera throws up several key issues on the disjunct between participation and empowerment. First, and perhaps the most seminal issue is of choice - did the villagers have a say either in the choice of the organisations working 'for them' or in the projects they are meant to participate in? Even NGO-led development projects seem imposed in which the villagers have little choice but to 'participate.'

The VDC and the many SHG's are, as the Director, SSD, points out "…are for the people and by the people!" Practice, however, ran contrary to this rhetoric. Despite the fact that SSD had been functioning for at least 5 years in Nibhera, the villagers, even those who were active members of the VDC, did not seem to have enough information on its working. Even the members of the VDC were not aware of the sources of funding of the various projects that SSD executed through the VDC. Owing to paternalistic attitude adopted by the SSD workers towards the villagers, most people wondered as to why the

organisation was doing 'free service' for the community i.e. working without any returns. Despite being aware of these apprehensions, the SSD made no efforts to clarify these issues, making the villagers even more suspicious of its motives and intentions. Compounding the villagers' confusion was the fact that SSD had adopted different approaches in different villages for the same kind of work. [112]

Given the lack of information and patronising of the more privileged and powerful individuals in the village, there were also allegations of corruption against some of the SSD workers. Most individuals I interviewed had a complaint against the functioning of SSD in the village. Wondering why the people still worked with the NGO despite their dissatisfaction, I received an insightful response from Kiori Pandit, the VDC president:

> So what if we don't have all the answers? What choice do we have? They will be here in our village and they will bring work. If I don't support them then someone else will. The organisation is at least bringing something to the village. It is better than having nothing.

The above response reflects the extent to which villagers perceived institutions like VDCs and organisations like SSD as 'inevitable'. This was also evident in some of the rumours doing the rounds owing to the proliferation of such organisations in the area. One such rumour had become a cause of worry:

> There are Arun (SSD representatives) and Tarun (TBS representatives) but now we have heard that there is a third organisation. I believe they mainly work on people's farm land doing levelling and bunding (field boundaries). If the farmer does not want to get work done on his farm then I believe that they put him in the jail! They release him only after they finish work on his field. (As told by Bhanta Gujjar).

Despite my efforts I could not establish either the existence of this 'organisation.' Irrespective of its authenticity, the content of the rumour reflects profoundly on the understanding communities associate with NGOs. Like government programmes or the FD, NGOs have their agendas to carry out in the Sanctuary, whether or not the 'beneficiaries' understand it or desire it, they *have* to be a part of it. It is a case of 'imposed' development; the NGOs need the communities to sustain their own existence and agenda in the area.

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[112] In village Chauria Khata SSD, being funded by AKRSP, had the provision to allow villagers to use tractors for the earthwork involved in its soil and water conservation activities. In Nibhera similar work was being funded by CRS but because the funders wanted to generate livelihood through generating wages, they had insisted that the earthwork be done manually.

The second issue with regard to empowerment pertains to the issue of ownership and decision making. Although the Village Development Committees adopt a much more participatory approach than Eco-Development Committees, issues of ownership and decision-making still remain the domain of the NGO. However, the process of asserting authority tends to be very subtle. In fact, it becomes apparent when the organisation fails to get the committees to agree with it on a particular issue.

Notwithstanding the claims of VDC being a 'local institution', its ownership is identified with SSD. In April 2001 Masterji, the president of VDC, was in charge of the project of building a common village *bund* (embankment). The manner in which the project progressed made several issues of ownership quite apparent. Although the project was talked of as 'community initiative', to be implemented through the VDC, most villagers saw the project as the sole responsibility of the Masterji and the community-worker of SSD. The rest of the villagers saw it only as a source of wage labour. As per the project rules the wage payments were to be made in instalments, something that made the villagers unhappy. Some of them started casting aspersions on Masterji's integrity and accused him of making money from the project. Unhappy with these allegations he drafted a resignation letter addressed to the Director, SSD and handed it over to SSD staff who supervising the project at the village level. The supervisor was reluctant to accept the resignation. He asked Masterji to tend his resignation to the VDC and not to SSD. It was Masterji's reply that put in perspective the ownership of the VDC:

> The VDC is ours for you to say. But, in fact, you are the one running it.
> Ultimately we know that it's all yours. I am the head of the VDC but beyond me
> you are also there. You handle all matters and you take all the final decisions.
> For us you are the owner of the VDC.

Another example is that of constructing the new well in the village. The work was being supervised by the watershed committee of the village. The NGO was keen to live up to the expectations of NGOs of being more cost effective and efficient than government systems (Vivian 1994). SSD had set ambitious timeframe and unrealistic budgets for completing the project through community participation. Hence it was unwilling to permit the *hiring* of a mate. This would have undermined the organisation's position vis-à-vis the Public Works Department (PWD), the members of which already begrudged the fact that government work (that should have rightfully been undertaken by them) had been given

to a NGO. SSD, on the promise of voluntary labour of the communities had managed to get the project at a much lower bid than the PWD.

In the VDC meeting convened to discuss this issue, it was clear that most members present felt that a having a mate would enable them to get the work done more efficiently. A mate was necessary because the committee members (who were being asked to take charge of executing the project), would not have been able to devote much time to the project as the time would overlap with the sowing season for the summer crops.

SSD first opposed the idea on the basis that the person chosen as the mate reflected caste bias and nepotism (an issue discussed in the section on 'Polarising Structures'). In response, the watershed committee agreed that they would change the person but retain the position of the mate. Since this clearly defeated the purpose of the NGO, its staff argued that having a mate made them no different from the government mode of working and if that's the mode the community wanted to adopt then they would have to dissolve the watershed committee, a move unanimously opposed by the villagers. Its dissolution would mean an insult and the undermining of the authority of the committee that had been chosen by the VDC and included the heads of most caste groups. Bhanta Gujjar was categorical at the VDC meeting:

> If we dissolve the committee then it would affect the presence of the village identity in the project. It would lead to a total dismissal of the community in the project. It will also mean complete defamation (*manhani*) of the village and its administration. (Bhanta Gujjar)

The agricultural engineer of SSD, who prided over his acumen at dealing with the villagers, was in charge of the project. His strength, as he himself put it, was "the confidence that I can get the villagers to do any work I want them to!" He was convinced that hiring a mate was a reflection of "villagers trying to get the better of SSD". The VDC's reluctance to dissolve the committee gave him the leverage he wanted. He argued that a community-based project could either have a committee or a mate and the VDC had to choose between the two

The VDC and the committee members argued it was a common practice to have a mate for such kind of activity. They said that they had done their share by sending a member of their family for voluntary labour. They reasoned that since mate was going to be a paid

position the individual in charge would get compensated for the time he would spend in doing the job. The engineer remained adamant. Faced with this choice, amidst much discontent the VDC decided to retain the committee. This incident left the village feeling very bitter towards the NGO. Bhanta Gujjar reasoned with me the day after the meeting:

> The NGO people didn't do a good thing yesterday. They challenged the very identity and authority of the village. This is like forcing us to do what they want. We are helpless and they have resorted to arm-twisting. What can we do? We want the well and they have the might.

As predicted by the committee, the work of the well construction suffered. No one took the responsibility as none of the committee members could devote the required time. When the deadlines were not met, SSD stalled payment. The members were told that the Collector was unhappy and would not release money, as he wanted the work completed by January of 2002. When SSD did not relent, a few of the committee members proceeded to meet the Collector. It was only then that they learnt that it was SSD and not the Collector who had set the deadlines for the project. In February 2002, when I finally left Nibhera, the well was only half-constructed and the work had been stalled.

If empowerment of people is seen as the NGO's mission, it is also its greatest dilemma. Rather than an ideology, 'empowerment' comes defined by project prescription and identifiable project targets. However even when project processes go through the rituals and motions of enabling such notions of 'empowerment' and 'participation' as Mosse (2004:239) suggests in another context, they tend to 'open up liberating spaces beyond the control of the project'. Consequently, the processes of empowerment have a two-fold effect on 'participating community'. At one level it enables them to participate in the village development committees, take stock of accounts in the self-help groups and mobilize against ineffectiveness of the government services. At another level it also enables them to intervene in the operations of the NGO in the village, oppose some of its proposals or question some of its activities. While the NGO is happy to publish and trumpet the former as its achievements' on 'community empowerment', it labels the latter as the villagers trying to make 'trouble' or being 'ungrateful'.

A NGOs ability to empower communities is also constrained by its needs to foster dependency (Bebbington *et al.* 2007). Hence when VDC members requested SSD to

make VDC into an independent registered body so that could bid for government projects directly, the NGO predictably ignored their request.

Conclusion

The agenda of 'sustainable development' and 'collaborative management' of natural resources provides scope for NGOs to facilitate the effective participation of local communities. In India, expectations come from the fact that a diverse range of NGOs have significantly influenced policy and practice of JFM in community forest management. This has led to a broad generalisation of the abilities of NGOs to enable better participation and empowerment of the local communities as well as to effectively facilitate the collaboration between the communities and the State.

An examination of the case of NGOs operating in Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary concludes that the effectiveness of local level NGOs cannot be predicated on broad generalisations. The extent to which NGOs can be effective is contingent on context specific issues, personalities, organisational history and objectives - both hidden and stated (Haynes 1999).

In Kailadevi, the scope for NGO engagement in resource conflicts and their resolution has enabled individuals to opportunistically establish themselves in the 'business of NGOs'. With the organisational survival and maintenance as their priority, the NGOs in Kailadevi are dependent on and answerable to several publics-the government, the donors and the network of people-oriented advocacy groups. The NGOs thus attempt to simultaneously play multiple roles that are at most times inherently contradictory. The brunt of such manipulations and role playing is often borne by the very communities the NGO's seek to empower.

Community-based conservation and community representation, for NGOs like TBS and SSD, is valuable stakes to be upheld for their own survival. Their saleability lies in projecting themselves as 'successful' in *enabling* community-initiatives and participation in community-based conservation. Consequently, both organisations tend to appropriate credit for community-initiatives in which they have had no role to play. While the locally

based NGO claimed to have made them more effective by formalizing the *panchayats* as Village Development Committees, Tarun Bharat Sangh claimed to have initiated them in 23 villages. In projecting their credibility with and proximity to communities' they not only misrepresent the communities' merits and undermine their interests but also represent them as being *in need of interventions* by NGOs to guard their own well being and interests.

NGOs ability to work for the interests of the people is contingent on the political dynamics of the larger organisational networks of which they are a part. Although the issue is of people and their access that are at stake, SSD's ability to address these issues are underpinned by its own agenda for project 'performance', sustained funding, maintaining solidarity with support organisations and future opportunities for work with the FD. Consequently the NGO is unable to take up any advocacy or confrontational issues directly. Its instigation of community action against the State becomes either a means in the power play between the organisation and the Forest department or an action to affirm its legitimacy as an advocacy organisation to the network of support organisations that expect the same from it. In the balance, however, it has no real impact either in facilitating a participatory approach or in ensuring the rights and livelihood issues of the people vis-a-vis the Forest Department.

Participation is mostly instrumental in nature i.e. essentially to facilitate the smooth implementation of the pre-planned projects. Making people participate is the most important factor for the NGOs own survival. Just as in the case of the FD, the NGO also need to demonstrate to its funding agencies a willing participation by the people. However, contrary to the popular assumption (much of which generated by NGOs themselves) 'communities' are not necessarily willing participants in the NGO programmes.

Administrative exigencies of the NGO lead them to co-opt local power structures in the local institutions like village development committees, thus reinforcing the existing social hierarchies and inequities in the village. Although the process of decision-making is done through convening of the local institution and in the presence of the communities, the expression of the communities is straight jacketed into that which is expected of them by

the donor or the state. The malleability of the community in the hands of the NGO is maintained by lack of transparency and misinformation.

Empowerment is limited to meeting project prescribed items i.e. establishment of local institutions or SHG groups etc. The NGO's survival is dependent on fostering dependency of the communities. Most importantly while the NGO encourages communities to seek accountability and question the functioning of the State at the village level, it views communities questioning of the NGOs working as 'trouble making' and being 'ungrateful'.

In conclusion, I submit that the effectiveness of NGOs as active partners in participatory conservation approaches have to be analysed within their local contexts of origin and operations. While their work may seem credible, and enabling a community-based approach, in effect the NGO can also be subtly perpetuating the very hurdles to ensure its own survival and sustainability. It may just be shifting of assumed control over community from one hand to the other. Thus it is suggested that rather than seeing NGOs as the closest to community aspiration and legitimate brokers, the communities themselves should be directly involved in negotiating their fates. Rather than dealing with politics at the NGO level, it would serve better to deal with the politics at the community level in enabling community participation and participation in conservation and other developmental projects.

Chapter 6

Communities: Perceptions, Strategies and Disenchantment

Introduction

The primary thrust of the India Ecodevelopment Project (IEDP) was to reduce the negative impacts of conservation policy and practice on the people by adopting a participatory approach to develop viable alternatives to resource use and dependence. This Chapter focuses on the interpretations and responses of the communities based on their understanding of the concept and implementation of IEDP. In analysing the perceptions of the communities and their engagement with external agencies, the paradox of participatory conservation attempted through IEDP is attempted to be brought out.

The first three sections of the Chapter provide a brief history of Karauli forests and the changing policies over rights and wildlife management. The purpose is to underscore the fact that external interventions that do not consider the local socio-political history of the issues they seek to address, either fail or are inadequate in addressing the issues effectively (Ferguson 1990; Sivaramakrishnan 1999). In the case of IEDP, prescriptions are ahistorical in nature. The starting premise is that local communities, especially their resource dependence, have an adverse impact on the PA. The communities, on the other hand, accept the project-related activities of the Forest Department (FD), and its impact on their lives, in continuity of, and in relation to, the history of control exercised on the forests by the different regimes over time, starting with the princely state of Karauli. The crux of the perceived people-wildlife conflict remains the issue of resource use and rights and the impact of wildlife on livelihoods. Irrespective of all the rhetoric of conservation and participation that the Project may have adopted, for the communities the impact of changing regimes on these two issues remain central to how they perceive the ongoing activities.

Section four focuses on the Project's attempts at institutionalisation of participation through the formation of Ecodevelopment Committees (EDC) In analysing its impact on the practice of *kulhadi bandh panchayat*, it has been demonstrated that the processes and

principles of external attempts at local institutional building, only serve to create localised project institutions that serve to co-opt people and their resistance to the implementation of externally defined agendas (Sundar 2000, Hailey 2001, Vasavada *et al.* 1999). Local communities, unable to relate to the prescribed and imposed structures of the Project, identify them not as their 'own' but as of the 'other' (external agencies). It also focuses how the emergence of external institution redefines the people-forest relations and weakens their own attempts at forest protection.

Section five focuses on the agency of people themselves. It answers questions raised in the first chapter as to why communities, despite being severely disadvantaged by the Project and gaining no real benefit, still choose to collaborate with the external agencies in sustaining the success stories of their intervention. The last section focuses on the communities continued efforts at forest protection and concludes that the community-initiative at forest protection is indispensable to their own survival needs and will remain their domain with, or without, the support of the State and external projects.

State and Communities

In analyzing the community response to the conservation initiative by the Forest Department, the thesis presents an analysis of the communities *in relation* to the state and in no way suggests a binary opposition between the 'State' and the 'communities' (See Chapter 1). While earlier development critique and subaltern studies may have suggested such an opposition (Chatterjee 1993; Guha 1989), it is no longer argued that such divides are simplistic and that 'society/communities' and 'state' are mutually constitutive of each other (Sinha 2008; Chatterjee 2004; Gilbert and Nugent 1994). This becomes even more apparent in the critiques on participatory development and conservation discussed in Chapter 2.

The analysis of the participatory conservation initiative in Kailadevi done in this study resonates with Sinha's (2008:84) argument in his analysis of the government programme on Community Development in India as a process and outcome of what he refers to as the 'transnational regime' (rather than just postcolonial or national):

> "Community" and "state" far from being mutually exclusive became mutual
> conditions of possibility; the state makes certain forms of community possible,
> just as incorporating the communities become a mode of exercising state power.

In Kailadevi the EDCs formed by the state, with the participation of communities, served not only to entrench the Department in the villages, but also enabled both the re-articulation communities' self-initiated forest protection discourse and the reinforcement of existing power inequities within the communities. Simultaneously, the KBPs and the 'community' became a central category in the states conservation paradigm and discourse.

In representing the 'state' and the 'communities', one of the principle analytical premise of the thesis, is to see the 'communities' and 'state' (largely represented by the Forest Department) not as monotheistic but in their disaggregated self. This has been discussed in some detail in Chapters 3 and 4. It is in this disaggregated interaction between the two agencies that boundaries blur, making any binary opposition unlikely. As discussed in Chapter 4, the lower cadres of the government (in this case the Forest Department) emerge from and remain entrenched in village communities. Equally, as discussed in Chapter 1, 'communities' get entrenched in the State through engagement with village functionaries and local officials for potential political and economic gain. Referred to as 'mediators', 'intermediaries' or 'brokers', such groups or individuals tend to reproduce a 'shadow state', blurring the divides between actual 'state' and 'society' (Pattenden 2011; Shah 2010; Lewis and Mosse 2006).

Ironically the analysis of the 'state' in the thesis (Chapter 4) as a disaggregate of people, levels and inter and intra-institutional complex of relationships compels this author to use the word 'state' in this Chapter, even though it is largely used to refer to the Forest Department. As discussed in Chapter 4, the Department may be the implementing body, but its logic of operations and ideologies are borne from its internal and intra-organizational compulsions. The participatory conservation models embodied in IEDP and its implementation are more akin to what Sinha (2008) refers to as the 'transnational regime' – driven as much by international and national ideologies, interests and operation in conservation, as by regional and local interests. The forest operations of the erstwhile State (as discussed in Chapter 2) remained implicated in the larger colonial politics played out in hunting as a sport, emerging international ideologies of conservation and its

own need retain power and sovereignty. Thus, the Department in its position vis-à-vis the communities, not only represent its many facets but also encompasses the multiple facets of the international, regional and other local governmental interests and conflicts.

The concept of 'communities' has been used interchangeably with 'people' in this Chapter. This does not necessarily contradict the analysis of community as a disaggregate as done in the preceding Chapters or in this one; it does not intend to deny the differences based on competing interests, age, caste, class, political or economic power. In fact Chapter 3 demonstrates the oft cited concerns, found in the literature on community management and co-management of natural resources, that in heterogeneous and divided communities, strengthening of traditional systems or instituting of new systems of management does not necessarily ensure the equitable distribution of resources among the community groups (Agrawal 1997; Jodha 1996). On the contrary as demonstrated in the case of the Rebaris in Kailadevi, while enabling a better management of the resources through partnering of residential communities of Kailadevi and the Forest Department, the inequities within communities get reinforced wherein the relatively politically weaker non-residential communities of the Rebaris tend to be denied their rights to access the resources by the newly instituted authorities.

The analysis of the relation between the state and communities in this chapter underscores Singleton's (2000) argument made in acknowledgement of the understanding that many co-management regimes grow out of a prior history of conflictual relations, "...while co-management can reorder relations between different sets of actors in a variety of ways, it should be viewed as a continuation of conflicts, rather than a resolution of them" (ibid: 10). Further, where there is a prior history of conflicts, "a pattern of opportunistic and adversarial may have already been established and in that context such actions may be seen by actors themselves as either 'acts of resistance' (if done by community users) or 'upholding proper management practices (if done by state managers)." Also relevant to understanding the relation between the state and communities in Kailadevi is Singleton's (ibid.:6) observation of "how actors are constituted affects their relative bargaining power and the outcomes of conflicts".

In analyzing the communities' responses and interaction, this Chapter elaborates the history of forest management in Kailadevi to focus on the changing regimes of

management and in turn the changing practices and perceptions of the communities vis-à-vis the 'state'. The principal argument the Chapter makes that while external interventions deny both politics and history of the interactions between the state and the communities, their responses and strategies are shaped by: a) their history of interactions with the state and b) the communities' varying perception of how the state is constituted and the changes therein. It is not that the state is most powerful, but so far as the communities are concerned both historically and in the context of IEDP, their attempts to appeal to authorities other than the Forest Department have yielded little results. This in turn has lent to the communities perceiving the Forest Department as being the final authority on all matters related to resource use within the Sanctuary.

The final point in understanding the relations between the state and the communities is of politics and society. Although the communities' in Kailadevi perceive the state as a powerful authority and choose strategies of evasion, false compliance and other non-confrontational modes of response, it still functions as what Chatterjee (2004) refers to as a 'political society'. According to Chatterjee (ibid.:4) "political society is a notion that helps understand the entanglement of elite and subaltern politics - especially the politics that emerges out of the developmental policies of government aimed at specific population groups". According to Chaterjee, groups in political society claim rights and entitlement that are not necessarily due to them by mobilizing themselves and by networking outside the group i.e with other groups under similar circumstances, with governmental functionaries, influential people, political leaders etc. Usually authorities "cannot ignore …such groups receive attention from those agencies according to calculations of political expediency" (op cit.).

In understanding the potential of the communities of Kailadevi as a political society there are two important pointers. First, as most theorist's on state –community interaction acknowledge, while political power is interactive in all such interactions, it involves a continuous process of contestation and negotiation, that are tenuous and subject to fragile political calculations and not all political societies can mobilize support nor do they always get their claims (Chatterjee 2004; Gilbert and Nugent 1994; Scott 1994; 1990). Mallon (1994:70), in analyzing the everyday forms of state formation as a 'hegemonic

process'[113], states – " politics at all levels become nested arenas of contestations, where power is being contested, legitimated and redefined. Some political projects are always winning out over others, some factions are defeating others". The second point to understand is that not all contestation or resistance necessary leads to a 'revolution' (see Scott 1994; Knight 1994) Non-revolutionary resistance in the case of Kailadevi comprises of what Knight (1994:70 citing Scott 1990) refers to as "subversive attitudes...under the mask of docility". Resistance that precludes the use of any single measure for its subversion.

It is widely acknowledged in the literature on participatory conservation that co-management constitutes a context of unequal power relations. What strategies are adopted or how rule is resisted is a continuous process and is informed by the strategic needs of the communities; their relative power positions and perception of what is negotiable or non-negotiable in terms of accessing resources. In the case of Kailadevi, the communities have to try to garner support from other authorities to undermine the imposition of the regulations by the Forest Department. For instance, they have repeatedly approached the Revenue Department for regularizing the forest land they have encroached for agriculture. All efforts however have always been overruled by the Revenue Department by citing legislations applicable to the Sanctuary.

The communities' strategies are also informed by their learning from the experiences of the communities in Ranthambhore National Park (RNP) In RNP the Meena[114] communities have been able to mobilize their strength and network with their caste brothers in politics and government to oppose the Forest Department in Sawai Madhopur. This has led to several clashes and heightened the vigilance of the Department, including the building of a concrete boundary wall around the Park. The clashes in Ranthambhore, however, are for accessing resources of the forests from the 'outside'. (In RNP all villages have been relocated from the core area, four villages remain in the buffer area). Learning from this experience, where years of protest could not prevent relocation, in Kailadevi the

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[113] Mallon borrows the term from William Roseberry (1994). In this usage 'hegemony' is seen as an endpoint or outcome of a hegemonic process. Mallon (1994) uses this term to understand how popular culture interacts and inform the elite culture and how state formation is a co-produced process rather than an imposition of an elite culture.
[114] Meena is a Schedule Tribe community that wields considerable power in the state of Rajasthan. They have significant presence in politics and in the Government of Rajasthan.

communities' prefer 'everyday forms of resistance' while a confrontationist stance is more strategic and therefore no less political. Also, it is important to note that state-community relations over access and control of resources in Kailadevi are an ongoing, dynamic process that, at the time of this research was continually being negotiated. Therefore, it cannot be definitely concluded as to whether at a later stage their resistance will change its face, garner strength and mobilize opposition to the Department's impositions.

History of the Forests of Kailadevi: Administration and Management

Karauli has a history dating back to the 10th century, when it was established and ruled by the Jadon Clan.[115] Thereafter, the State fell into the hands of the rulers of the Slave dynasty[116], followed by the Mughal Empire,[117] and the Marathas.[118] A treaty between the Marathas and the East India Company (dated 9th November 1817) brought Karauli under British protection. Notwithstanding annexation by other forces, the Jadon Clan continued to rule Karauli State until the Independence of India in 1947. In 1949 it was merged with the State of Rajasthan (Prasad 1982, District Gazetteer 1983, Imperial Gazetteer 1901).

The earliest documented history of the forests of Karauli State is from early 20th century which describes the area (c. 516 sq km) being bereft of any 'real forests' and 'valuable timber' (Imperial Gazetteer, 1901). At the time forests were managed by the Bagar Department, a subsidiary of the Revenue Department, with a Forest Officer, Forest Inspector and several Forest Guards (referred to as *rundhiya*s). The principle functions of the Department were:

1. Supply grass and firewood for State elephants and cattle
2. Find and preserve game for the King and his followers

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[115] Jadon, the ruling clan of the Rajputs, consider themselves to be the descendants of Lord Krishna, a popular Hindu god.
[116] Between the 10th and the 17th century the Slave Dynasty had ruled Karauli. Slave dynasty refers to the various Muslim dynasties that ruled in India in the 12th and 13th century. (See Habib and Raychaudhuri (eds.) 1982)
[117] The Mughal Empire lasted from 1526 to 1857 (See Richards, 1993).
[118] Marathas were Marathi-speaking people of West and Central India, known for their ability as warriors and their devotion to Hinduism. They rose to power in the 17th century and helped bring about the fall of the Mughal Empire but also opposed British supremacy in India. The Imperial British army waged several wars with the Marathas finally subjugating them in 1818 (See Stein 1998).

3. Provide revenue by exacting grazing dues.

Other than securing these interests of the State, the forest management was not given much importance. The section on 'Forest' in the State Administrative Reports from 1885-1908 focus only on the revenue received from the Forest Department. In 1912 the first forest survey of the area was undertaken by JH Lyall, an Imperial Forest Officer appointed by the Political Agent of Karauli, who reported "no systematic management of the forests" (1914: 12) Other than game reserves and fodder enclosures (*rundh*s), the rest of the forests were not well protected, and Lyall made several recommendations for the management, survey and commercial exploitation of the forests. However, because of financial constraints the State was unable to implement any of his suggestions,[119] with practically no exploitation of forests during years of State rule.[120] In 1944 contracts were given for the first time for manufacture and export of *katha*,[121] firewood and charcoal. However, this system of exploitation was dismissed later for being "unsystematic, non-profitable and unscientific." [122]

In 1948-49, under the State of Rajasthan, the Forest Departments of four princely states (Bharatpur, Alwar, Dholpur and Karauli) were merged to form the Bharatpur Forest Division, with Karauli and Sapotra Ranges covering the forests of Kailadevi. The two defining features of this phase of management are the settlement of the forests and the systematic exploitation of the forests for revenue generation.

The Rajasthan Forest Act was promulgated in 1953 and shortly thereafter, in 1955-56, the first Forest Settlement of Rajasthan was undertaken. As a part of the Settlement process Forest Blocks were demarcated and areas notified as 'Protected Forests' to be managed for revenue generation. At that time the principal forest products (*katha*, firewood, charcoal, and bamboo) were exploited by auctioning annual forest coupes to local contractors. In 1979 the Karauli and the Sapotra Ranges were moved from Bharatpur to the Tonk Forest Division.

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[119] Report on the Administration of the Karauli State for year 1932-1933.
[120] Management Plan, Bharatpur Forest Division (1968-78)
[121] An edible extract of the Khair *(Acacia catechu)*
[122] Working Plan of the Tonk Forest Division (1955-56 to 1974-75)

In 1983 the Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary was declared under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, followed by the creation of the Karauli Forest Division in 1984. As a Sanctuary, the forests were managed for conservation and protection of biodiversity, by the Territorial Wing of the Forest Department. In 1990-91, the management of the Sanctuary was brought under the Project Tiger Office in Ranthambhore, Sawai Madhopur.[123] In 1996 the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve was selected under the World Bank-supported India Ecodevelopment Project (IEDP). Between 1997 and 2000 three more Forest Ranges were added to the Sanctuary area and the post of the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) was created in Karauli, leading to a significant enhancement of staff and the infrastructure.[124]

Through these various phases, the State has put on 'many faces' represented by Departments and mediated by informal and formal policies. The communities have assessed these regime changes in terms of impact on their resource use practices and by the events that have unfolded at the village level. In the narratives of the communities there are three distinct comparative phases of State interventions. These are: *Rajan ka Raj* (the period of rule by the King of Karauli State); *Congress Raj* (the period of Congress party rule)[125]; and the time when the 'EDC people came.'[126]

The history of forest management of the area has not informed the formulation of the Project. But as Sivaramakrishnan (1999: 273) rightly argues 'present problems of conservation cannot be diagnosed and hence cannot be prescribed for without a situated understanding of the historical process that moulded them'. In the village of Nibhera the people's interpretation and response to external intervention are shaped by their lived histories of interaction with the State in the past. People tend to understand present intervention in forest management by constant reference and comparison to the past systems of management.

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[123] Ranthambhore Management Plan 1991-1995
[124] Ranthambhore Management Plan 2002-2012
[125] Since Independence the Indian National Congress has dominated state politics in Rajasthan. Besides, as the older generation remembers, it was the people of the Indian National Congress that visited their villages to announce Independence from the British and the end of the *Rajan ka Raj*. Thus the generation always refer to the Government of Independent India as *Congress ki Sarkar* (for the advent and rule of Congress in Rajasthan see Narain and Mathur, 1990)
[126] Similar narratives of the changing regimes are also found in other parts of Rajasthan (See Gold and Gujjar 2002)

As is evident from the historical records and the narratives of the communities, the State and the communities have always had a conflicting agenda of protection and resource use. The communities' means of resource use and management however seem to have always taken into account the State's authority, management and control over the resources. With every passing regime the State, represented by the FD, has become less accessible and amenable to the people and their needs. The advent of the forest bureaucracy and its transition to the current management structure of the Sanctuary has increasingly alienated the people from the State in two key aspects affecting their existence in the forest area - resource access and perils of wildlife.

For the communities, the fundamental change in their relation with the State, and subsequently with their resources, occurred with the demise of the Raj. The new systems, starting with the Congress and up to the time of EDCs, have introduced elements that, while maintaining some continuity with past systems, have radically redefined the boundaries of interaction between the people and the State.

People and the changing regimes of access and rights

There is little evidence indicating that the legal ownership of the forests of Kailadevi have ever been with the local communities. Prior to Independence, ownership primarily rested with the King and to some extent with the *baoptadars* and the *jagirdars,*[127] who paid tribute to the King but also enjoyed profit accruing from the sale of grass and firewood. Although technically there was a concept of 'village forest', no such demarcations had taken place (Lyall, 1914). Following the Settlement of Forests and Land Revenue in 1955-56, the jurisdiction of the forests and the land therein fell within the purview of the Forest Department and the Revenue Department. Currently, the villages of Kailadevi are classified by the Forest Department as 'island' villages i.e. revenue villages surrounded by forest land.

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[127] Forms of land tenancy introduced in India by the early sultans of Delhi in the early 13th century. Under the system, land, its revenues, and the power to govern it was assigned to an official of the state.

The regime of rights and access of local communities are not on record. For instance, Lyall (1914: 16) categorically states:

> There are no rights; grazing, green wood for agricultural and other purposes and dry wood for fuel are concessions, though time and custom may have caused them to be considered rights.

Felling green wood was strictly prohibited. Caste groups such as carpenters had to pay a sum to access a limited amount of green wood and fencing material. Grazing fee was applicable only for camels and goats. Following the Forest Settlement, the rights and concession of the people were laid down block-wise.[128] While most of the rules of Karauli State were retained, use of forest land for agriculture was curtailed. Unlike earlier when a farmer could cultivate land anywhere so long as he paid taxes, agricultural expansion on forest land without prior permission of the department was no longer permitted. Each village was given a designated grazing area. There was no restriction on grazing cattle in the forest area (Block settlement Records, 1956; IIPA 1997).

While restrictions on resource use have been imposed by every regime, people's access to resources has been shaped by how the State has sought to wield its authority. It is in this sense that the FD of the EDC phase (associated with the establishment of the Sanctuary) is markedly different from the period of the Raj or Congress. The State has always been all powerful, and continues to be so, but the terms of its interaction with the local communities has changed significantly.

The Authoritarian State

The oldest generation of Nibhera have seen the rule of the last two Kings, Bhompal Pal (1927-47) and his son Ganesh Pal (1947-84). Dhanbai Gujjar one of the oldest women alive in the village reminisces the all encompassing power of the State: "In those days whatever the *raja* said was final!" Within this authoritarian regime, there were apparently no *haq* (rights) that the people had. Access to resources was in terms of *manjuri* (permission) The Rajas' *sepoy* or the *rundhiya* (guard) were also carriers of messages from the King. According to Bodya:

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[128] During the Settlement process, the forest land was divided into units called blocks for the purpose of administration and management.

> They would come and tell us that from now on you are not allowed to get this or
> go there in the forest (in relation to new grass preserve or game preserve that
> would be set up) Those days wherever they wanted they would make a new
> *rundh*. Once the *rundh* was made we could not go there. This was the law of the
> State and if we broke it then punishment could be severe.

The State as the sole power over their forests continues to the present times, except that the States powers have multiplied (cf. Divyabhanusinh 1998). As the people put it- "now only God knows how many Kings there are!" In the recent times the villagers have seen many senior officials visit the area including the DFO, the CCF, even the State Minister of Forests. Today, the concept of *haq* or 'rights' is no different from the times of the *Raj*; villagers are aware that these rights can be taken away at any time.

The supremacy of the FD's authority vis-à-vis other authorities has been time and again established in front of the village. The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, deems that only those activities permitted by the FD may be carried out in the PA. Thus in many public meetings the District Magistrate, considered to be the highest authority at the District level, has been tactfully denied permission by the FD to carry out some infrastructure development activities inside the Sanctuary. Govind Gujjar, the EDC head states: "The right over the forests still remains with the Forest Department, like there was no one above the King, now no one seems to be above them."

It is because of the perception of FD as sole authority and arbitrator of all issues on rights, even when communities have an opportunity to claim rights through other channels, they do not bother. In 1997 there was a Supreme Court ruling to complete the pending legal processes of establishing PAs across India.[129] Given the indifference of the FD to complete legal procedures, most villages in Kailadevi were not even aware that a legal process was underway. It was the local NGO, the Society for Sustainable Development that took the initiative urging people to file claims over existing rights, but most people declined from doing so. Bhanta explains the disinterest:

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[129] In India, The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, governs the establishment and management of Protected Areas (PA). There are 13 legal steps between declaration of intent and final notification of an area as a PA. Many of the PAs in India are erstwhile Protected Forests (PF) or Reserved Forests (RF), and it is assumed that the procedure of settlement of rights would have been completed under the Indian Forest Act *prior* to their declaration as PF or RF. However, to declare an area as a PA, such as Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary, the 13-step legal process has to be followed to settle all existing rights over resources. Thus, while the intention to declare the area was made in 1983, it was not until 1998, following an order of the Supreme Court, that the final notification for Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary was issued.

> We have seen many such initiatives in the past, but nothing comes of them. If the FD says *no*, it is a *no*! Why should we insist and invite the hostility of the FD? Tomorrow they will change some words here and there and we will have to wash our hands off whatever little we have. We would rather avoid having anything to do with such claims.

Lack of Space for Negotiations

What differentiates the period of the Raj from the current authority of the FD, is the space for negotiation available to the villagers. Jania Gujjar, well into his sixties, has seen times change:

> In the past the people acknowledged the authority of the Raj over the forests. The *siphai*s (police guards) and the *rundhiya*s (forest guards) would come by regularly. Whoever would dare to disobey the King would be severely punished. People feared the *siphai*! But even in those days the Raj was not like the FD is now. The Raj honoured the needs of the people. If the people would ask for something at least the King would give them an audience. Now everything is according 'paper' (law), and they always tell us that the law cannot be changed.

In one instance the villagers wanted to exchange forest land (which they claimed had been cultivated by their ancestor) with wasteland[130] outside the jurisdiction of the FD, but were told that such an exchange is not permissible under the law. According to the villagers, under the Raj, despite the regulations and the prohibitive taxing structures, there was always space for negotiations. There was scope for the appeals of villages to be granted by the *durbar* (King's court), such as the village boundary of Nibhera and their exclusive grazing rights on the *badi kho*. These were granted as a reward for the valour of Baba Balram, a Gujjar ancestor, had displayed in battle.

A significant event in the Congress phase was the coming of the *doriwale* (literally, the 'people with the thread' or land surveyors)[131] to the village. This marked the beginning of a system whereby the State was no longer amenable to the needs of the communities. Haricharan Gujjar, a respected man of Gujjar community vividly recalls:

> When the *doriwale* came everything changed. They measured our land, divided it into various bits, and said: 'this bit belongs to the *janglat* (Forest Department), this to *sivaychak* (Revenue Department).'

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[130] Das 1997

[131] *Doriwale* in fact refers to the tools & instruments of land surveyors, who were responsible for physical measurement and demarcation, as part of the Settlement process of the mid-50s.

The division of the land was accompanied by restrictive and inflexible regulations pertaining to its use. Unlike earlier when farmers could cultivate land anywhere as long as they paid taxes, expansion of agriculture into forest land, without permission of the FD, was no longer permitted. Each village was given designated areas for its agriculture and grazing. Most importantly, the land ownership was no longer legitimised by its use but by possession of a *pata* (ownership deed) that Jania described as "numbers on a piece of paper!"

The all-pervasive legal system of current times leaves no space for negotiation as in the case of rejecting the request for 'exchange' of land. Instead the law is conveniently interpreted by the FD to exercise total control. For instance, although the law does allow for some human use in a Sanctuary, the Forest Guards will treat Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary at par with Ranthambhore National Park, making any human presence or use of resources illegal. The predominance of legal idioms in interaction increases the distance between the FD and the people. They simply do not understand the language in which their resources are now being talked about, especially under a programme like the IEDP.

Omnipresent State

According to the villagers the most evident difference between the times of the Raj and EDC, is the omnipresent and all pervasive nature of the State represented by the FD. The permitted use of forest resources always falls short of the required need of the communities. At the same time, openly breaking the law has always meant strict action unless one resorted to bribing the local officials and guards. The punishments were particularly severe during the time of the Raj.[132] In recent times, apart from being fined, some villagers have also been physically assaulted by the FD for what they perceived as violating the regulations of the Sanctuary. The people have nonetheless always managed to meet their needs from the forests (even of small timber, despite the fact that it has always been prohibited even in the time of the Raj). This they have done, to put it in their own words, by stealth (*chori - chippe*) or hoodwinking the FD (*janglat ki aankh bachake*).

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[132] Bodya Dom recalled how offenders were tied to cots and had stones trampled into their palms and feet. Sometimes the guards would confiscate the offender's cattle and land. In some cases the offender would be fined so heavily that he would leave the village and become a fugitive.

Thus, irrespective of *de jure* rights, villagers have defined their access issues by establishing their *de facto* rights.[133]

The problems that people face are less on account of the changes in their *de jure* rights and more because of the effect the new governance of the FD has on their *de facto* rights. The expansion of the Departments into the forests through, *nakas* and *chowkis* (check-post) and the presence of guards at the village level have made their *de facto* use of resources more visible. The intrusive presence of the FD is best captured in the words of Jania Gujjar:

> In the times of the Raj, the *sipahis* (guards) would come once in a while. They would be few in number, yet their approach would be immediately known in the village and people would become alert. There were dense forests close to the village and we would get what we want without having to in too deep. One never had to see the *siphai* if he didn't come to the village. These days the guards are all over…they have made check-posts and towers and now they stay in the village all the time. They have their eyes all over …now getting things from the forests is difficult, every other day they catch hold of some one or the other.

During the Raj there were many *de facto* rights that were not necessarily illegal. Although the Raj remained the owner of the forests, the villages had the *de facto* rights to exert their ownership over forests vis-à-vis other villages. Between them they could buy, sell and mortgage land. They had the freedom to give other villages access to their resources and themselves use any part of the forests as they pleased.

> The exclusivity of village territory was first impinged upon during the Forest Settlement, with the FD carving out Forest Blocks to improve forest administration. Each Block, however, included the forests of several villages. All the villages included in the Block would have grazing rights in the same area. (ACF 2002: pers. comm.)

Despite the Forest Settlement, the villages had continued to function as they had done under the Raj. The FD did not seem to interfere much and up until the advent of IEDP, the PA was rather neglected. With the declaration of the Sanctuary and advent of IEDP, the FD has imposed strict restriction on use of resources by villages located outside the Sanctuary.[134] This seriously impacted the reciprocal arrangement the villages within the Sanctuary had with the villages of the plains, especially for meeting the shortage of

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[133] The prevalence of *de facto* use and rights is common to most resource rich areas. It is these practices that challenge the ability to implement law effectively (Saberwal 1999; Peluso 1992).

[134] Similar, almost identical impacts have been noted by Neumann (1997) on buffer zone management and eco-development in East Africa. Similar impacts of establishment of PA have been noted by Karlsson (1999) in India.

fodder and water during the lean season. Also ownership of forest areas like the *badi kho*, conferred to the village in the time of the Raj, was now under threat. The setting up of cattle camps in the forests was made illegal, and villagers refrained from getting the use of forest land for agriculture regularized[135], lest such a claim attracts the undue attention of the FD. In effect, under the present governance system practically all *de facto* resource use practices have been rendered 'illegal'.

Unable to negotiate *de jure* rights, villagers expand the arena of *de facto* rights through false compliance, bribing, avoidance, misinformation and feigned ignorance - strategies that Scott (1985: 29) defines as the "everyday forms of resistance… ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups." The 'illegal' nature of *de facto* rights and the constraints of *de jure* rights is what spawn maximum corruption and exploitation of local villages by the FD frontline staff (cf. Robbins 2000). The nexus that they have with villagers either because of political and economic might or because of long standing inter-personal relationship plays a significant role defining the access issues of the people.

Radhacharan Nai, the 21 year old community worker for the local NGO, was among the few people in the village with whom I could openly discuss issues of encroachment on Forest land. According to his lists (that I later confirmed with others) the only families who had been consistently cultivating Forest land illegally were the economically well off Gujjar families. According to the other villagers, these Gujjar families have the forest guard and the *patwari* on their pay roll. Thus as Radharaman, a young Brahmin youth and a master at the primary school in the neighbouring village, put it:

> The officials know about it but tend to turn a blind eye to it…these Gujjar families are rich and they are also very powerful…in our village there are different sets of rules for different people…might is right here it has nothing to do with rules

Seeing the operations of the FD and how the people tend to meet their needs through non-confrontation and yet in violation of the laws of the FD, I noted in my Field Dairy (dated 21 May 2001):

> It seems to me that what the Forest Department now deems illegal is (and has been) a 'way of life' for people so far as resource use practices are concerned. How can people be the prime stakeholders of the Project when they can't even

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[135] Under the provision of the Forest Conservation Act of 1980, ownership of land encroached before 1988 and under possession for more than 12 years could be regularized.

be upfront about what their stakes are? In what terms does the Project assess the impacts of the PA on the people when the FD lives in denial of the actual resource use practices of the villagers? If the villagers can't even claim their stakes, how are they meant to get them? By letting the World Bank believe that the FD is doing fine under the IEDP are they not legitimizing the FD regime of rights that deny villagers basic access to resources? Full of misconceptions and a servile attitude towards authorities, why are they choosing to function in a system, an illegal system that leaves them vulnerable at all times?

Clearly, opportunities like the IEDP that are supposed to offer opportunities for people to stake their claims, through its implementation process, is being construed by communities as one that further jeopardises their claims to their sources of survival. It is evident in these processes of implementation of the IEDP, that in participatory projects like this one, the contesting stakeholders are not engaging in dialogues that have a common idiom of understanding.

People-wildlife Conflict

In this section, in reference to the concept of 'people-wildlife' conflict detailed in Chapter 1, I analyse the situation, as it exists at Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary with a 'view from below'. There are two main issues that emerge in this context. The first, affirms a general assertion made in the recent literature on the ecological history of India,[136] in KWS the peoples relationship with wildlife is largely influenced by the policies that the State adopts towards wildlife and the impact these policies have on the people's livelihood and survival. Consequently, what is seen as 'people-wildlife' conflict is probably a conflict between two sets of people (the FD and the local communities) mediated largely by the policies of the State.

The second issue, that partly ties in with the first, questions some of the arguments employed to lobby for the 'inclusion' of people in PA management agendas. As the case in KWS shows up advocating 'inclusion' without analysing the historically contingent and constantly changing specific socio-political and cultural contexts that shape people relationships with wildlife would do little to serve the cause either of the communities or of wildlife conservation. It is important to understand that these relationships are

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[136] This argument has been made more vehemently in the context of the environmental policies of British India. However, for similar assertions made in a contemporary context see, among others, Saberwal *et. al.* (2001) and Guha and Gadgil (1992).

dynamic and circumstantial; contingent on the nature of the livelihood, lifestyles of the communities and the significance of wildlife (or the lack of it) therein. This is reflected in the ironical situation that exists in KWS today. While the local wildlife population is significantly smaller compared to the erstwhile state, the threats from them seem potentially larger and thus the conflict more pronounced.

Rajan ka Raj: Alluding significance

In the erstwhile Karauli State there was an abundance of wildlife and the threats they posed to human lives, cattle and crops were perhaps much more frequent and real. However, the narratives of the people of the past on wildlife reflects not the outright hostility that is seen today, but one where there is more tolerance and an ethic of mutual respect, accepting that wildlife have equal rights to live in the forest just as much as humans do. In recalling the past of abundance of wildlife there is sense of awe and grandeur. There is also a lamentation at the drastic reduction of the wildlife population over the years. This, however, does not suggest harmonious relations between humans and wildlife, as is often suggested by some of those who argue for participatory PA management. Interspersed with these narratives of the Raj are also those of loss of human lives and cattle to wildlife. However, in the balance of the 'inevitability' of living in close proximity to wildlife, the dangers of wildlife were partially offset by the significance it had for the people. Also available were several means of controlling and protecting themselves against wildlife.

Writing about the 'wealth' of wildlife in Karauli in 1895, Brockman in the Medical Gazette wrote:

> Tigers and panthers are to be found within most parts of this State, especially the latter who inhabit caves and holes, which exists in such abundance in most of the rocky hills to be found and almost everywhere in this State. Hyenas and bears are also met with, as also occasionally wild dogs. Chinkara (ravine deer) as well as black buck are to be found in fairly large numbers (p. 386)

Typical of the erstwhile days, wildlife hunting was a royal sport both for the British and the Indian aristocracy. Much of the forests of Karauli were maintained as *shikargah* or hunting reserves exclusively for the King and his guests[137]. As is evident from the various

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[137] As many of the environmental historians of India have argued, in Princely States, hunting had a symbolic significance in the political relations between the rulers with his Imperial Administrator.

administrative reports the State, the British political agents and their representatives to the State were all taken on shooting expeditions. Tiger was considered the 'royal game'. The animal adorned the royal crest of the most popular ruler of Karauli, Bhanwar Pal (1887-1927), who also kept two tigers as pets and made them sit on either side of the King's throne. The older residents of Karauli claim that this greatly enhanced his royal position with the British; they were impressed with his bravery of having tamed two tigers.[138] The extent of shooting carried out is evident from a statement made in of the administrative report of the year 1913-14 (p 15) - "The total number of tigers that have fallen to His Highness' gun since he ascended the *Gaddi* (throne) in 1886 is 213."

Although the forest of the present KWS did not comprise the main shooting camps of the rulers,[139] the *khos* with their dense forests and rich reserve of wildlife were seen as attractive hunting grounds. As was the case in most princely states, wildlife preserved for game hunting by the rulers posed great dangers to the lives and livelihoods of the people (Rangarajan 2000; Saberwal *et al.* 2001; Gold and Gujjar 2002). In Nibhera many people of the older generation have suffered severe losses at the hands of marauding wildlife. As family histories reveal, losing a family member at the hands of the tiger was a common occurrence. So far as crop raiding was concerned, blue bull, wild pigs and sambars were of great nuisance value. Jania Gujjar, now in his late sixties, recalls the havoc of wildlife: "They troubled us a lot. They would ruin our crops, carry away our cattle …we always had to be on our guard!" Ramkilan Gujjar, the head of the Gujjar clan living in Jheelan ka Pura, gives an account of the fear evoked by a tiger:

> Whenever there was a tiger in the vicinity the buffalo would make a noise and as for us, our hair would stand on end! We were more frightened of the tiger than of persons like you coming from outside. The tiger is the king of the forests. He would be fearless. The tiger would roam around the jungle and kill both cattle and humans that crossed its path!

Following the significance the imperial rulers attached to game hunting as a sport, the rulers of the Princely State entertained the British guests by allowing them to hunt in their game reserves. These gestures were a token display of the loyalty of the ruler of the Princely State to the Imperial ruler, helped the ruler to be on good terms with the representatives and 'added to the zeal of princely protection' (Mackenzie 1988; Rangarajan 1996;Rangarajan 2001). Hunting was also critical in self-image of rulers who were not allowed to wage war (See Waghorne 1994).

[138] This perhaps affirms Rangarajans (2000: 32) assertion that taming the wild animals through hunts was 'symbolic of their coercive strength' (especially since local rulers   under British protection were denied the power to wage war or acquire territories). Also see Divyabhanusinh (1999).

[139] There are no records available of the *shikargahs* of Kailadevi.

Hunting wildlife was the exclusive prerogative of the *durbar*. The rulers were strict about enforcing the game laws against the local communities. The oppression suffered on this account was a moot point in the covert political revolt[140] against Bhanwar Pal in 1921:

> The increase in the population of tigers and panthers, their merciless devouring of farmers and their cattle, the heavy fining and jailing of farmers on killing them, taking away from the subject the right to self-defence is the second important cause of the poverty of the subject in your state (Memorandum by Madan Singh to Bhanwar Pal, in Prasad 1982: 43)[141].

Despite the evidence of these oppressions suffered by villagers in KWS area, their local narratives, unlike those studied by Gold and Gujjar (2002) in another part of Rajasthan, refer to these atrocities only partially and in the passing. Recalled in the context of the wildlife problems today, and notwithstanding the atrocities and loss in Nibhera, the narratives on wildlife in the erstwhile State of Karauli focus on the other, more positive meanings it had on their lives[142].

The hunting expeditions of the State were an important aspect of the relationship of the village with the State; it offered an opportunity to the villagers to directly engage with the King and his activities. The hunting expeditions to *Nenia ki Kho* always passed through Nibhera. Rukmini Gujjar (mother of Govind Gujjar and possibly over 80 years) remembers that women would gather along the path that the King took to *Nenia ki Kho* bearing milk and curd for the entourage. The King's *sepoy*s emptied out their pots and the king would put a silver coin into them. The men were required to clean the path, provide water and do any other task they were asked. They would also accompany the *hakka* (the systematic process of flushing out wildlife from a forest)

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[140] This revolt was also partially motivated in support of the National Congress for the Independence of India from the British. Madan Singh who had spearheaded the revolt was linked to some of the regional freedom fighters that clandestinely operated in the area (Ishwari Prasad 1982). In some cases these oppressive measures, like in British India, resulted in popular local agitation For popular agitation of local communities against the forest policies of British India see Guha and Gadgil (1989), Nandini Sundar(1997). For the cases of popular agitations in Princely India see Rangarajan (1996). Also see Gold and Gujjar (2002).

[141] The main instigator was Madan Singh was the son of the Kings favourite minister He is known as a legendary freedom fighter in the popular local history of Karauli. He wrote regularly in the local papers about indignity and losses suffered by local people because of the durbar's ban on killing of wildlife by villagers.

[142] The playing down of the possible atrocities in the narratives can also be understood in terms of the politics of representing the past. As Tonkin *et al*. (1989:5) suggests 'in order to account for the present, to justify it, or criticise it, the past is selectively appropriated, remembered, forgotten or invented'. In the case of KWS policies of the FD on wildlife in the Sanctuary while bearing no positive significance, threatens the basic survival of the communities in the area.

Often the King conferred honours on villagers for acts of bravery during these expeditions. Many people in Nibhera recall how Bhanta Gujjar's father, late Shivlal, managed to trap three tigers in *Kudka ki Kho* and then informed the *durbar* about it. The King's hunt was successful and Shivlal was presented a gun as a reward, making him the first person to possess a gun in the village. These individual honours conferred by the State elevated the social and political standing of that particular village in the region considerably. In some cases a long-term relationship was established between the King and the individual.[143]

Most importantly it was in these meetings with the King that people were able to negotiate their access and rights to land and water sources. The king held a *durbar* with the people in the village itself, where he would hear the case for enhanced access to resources. In Nibhera the oldest well was granted by the King on one such occasion. Troubled by the shortage of water, the village poet sang a eulogy to the King and requested for the well. Similarly, on other occasions the King was known to have given grants of agricultural land and grazing land.

Additionally, communities were also able protect their fields from crop raiding by engaging the nomadic hunting communities known as Moghiyas[144] during the harvest season. The farmers provided food and temporary shelters near the agricultural field, and it was the job of the Moghiyas to ward of animals by using muzzle loader rifles. According to Bodya:

> Other than tigers the Moghiyas would kill everything. Even if they didn't kill them they would ward the animals off by firing in the air. People gave them 1-10 *pesari*[145] grains in exchange for their services.

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[143] It has to be mentioned that in most studies of princely state of Rajasthan, the participation of local communities in the hunting activities have been described as instances of conscripted, often unpaid, labour or *begar*. Their participation was seen as forced and oppressive (Rangarajan *et al.* 2000, Gold and Gujjar 2002, Johari 2003). *Begar* was largely confined to the Bairva, for whom the days of the Raj were a 'hated past' in most aspect. Most of the other castes, however, speak of their participation with a sense of duty, a chance to participate in the affairs of the State. The atrocities of the state are mostly recalled in terms of the prohibitive land tax and the punishment for shooting wild animals. The many narratives of the hunting expedition were mostly of the grandeur and the largesse of the King.

[144] Similar ties of farmers with local hunting communities have also been noted for other parts of the country (Rangarajan 1996; Sivaramakrishnan 1999).

[145] *Pesari* was a measure for grains. It referred to a standard tin that carried about 1 kilogram of grains.

Moghiyas were noted marksmen and were often drafted into service to the King. According to some of the villagers, the Moghiyas used to 'fix' the sights for the King's guns. Their assistance in the hunting expedition is also recorded in the 1923 administrative report of the State of Karauli. Wildlife was also kept at bay by the hunting activities of the Kings themselves. As was common in princely states, the Kings partly justified the shooting of large predators and mammals (even wild pigs) on the grounds of protecting the cattle and crops of the communities. As Kishen Pal[146] claimed:

> *Shikar* (hunting) was a part of life… it was not only a source of entertainment and pleasure but also relief to the villagers the animal population of the area was so much that it required to be culled and controlled. Some tigers played havoc with the lives of the villagers - especially when they took their cattle to waterholes that were 1-2 km away from the settlement. Since the forest was dense, cattle lifting and man-eating tigers were an omnipresent threat.

Irrespective of what the ulterior motives of the ruler might have been, it seems these measures, albeit in a limited way, did alleviate the fears of the communities and offered some of the measures by which they sought to protect themselves from wildlife.

Congress Raj: Manageable Threat

With the demise of the Raj and advent of the 'Congress ka Raj', the threat of wildlife was made more manageable. Like in other parts of the country, in Karauli too, in the period immediately preceding and following the Independence of India saw an unprecedented destruction of forests and hunting of wildlife that hitherto received protection from the erstwhile rulers.[147] The Working Plan of Bharatpur Forest Division, under which the Karauli forests were managed till 1979, is the first official record on the forests of the post-merger era that identifies some of the main causes of loss of forests and wildlife:

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[146] Kishen Pal Deo Bahadur, son of the last ruling King of Karuali Ganesh Pal Deo Bahardur (1947-1984), lives at his residence Bhanwar Vilas, which has now been converted into a heritage hotel. He has played a significant role in advocating for the establishment of Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary and is also its Honorary Wildlife Warden. This is an extract from an interview conducted with him on 08th November 2000.

[147] Such activities were a fall out of several political, social and economic compulsions that marked the processes leading to the Independence of India and the consolidation of the political powers therein. Some of the key factors that unleashed, what is referred to as a 'free reign' of all possible destructive forces on the forests and wildlife, included the availability of fire arms on account of the Second World War; the breakdown of the protective measures of the erstwhile ruler; the ruthless tree felling and hunting by ex-*jargirdars* in anticipation of losing their ownership of the resources to the government of Independent India; the economic compulsion to provide better agricultural facilities; and the political compulsion (or ambition) to realize India as a 'modern' and industrially advanced nation (Mackenzie 1988; Guha and Gadgil 1992; Rangarajan 2000; 2001). Also see E.P Gee (1964). There was also a general *laissez faire* on wildlife hunting till the early 1970s (See Sankhla 1978).

> …on the whole the population of wild life has dwindled from the pre-Independence days mainly due to the indiscriminate felling of ex-*jagir* and *zamindari* forests and also due to poaching and unauthorized shootings. (1968: 34)

Although Nibhera was not a *jagirdari* village, its forests were not spared the fate that was meted out other forests of the region. The local narratives detail the trends as they manifested in their forests:

> After we were told that there was to be no Raja (King) and the Congress had come into power, all sorts of people came to our forests and hunted no end. They would have guns and *gola barud* (explosives). There were *thekedars*, there were *zamindars*, and there were also *gorelog* (white people or foreigners). Long after the Raja was gone the *gorelog* would come to hunt tigers. They used to come to hunt even during the time of the King but obviously they had his permission, for we rarely heard anything being said to them. The King stopped hunting with the end of the Raj but the foreigners continued to come. They used to take pictures of the tigers, then shoot them, then take pictures again with themselves besides their kill!"(Kajjoria Nai, 70)

In the forests of Nibhera and the adjoining region, hunting and poaching seemed to have continued even as late as the early 1980s, indirectly and unintentionally aided by the policies of the FD. When the forests were managed by the State Trading Circle, hunting and poaching was rampant. According to the villagers of Nibhera, the dwindling population of the wildlife of this phase offered considerable relief to the people from the threats of wildlife.

Wildlife Sanctuary: The most threatening redefinition of the people-wildlife conflict

In the winter of 2001, Prabhu Gujjar of Bhattin, when camping in *badi kho* lost a buffalo to what the villagers felt sure was a panther. In February 2002, the village was abuzz with the news of a tigress being sighted in the *kho.* The Forest Guard lent credence to the belief by producing the plaster cast of a pug-mark of a tigress. There was already news that the tigress had attacked a buffalo in neighbouring village of Beherda. The people of Nibhera made sure that all the able bodied men in their families spent the night in the cattle camps in the *badi kho*. These events were a great source of anxiety to the communities. Gathered around a fire outside Haricharan Gujjar's house a group of men were airing their fears about things to come. Shaking his head, Haricharan spoke despairingly, "…now they (wildlife) will only increase…they will increase…this is what the range people want!"

In the conversation that followed between the community and me, it was made clear why the people find co-existing with wild animal much more problematic now than before. It

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seems it is not wildlife per se that is more threatening, but the policies of wildlife preservation being implemented through the establishment of the Sanctuary that make it so. Although the Sanctuary has legally been in existence since 1983, practically no one in the village was aware of its existence, till 1996. Some like Govind Gujjar had heard it being mentioned in passing. When I started to ask about the Sanctuary in 1996, some of the elderly assumed that it was *"gameshri"*[148] I was referring to.

In 2001, there was a lot more awareness amongst the people of the word 'Sanctuary' but its precise meaning still remained as obscure. Interpreting it in terms of the activities of the FD (mainly the regulations and the restrictions that are imposed in the name of the conservation), the Sanctuary defines itself to the people in a manner in which it pits their survival against the survival of the wild animals. Therefore, wildlife for the community, poses not only the threat of crop raiding and cattle-lifting but also of physical relocation. Purshotam Sharma, 35, shared his confusion:

> I don't know when it came into existence. But I've been hearing about it for the last 2-3 years. There was even talk of relocating the village among the people and they said the Sanctuary was here so we may have to go. The Range Office of the FD told us that the Sanctuary was for wildlife, for which they will need to remove the communities and then they will start releasing animals inside the area.

Bhanta Gujjar's understanding of *'sanchuri'* best captures the general understanding villagers have of the Sanctuary and the activities of the FD therein:

> A system (sic) where the land gets taken away, land cannot be cultivated, one cannot cut wood etc. That's how the land has come under the *Janglat*. They are doing all this to leave wildlife inside here.

Although, the Forest Department has denied the possibility of relocation, it is a threat that is irresponsibly and frequently used by the lower level FD staff. These fears are also reinforced both by increased restriction on resource use and the deluge of infrastructure construction that has accompanied the implementation of IEDP.

The conundrum of information or the lack of it, rumours and misinformation following the advent of IEDP also fuel the apprehensions of the people. Notions like 'sanctuary', 'wildlife conservation' and 'forest protection' under the new charter of biodiversity

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[148] Associating the question with the obvious increase in the FD presence, some of the people assumed that perhaps the government was re-establishing the game reserves (as in the days of the King) and it would now be called "gameshri".

conservation are ideas and concepts most people are unable to rationalize within their existing framework of understanding. Consequently these ideas are quite easily misunderstood and misconstrued and significantly influence how people interpret the project and in turn engage with it. For example, there is a popular belief amongst the people that the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had sold their forests to the 'foreigners' in the 1970s and now the 'white people' (represented by the World Bank) are returning to stake their claim. Thus, it is popularly believed that the FD is safeguarding somebody else's interests against that of the villagers. This feeling of abandonment and alienation is most succinctly conveyed in the words of an octogenarian who has witnessed changing regimes since 1940s:

> The King was ours. He looked after us in our good and bad times. This Department belongs to nobody…it cannot be anybody's government (*kissi ki Sarkar nehi*). They look at their own interests. They listen not to us but to foreign (*bidesi*) governments."

The Sanctuary, and by association wildlife, also poses the biggest impediment to receiving the much needed developmental and drought relief schemes in the area. Other than land, all requests for roads, pisciculture, electricity, water, mining leases and other alternative of development have been denied on the grounds of that these activities are incompatible with the conservation imperatives of the Sanctuary. These issues have made the younger generation of men and women particularly hostile towards the FD and its activities.

The presence of the Sanctuary has also largely altered the protection measures available to the community earlier. Branded as 'outright poachers', the FD has banned the entry of Moghiya community into the Sanctuary. In a widely publicised incident in 1993[149], it was alleged that two Moghiyas had killed a forest officer in Ranthambhore National Park. Subsequently the FD set about clearing the presence of the Moghiya in the Reserve on a war-footing. A former Ranger, by his own admission, set fire to many Moghiya settlements.

In the post-Independence era, whenever required the people were able to kill a wild animal in self-defence with relative ease. Even in the erstwhile state, although there were strict bans on killing as Bodya put it, "…people would kill small game on the sly. The

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[149] Rangarajan (2001).

guards were few and were not so vigilant!" This too has become difficult because of the increased vigil of the FD:

> Now it is impossible to use the gun easily. The Range Office has come to stay at our threshold…they have made inroads everywhere…a gunshot goes a long distance. If you fire a shot someone or the other, it is bound to be heard. (Radheshyam Gujjar, 32)

Crop-raiding in the area is an acute problem. In 2000 Purushottam lost 95% of his winter crop. The impact of crop loss is further magnified by the frequent droughts in the area. As Dhapo Sharma, a Brahmin woman in her 50s put it, "…even if the rains are merciful, the wild animals don't spare us!" In 2001 her entire standing crop was raided by wildlife. For most people, the only means of protecting their crop is to sleep on temporary *machan*s (elevated platform) and keep a nightly vigil on their fields. Even this is only partially effective, requiring several able bodied persons per household who can be engaged for the activity. The main danger lies when they have to engage in physically chasing a herd of animals out of their fields. The FD has schemes for compensating loss of crops and cattle. However the monetary compensation offered is paltry and bureaucratic procedure for making claims, tedious. It also involves the bribing lower level officials. Hence people do not make much of these schemes and do not bother with filing claims.

It is of no mean significance that the contradictory stand of the FD that confounds the people understanding of the significance of wildlife conservation. As Bhanta asked me on one occasion, "…if wildlife preservation is good, then why did they allow the killing of so many wild animals in the past?" They seriously doubt the integrity of the FD so far as conservation is concerned. This is also largely to do with corrupt practices of the FD. Kirori doubting the motive of the FD asked:

> There is nothing sacred to the FD. Their words have neither father nor mother. On one hand they tell us not to pilfer, not to cut, and not to hunt and on the other they said the outsiders who indulge in these very same activities. We have seen this with our own eyes, how the Range Office people have cut down our trees and helped hunters.

Threatened by wildlife, the only other means available to opposing the FD's attempt at wildlife conservation and protecting themselves against the same is civil disobedience. There are strict instructions from the FD that the villagers should report any incident of poaching in the forests. The people however prefer not to do so even if an incident does take place. Thus while the FD claims that it has no problems of poachers anymore, Kirori

contends that occasionally, especially in the monsoons, they hear guns being fired in the forest. He asserts that these are definitely *shikaris* (hunters) who come into the Sanctuary from the neighbouring state of Madhya Pradesh across the river Chambal. When asked whether he reported these incidents to the FD, he conveniently replies that it happens in the cover of darkness and he has no evidence to back his claim. Chiranji (50) however is more daring as he retorts, "If we report them to the FD, then who will save us the next time they come around?"

Notwithstanding this attitude, the communities do understand the strategic significance of 'wildlife conservation'. Besides they are also aware that any attempt to harm wildlife would lead to fines and imprisonment. Thus, there are no overt attempts at defying the wildlife laws or challenging the FD's stand. On the contrary, the people are quick to learn the rhetoric of the FD and have started claiming that wildlife protection was also one of the objectives of *kulhadi bandh panchayat*!

EDCs: Forest Department's 'Localised Project Institutions'

Against what I had witnessed in 1996-97, during my visits to Kailadevi in 2000-01 I found that the people had actually distanced themselves from *kulhadi bandh panchayats*. As part of the political and social system of resource management in the village, three significant factors sustained the practice at the village level. First, it was important for the people to be able to relate to the organisation enforcing forest protection. Second, *kulhadi bandh panchayat*s were administrated with a sense of ownership of both the institution and the forest resources it sought to protect. Third, the community controlled the arbitrating powers that came with the sense of ownership of the institution.

The appropriation of the *kulhadi bandh panchayat* by the IEDP prescribed institution EDC negated each of these factors. The EDCs were constituted as per prescription of a Government of Rajasthan circular that specified structure, composition, function and operation of the institution (See Chapter 4). The imposition of a preconceived model and the mechanical processes of its formation are reflected clearly in the description given by Govind Gujjar, (the head of the EDC) of how the committee was initiated in his village:

> The Forest Dept. told us that we should have an EDC now as the government is planning to spend a lot of money in the village and it can only be done by forming the committee. They read out the requirements for EDC formation from an official Government notice. They told us that a man and a woman from every household would be its members. We would then have to choose a working committee of seven members, with one member functioning as head. That is how we made our EDC in Nibhera.

The co-option of *kulhadi bandh panchayat* into a 'committee' structure for IEDP had little parallel with the original community-initiated local institution. Instead, it was perceived as a 'local project institution' by the villagers. 'Local project institutions' like the EDC are a premeditated model and impose their structures on local institutions. It deliberately trims out from the local institutions all aspects that are not in the interest of the Project. The adverse consequences of such action were acknowledged even by the World Bank:[150]

> In recent years working with groups has become the fashion of all government and non-government programmes and as a result the fundamental features required for sustainability of a group and the formation of a group which really has the capacity to develop into a viable institution, have got lost (cited in Vasavada *et. al.* 1999: 166)

The ownership of EDC was clearly identified with the Forest Department. It was common for people to refer to EDC as *janglat wali sanstha* (the organisation created by the Forest Department)[151] and not as one that is their own or *gaon ki sanstha* (organisation of the village).[152] The process of formation and operation of these committees is largely responsible for these notions that people have. Meetings and the work done under the aegis of such these committees are all initiated by the Forest Department and not by its so called members. Although the head of the committee is a co-signatory for disbursement of project funds, the money is granted as per the Forest Department's discretion. The Department pre-determines the nature of the work that an EDC can undertake at the village level. The villagers either select one task from a given menu or are consulted only

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[150] Project document on Rural Women Development and Empowerment Programme.

[151] In the initial days of research for this thesis there were few people in the village who had any idea what EDC stood for. The exceptions were Jagdish master (the primary school teacher with an active interest in external agencies) and Govind Gujjar (head of EDC) There was also no Hindi translation of the term. Most villagers when asked about "EDC" didn't seem to be aware its existence in the village. However as I realised later, most villagers related to EDC not by its name but as *janglat wali sanstha*" (the organisation of the Forest Department).

[152] The fact that it is identified with the external government and not the village is also reflected in the use of EDCs as a political platform in the village, akin to one afforded by the Panchayati Raj system. Thus just as caste politics are played out in Panchayat election, most EDC composition and elections were marked by inter-community conflicts.

about the location of the work (most which involved construction of physical structures for natural resource management). This seems to have been a common practice in the other Protected Areas under IEDP as well (Karlsson 1999; Baviskar 2003) Further, although on paper it remains the executive committee's prerogative to convene EDC, most meetings at the village level, were convened by the Forest Department as per their schedule or their required need to fulfil a project agenda.

Identifying the ownership and the authority of village ecodevelopment committee with the Forest Department had significantly altered the relation people had with forest protection activities. The villagers in the Sanctuary area have never been inclined to take the responsibility of managing or protecting anything that belongs to, or has been constructed by, the Department. With a few exceptions, in practically all the villages that I have visited in the region, one could see the stark difference in the maintenance of fodder enclosures built by the people and those built by the Department. The former were well guarded and maintained by the people while the latter is most places, if not maintained by the Department itself, were in a state of ruin, mostly destroyed by the local people themselves. The difference in attitude to the Department owned structures hinges on the issue of responsibility. People, without exception of age, gender or caste feel that anything that the Department initiates is its own responsibility; a responsibility the Department staff are paid to take up.[153] As a young Gujjar man of 32 Nibhera, who takes active interests in the works initiated by the Department, commented:

> We have a hundred things to do. They (the forest officials) are paid to maintain these structures…why should we do it for free and save them their work? We don't get paid for looking after these things. It is their job and they should be doing it.

This resentment and disregard for structures built by the Department also stems from the lack of faith in the Department and its intention. For instance, in many villages some members of the community accused the village level forest staff of selling stone slabs from the enclosure walls built from IEDP funds to some of the powerful and wealthy Gujjar families. Thus villagers resented taking the onus of protecting Department-led initiatives which the Department staff themselves were willingly destroying. In a similar vein, communities who perceive the EDCs as the Department's organisation with an

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[153] A similar point is noted by Karlsson (1999) in the context of the ecodevelopment project in Buxa Tiger Reserve, West Bengal

assigned responsibility of forest protection left the onus of forest protection to the EDC. In 2000 when I would ask people if they were still practising KBP, many replied "The EDC has its duty now… the *janglat* (FD) will do *kulhadi bandh* now!"

The other reason why people do not want to take the onus of forest protection through the committees is because of the institutional shift of the arbitrating authority. The Department usurped the decision-making and arbitrating powers of the communities in the trial of forest offences. As one Gujjar *patel*, lamenting the erosion of the powers of their institution put it, "What *kulhadi bandh panchayat* will we do…now the *janglat* makes all the decisions."

In imposing its own version of participation, the Department reinforced the existing power structures within the village systems while simultaneously eroding the spaces available within the system to negotiate these inequities. In EDC the arbitrating powers are appropriated by the Department through the *adhyaksh* whose election is engineered to the Department's preference. The committee led by the *adhyaksh* hardly ever allow any space for contesting or debating the decisions taken.

Imposed Reciprocity: Disenchanted Communities

As mentioned earlier (Chapter IV) the discourse of participation in IEDP does not directly engage with the issues of rights and access to livelihood. Simultaneously, however, the ecodevelopment processes accompanied the State's takeover of community rights (Baviskar 1998a). This take over is either direct, where people sign off their rights in exchange for petty material benefit or indirect through the creation of what Jeffery and Sundar (1999) term a 'new moral economy' whereby issues of access and use of resources are articulated mostly in the context of 'reciprocal commitments' and not as rights (customary or otherwise). As a FD official pointed out, insisting that the wildlife laws applicable to a sanctuary and a national park are the same:

> Since the time we have the ecodevelopment project the people are not allowed to use anything. But these are poor people so the government, in recognition of their good work done in co-operating with the Department and protecting the forests, have allowed them some concessions.

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But much of this reciprocal commitment is 'enforced'. In appropriating *kulhadi bandh panchayat*, the Forest Department has redefined the practice of *kulhadi bandh*. Legitimacy of *kulhadi bandh panchayat* as a 'success' of the project is sustained by enforcing reciprocity.

Kulhadi bandh panchayat was essentially a movement to ban indiscriminate felling by the people themselves. It was not an institution to deny people access to resources for meeting their basic needs. Contradictory to the communities' ideology behind the practice, the Department takes it for its literal meaning of *'kulhadi bandh'* (or ban on use of the axe) In the name of *kulhadi bandh panchayat*s it has now banned any sort of cutting in the forest and people caught with axes are fined and risk having their axes confiscated. Since *kulhadi bandh panchayat*s were represented as 'reciprocal actions for conservation' and had legitimised the Department's access to project resources, it took up the onus of enforcing the projected or imagined *kulhadi bandh panchayat* ideology through coercive measures. Coercion was necessary, as the 'success' story of *kulhadi bandh* sustained by the local level staff at Kailadevi remained constantly threatened by the possibility of a senior official spotting a 'villager with an axe' during their visits to the Sanctuary. Also the enforcing officers were unwilling to give a chance to their rivals within the Department who doubted the effectiveness of *kulhadi bandh panchayats* and were keen to prove it so. Moreover as a part of the 'success' story the officials were keen to show signs of regeneration of forest cover that could be achieved only at the cost imposing a strict ban on any 'illegal' felling. Thus the Department's enforced reciprocity and imposed interpretations of *kulhadi bandh panchayats* did not take into account the livelihood needs that were central to the people's concept of the *kulhadi bandh* practice. As one of the villager most succinctly put across the basic point of contradiction between the communities and the Forest Department's view of *kulhadi bandh panchayat*, "What's the point of protecting our forests…if we are not allowed to use them?" The inability to harvest, the very resources they have been protecting, serves as a great disincentive robbing the movement of the zeal it displayed in the earlier years.

The EDC takeover of KBP weakened the ability of the villagers to regulate their own resource use practice; while this served the immediate interest of the villagers it proved counter-productive to FD's aims at protecting the forests. Under the prevailing drought conditions, it had not been possible to curb any villager from extracting tree fodder from

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the forests. Hence by holding EDC responsible for regulating resource use, they were able to absolve themselves from the responsibility.

The direct takeover of rights was done through what Randheria (2003) refers to 'proto-laws'. According to Randheria (2003) proto laws refer to the concepts and principle that are introduced by international organizations like the World Bank that have no formal status of law but in practice often obtain the same degree of law. The 'reciprocal commitment' clause in the ecodevelopment component that made it obligatory for people to *sign away* their legal access to resources in return for investments made in an EDC would be an example of a 'proto law'.

In order to reduce the dependence on fuel wood, the FD has been distributing gas stoves and cooking gas cylinder connections at one-third the market price. However, all those who avail of this facility are required to forfeit their rights to collection of firewood from the forests. In many instances, people gave a signed undertaking to that effect. As the ACF specified, if firewood was to be found in the houses of those who had received gas stoves, they would be liable for legal action. It is important to point out that the alternate measures provided by the project to reduce the impact of the Protected Area on the community, are based on what the Department assumes to be the impacts of the community on the Sanctuary and are based on an universalised understanding of what the solutions might be (usually entrenched in the hegemonic conservation ideologies that underpins the project principles). Consequently, sometime the communities get imposed upon to adopt measures that are most inappropriate for their circumstances and thus are unsustainable (cf. Crewe and Harrison 1998)

While most people bought gas cylinders and stoves as a lucrative investment, or to pass it on to their family members staying in cities, they knew from the start that this was not a realistic option. Given the extent of use of their hearths, a cooking gas cylinder was most likely to last no more than a fortnight. Not only would most people be unable to afford the frequent refilling required (at the rate of Rs.220 per cylinder) but transporting the cylinders to and fro from the nearest Kailadevi village would have been a 'headache' complained the local people. With a limited bus service, restricted only to main road frequent refilling of cylinders was not going to be an easy option. Most villages are located away from the main road and are connected to it by paths that stretch over couple

of kilometres through forested and undulating terrain which often get blocked during the rainy season.

Similar restrictions were imposed on their fodder use practices. Under the EDC in Nibhera the Forest Department built a fodder enclosure and even before the enclosure could be completed the FD without any due consultation with the people imposed a ban on the setting up of cattle camps (*khirkaries*) in the forest area. The FD argued that it has provided the fodder enclosure as an alternative, to which Haricharan Gujjar of Nibhera counter-argued:

> What purpose do these enclosures serve? How many days are they to serve us? We use enclosures only when the grass begins to dwindle in the forests. Is there any comparison? All these are efforts at gradually making our existence in the forest impossible!

While the resource rights are being gradually chipped away, by the admission of the FD official, there are no real livelihood alternatives being fostered. The District level committee, which was to facilitate inter-departmental coordination and convergence required to develop livelihood options for the villagers of the Sanctuary area, was set up at a very late stage. In the one year that was available to it, because of inter-departmental differences, no progress could be made. In the absence of any additional funding, other departmental authorities were unwilling to put in any effort to facilitate an endeavour that would benefit the Forest Department alone. Also, because of the unwillingness of the Government of Rajasthan and the FD to hire consultants, the component of developing a corpus fund for future sustainability of EDCs could not be implemented.

In essence, while the IEDP was effective in addressing the impact of local people on the PA, it only aggravated the impact of the PA on the people. Hence, as evidenced in other integrated conservation and development programmes in India and other countries (Karlsson 1997; Li 1997; Neumann 1997; Baviskar 2003) in Kailadevi too, the ecodevelopment project operations resulted in furthering the State's control over community resources and lives.

Community Consent: A strategic response

The Forest Department is not alone in touting the successes of *kulhadi bandh panchayats*. The representation of success is sought to be sustained by the public display of consent by 'members of the communities' who are also members of the executive committee or the President of their respective village EDCs. This consent is usually not imposed on the members, instead they become willing collaborators. Even non-members rarely refute such claims in public forums.

In the initial days of my doctoral fieldwork in 2000 the villagers were keen to impress upon me three key issues. First, that the ecodevelopment committees functioned well in their village; second, that these committees effectively served the functions of *kulhadi bandh panchayat*s and third, that the people rarely carried axes into the forest any more. It would be simplistic to assume that these impressions were entirely true. Perhaps it was more likely that they are reinforced owing to the influence of the powerful members of the committees, who usually are keen to endorse such initiatives because of special favours and benefits they might receive from Department officials. Consent, even in the face of deep-seated disaffection about IEDP, was a key coping and survival strategy. It was what Li (1999) refers to as 'practical political economy' i.e. direct and indirect strategies that rural poor, especially in the case of resource conflict, use to obtain access to resources.

The communities gradually came to understand that it was the appeal of *kulhadi bandh panchayat*s that had attracted the funds of the foreigners (the World Bank) and other NGOs. According to their reasoning, practising *kulhadi bandh* gave them a strategic advantage at a time when their very survival in the Sanctuary was under threat. Thus, although the project imposed several restrictions on resource use and offered no long-term or sustainable livelihood alternatives, the communities knew from FD officials that if they were to present the IEDP in bad light then the World Bank could stop 'giving money'. The communities' decision to support the Project was thus influenced by their own potential gains. This is evident in the remark made by an executive member of the EDC on why villagers chose not to air their grievances about the project publicly:

> The money belongs to the Government. It is their servants who are eating it.
> What have we got to lose? We get a few benefits from it, why should we

It was common knowledge that if the villagers complained against the project practices,
they would jeopardise these short-term but critical material benefits they received from it.
In Karauli, the *dang* area was worst hit by the droughts in Rajasthan from 1999-2002. The
wages generated by the IEDP through work undertaken at the village level has been
critical for their survival. Further, in a water scarce region the water harvesting structures
that had been built through Project funding (although they were yet to be tested) held out
some hope for the people.

Apart from garnering material benefits, affirming the Department's claims on *kulhadi
bandh panchayat*, especially the claim that axes were no longer carried into the forest, the
people led the Forest Department to believe it was not necessary for it to increase its vigil
on the forest areas and in turn their *de facto* resource extraction practices. Cooperating
with the Department has also had the additional advantage of getting them to control the
problem of the Rebaries.[154] An important aspect of their apparent collaboration was the
fear of the might of the Department. Given their perception that the FD is all powerful,
they did not wish to antagonize them openly. Instead, through false sense of compliance
they hoped to avert the threat of relocation, in itself a far bigger issue.

Forest Protection: The Domain of the People

Although the practice of *kulhadi bandh* had lost much of its initial momentum and its
scope to protect the forests, and despite the people's collaborations in the
misappropriation the communities continued to maintain their *own* practice of *kulhadi
bandh panchayats*, independent of the Forest department and the IEDP.

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[154] See Baviskar (1998) for a similar account of the project as implemented in The Greater Himalayan
National Park. It points out the strategic use of certain self-representations by the villagers and their
collaboration with the State to legitimise their claims while excluding the claims of the competing migrant
graziers and labourers. .

While still dependent on its resources, the communities realize that forest protection remains a crucial aspect of their survival and needs to be done with or without the Forest Department. They have little faith in the Forest Department and its effectiveness, holding it responsible for the loss of forests in the past. Citing examples of the Department's corruption and ineffectiveness, it brings into question their ability and intentions of protecting forests in the present. Their own long history of extracting resources in defiance of existing restrictions also tells the people that forest protection can be effected only through their genuine willingness and participation. As Buddhu Chamar put it:

> What will the Department do? They only how to take bribes and get the forests cut. If we decide to destroy the forests we can do that too. It is only because *we* have protected it that the forests have survived.

Neither the Forest Department nor an NGO can substitute the *kulhadi bandh panchayat'*s role as a socio-political organisation that is crucial not only to managing the communities' resources but also the wider web of relations that are otherwise exclusively 'a matter of the village'. This is the essential source of the *kulhadi bandh panchayat's* resilience.

In limiting the role of the external interventions, communities categorized different forest issues as belonging to distinct forums. The EDC as a forum was earmarked only for discussing issues of resource access and extraction that were subject to the regulation of the Forest Department. Discussions in the VDC were dominated by strategies to garner support from the NGO on contentious issues pertaining to the Forest Department. Discussions of inter-village or intra-village forest management issues and conflicts in the VDC were mostly incidental. These issues were considered a part of internal issues and thus something that they first discussed in their preferred forum, that is, *kulhadi bandh panchayat*.

The extent to which the VDC serve the role of *kulhadi bandh panchayat* is well captured in the words of Kirori Pandit, who also served as the VDC head in his village for five years:

> Now the *sanstha* (NGO) people constantly call for meetings and thus we get together. Having done that, we also discuss any issue we might have with regard to *kulhadi bandh panchayats*. People are so busy –they don't have time to meet again and again. So when we meet for the *sanstha* we use the opportunity to discuss *other issues* (other than those pertaining to the development works in the village) like *kulhadi bandh.*

Kulhadi bandh panchayats were often convened immediately after the meeting of the VDC, even if it ran the risk of continuing late into the night. During one such late night meeting, on the encroachment in their pasture enclosure by Morechi village, when I asked Bhanta Gujjar why the issues of inter-village conflict had not come up in the committee meeting earlier in the evening, he remarked that "…this conflict (with Morechi) is a village matter. They (the VDC) have different matters to discuss."

The above remark by Bhanta Gujjar points to the difference between external agencies and the people in understanding issues of 'resource management' and 'conservation'. Despite the rhetoric of 'indigenous/local' resource management practices in the development and conservation paradigms, these issues continue to be seen in isolation to the larger social practices of the communities. The interpretative grid is largely oriented towards 'conservation' and 'resource management' and issues of inter-village conflicts are rationalised accordingly. Such aspects of conflicts receive only perfunctory attention as material for the increasingly popular field of 'conflict management/resolution mechanisms', aspects the various 'projects' are keen to record. This may be of use elsewhere in other similar project contexts (See Chapter V). Thus the villagers prefer their own forums as such conflicts and their resolutions are embedded in a history of social and cultural relationship that exists between the villages.

The communities tend to perceive externally initiated committees, whether EDC or VDC, as representing something belonging to an 'outside world' (*anth ki duniya*-an idea often used to convey the complexities and vastness of the world outside of their region) and not to the village. Even with inter-village disputes, it is only when negotiations fail at the inter-village level that the Forest Department is called to intervene. Such external interventions are seen as a 'moral breakdown of the village system'. Also, as Kirori Pandit put it, seeking external intervention was like "…invitations to a monkey who will get away with the loot, over which two cats, are fighting!"

To conclude, the villagers did not believe that the array of institutions that actively sought their participation would actually safeguard their interests in the forests. They were convinced that the forest protection and management for their own purpose (as an indispensable resource base) still remained an agenda of the people and was best served by their own *kulhadi bandh panchayat*. Attempting to romanticize the communities'

commitment towards conservation or suggesting that conservation should be handed over to the communities would be impractical. Forest protection with, or without external support, remains a crucial part of the survival of resource-dependent communities. The people are aware, especially in the face of commercial interests and illegal felling, that effective forest protection needs the support of the Forest Department. Such support, they feel, is never forthcoming, especially if interventions like IEDP are all the support that the Forest Department can practically offer.

Conclusion

Although projects may ignore the significance of the history of people-wildlife conflicts and the manner in which it implicates the state in generating much of the conflict, communities' response to current project activities are informed by such pasts. Over the past hundred years, the forests of the Sanctuary have been subject to three distinct management regimes. The period of the 'Raj' under the erstwhile state of Karauli; the 'Congress ka Raj' representing the evolution of the forest bureaucracy in post-Independence; and finally the 'ecodevelopment committee period' in which new principles of governance are being applied by the Forest Department.

Issues of resource access and the dangers posed by wildlife are central concerns of communities living in PA. Project's ability to provide an alternative and solicit the involvement of people therein has to address these issues upfront. No amount of rhetoric or posturing can convince the communities otherwise. Within a comparative framework, with every passing regime, it is in these two issues that the state, represented by the Forest Department, seemed to become less accessible and less amenable to the people. The forest bureaucracy that unfolded with the advent of the IEDP had alienated people from their resources the most. People suggested that with the implementation of the IEDP, the laws and regulations have become all-pervasive, leaving little scope for negotiations. While the Project provides no alternative means of livelihood, through the enactment of reciprocal commitment it has systematically clamped down on all their other resource use practices. Thus, the new EDC phase is seen as further strengthening of the state control on forests and aimed at ultimately at relocating the villages out of the Sanctuary area. The interpretations of the communities', and in turn responses to the ensuing activities of the

FD under the Project, are framed within an understanding that rather than reducing the impact of PA on the people, the Project activities actually exacerbate them.

The Project in its attempts to institutionalise participation that involves mere charades and posturing brings about a paradoxical situation, wherein apparent initiative at soliciting local participation in conservation alienates the communities and weakens an existing community-initiative at forest protection. EDC and VDC are externally designed institutions. Despite claiming to build on local institutions like *kulhadi bandh panchayats* they come with premeditated structures and modes of operation. Institutionalisation of participation through prescribed structures and imposed principles fail to create any ownership among the communities. By co-opting *kulhadi bandh panchayat into* EDCs, the Department, in the name of reciprocal-commitment, has put a complete ban any form of tree felling and thus defeats the very purpose of sustainable use for which the communities had initiated *kulhadi bandh panchayats* in the first place. Consequently, communities no longer able to regulate or arbitrate resource use practices, weaken their hold on *kulhadi bandh panchayats* and its forest protection function.

Community participation in IEDP and their enrolment is sustaining representation of Project success, despite being aware of the realities, is a means of creating their negotiating space for survival. Through a show of compliance and collaborating in propping up images, the community primarily aims not to jeopardise the petty material benefits that accrue to them through the Project activities. More importantly, however, by playing to the 'gallery' (of the FD's show of people's cooperation) they hope to keep at bay the vigil and intrusion of the FD into their *de facto* resource use. Show of compliance is also a means of preventing the FD from invoking the relocation option that it constantly threatens the communities with.

Unlike the State, forest protection for communities is not an outcome of political, administrative and economic exigencies. It is an important aspect of resource management for ensuring sustainable use and availability. Given the contradictory stances of the Department who earlier allowed hunting and led-large scale commercial exploitation of forests and now insist on saving and protecting the same, communities are extremely circumspect of the FD intention and ability to protect the forest. Their apprehensions are reinforced by the corrupt manner in which the field level staff permits

the exploitation of restricted resources. Hence, people concur that forest protection can be achieved only by community intent and initiative. Thus, away from the attention of the FD, the communities attempt to continue their regulating practices of *kulhadi bandh panchayats*. Although the EDC interventions have weakened their ability to regulate the resource use practices within the village, protection of forests from neighbouring village is still considered the domain of the village community.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

In India the discourse for participatory management of protected areas has been articulated from the early 1990s, just as in much of the rest of the developing world. Policy level discourse on participatory approaches to conservation has also gained significant ground. Although effective community initiatives aimed at forest and wildlife protection have been prevalent in India for a long time (Kothari *et al.* 2000) scholars and practitioners have contributed significantly to the increasingly popularity of participatory and plural-governance system of resource management. Officially, community-based conservation has received recognition mainly in the form of Joint Forest Management initiatives, restricted to non-PA forest (Kothari *et al.* 2000) Despite the emerging trends in participatory conservation as a middle-way, from strict preservation to complete hand over of natural resources to community management, the debates on participatory conservation in PAs continues to be divided.

Despite a lack of consensus and reluctance of the State in India to involve communities in PAs, international support for community-based conservation in parks and sanctuaries has given it a moral legitimacy and appeal for donor agencies. Governments and agencies otherwise less inclined to participatory approaches are increasingly taking up initiatives such as the World Bank supported India Ecodevelopment Project. This IEDP was seen as a sign that the Government was beginning to show an inclination towards participatory management of protected areas. However, participatory conservation approaches have not been restricted to Governments alone. A number of initiatives undertaken by NGOs and grassroots organisation predate state-supported JFM and IEDP initiatives. In fact, NGOs are seen as crucial players in enabling participatory conservation.

Two aspects of international discourse on participatory conservation, in both PA and non-PA forests, has been striking in the Indian context. First, is the emphasis on institutionalising participation at the local level, leading to the formation of local committees at an unprecedented scale. Second, is the emphasis on the compilation of 'success' stories of community participation in conservation, including advocacy, research, funding and NGO initiatives. The issue of 'institutionalising participation' and

the claims of 'success' in the context of participatory conservation of PAs have been the main focus of this study. Today participatory conservation is believed to be *the* solution to the vexing issue of people-wildlife conflict. Claims of success suggest that these initiatives or projects have been able to prevent the loss of livelihood and habitats of affected communities, some of whom are amongst the most marginalised groups. They also suggest that effective conservation of biodiversity was, in the absence of a participatory conservation approach, threatened by the very local communities who under the participatory approach emerge as the vanguards of conservation.

This leads us to inquire into policy change and stories of success that followed the introduction of participatory conservation. How are divisions and contentions over issues of management and participation resolved, when hitherto divergent parties like the State and donor agencies such as the World Bank, adopt 'successful' participatory approaches? How do NGOs, who have emerged as significant actors in the conservation scenario, parallel their success in setting the agenda for sustainable development, make the crucial difference in enabling participatory approaches? To what extent do these approaches address issues raised in the debate of 'people-wildlife' conflict? What does it mean for the communities and their survival?

The thesis has analysed one case of a 'successful' initiative in participatory conservation in Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary in Rajasthan, India. The same area is also known for a community-initiative in forest protection and a hub for NGOs working on sustainable development. Informed by theoretical traditions of political ecology and a new ethnographic approach, the main aim of the thesis was to analyse *how* participatory conservation initiative/practices/initiatives operate in practice. The thesis focuses on the multiple initiatives undertaken by government and non-government agencies and examines its implication for both biodiversity conservation and community participation therein. It examines *how* and *why* a people's initiative for forest protection, *kulhadi bandh panchayat*, started mainly to enable sustainable use of their resources, was subsequently appropriated and undermined by external agencies like the FD and the NGOs in order claim 'success' of their respective donor-aided participatory conservation initiatives. It analyses the implications such processes of appropriation have for the rhetoric of participation and conservation employed.

The study has taken an actor-oriented approach to analyse how each agency - the communities, Forest Department, NGOs and the World Bank - engages with participatory conservation in relation to *kulhadi bandh panchayat*. The thesis focuses on the oral histories of community representatives, ethnographic analysis of organisational culture and operations and the specificities of project processes. It analyses project and policy text, intra and inter-agency interactions and multiple domains of interaction outside of the project design. Through identifying specific interests, stakes, compulsions and interpretations that inform the engagement of different and differentiated agencies, the thesis unfolds the complex micro-politics involved in the field level operations of such claimed 'successful' participatory conservation initiatives. The thesis attempts to make a case for contextualising participatory conservation discourses, operations and outcomes within the broader political dynamics of Indian wildlife conservation, as embodied in Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary in general and the multi-caste village of Nibhera.

Kulhadi bandh panchayat initiated by the villages of Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary emerged in response to a resource crunch owing to frequent droughts, dwindling forest resource and the need to secure their resources against competitive demand by migratory sheep herders from western Rajasthan. The functioning and operation of *kulhadi bandh panchayat* as a means of securing and managing resources, was inextricably linked and embedded in the social, cultural and political relations within the village and in the wider region. It had several pre-requisites and attributes of ownership, reciprocal exchange, livelihood dependency and consolidation of identities through territorial claims.

Forest protection activities through the *kulhadi bandh panchayat* were aimed primarily at resource use and not 'conservation'. *Kulhadi bandh* or ban-the-axe meant that people could harvest only as much as they needed and not as much they willed. The institution existed inclusive of the hierarchies and conflicts within the communities that manifested in the practice of *kulhadi bandh*. The practice had its own limitations including deliberately keeping out certain groups, being gender-discriminatory and contested by the goat-graziers, leading to it being intermittently dissolved. In essence the *panchayat* defied all essentialist ideas of 'community-based conservation'; it was nonetheless a community-initiative embedded in their everyday livelihoods and an attempt to self-regulate resource use.

Also, the community initiative for forest protection and their emplaced sense of life and identities posed no dualities to their aspirations for better lives and development opportunities in the area. Experiencing economic hardships owing to the depleting forests and changing livelihoods, communities endeavour to maximise the opportunities and options available. Wage labour and migration to distant cities for employment, debt and borrowing, salaried employment are all important and indispensable means of meeting their livelihood needs.

IEDP in Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve was implemented by the Rajasthan Forest Department. The Project tried to simultaneously address the concerns of the various groups across the divide on participatory conservation and ended up with several inherent contradictions. While it adopted the rhetoric of participation, ideologically its 'problem identification' and proffered solutions embodied the statist position of perceiving the resource dependent communities as the most important threat to wildlife conservation. It did not, however, explicitly recognise the conflict ridden history forest management, the complex institutional problems inherent in the functioning of the Forest Department and most importantly expected to be implemented within the existing policing functions of the Department. In failing to acknowledge these factors the Project placed nearly impossible demands on the Forest Department to deliver, despite staff shortage, bottlenecks in release of funds and approval of sub-proposals by the Government of Rajasthan.

In focusing on strengthening the Forest Department's traditional functions, IEDP failed to meet many of the Projects other objectives, especially those on research, training and facilitating the participatory component of its mandated village level institutions Ecodevelopment Committees. Half-way through the implementation of IEDP, the World Bank deemed Rajasthan as a non-performing State and cut the Project budget by half. The state of implementation of the Project in Ranthambhore added to body of criticism of the World Bank received for how IEDP was designed and implemented.

The Project budget cut affected not only the Forest Department staff at the Park Headquarters but also threatened the aspirations of other officers in Kailadevi Sanctuary. They had hoped to use the opportunity for undertaking significant infrastructural development and retrieve the status of their offices and the Sanctuary from living in shadows of the more famous Ranthambhore National Park.

The dilemma of incompatible Project goals with existing Departmental mandates, the floundering Project and the need for its extension (to salvage the budget cuts) was retrieved through co-opting the existing institution of *kulhadi bandh panchayats*. The co-option was of both strategic and symbolic advantage in addressing the complex and contradictory needs of the Department at multiple levels and redressed some of the expectations of the World Bank. It was a visible testimony of participatory conservation, a core mandate of the Project, and lent itself to interpretation as a Project-initiated success. Co-option of the *panchayats* into the externally designed EDC framework was both textual and physical and was a means of imposing state demand for forest protection. The process, implemented primarily by the frontline staff was undertaken with much posturing and charade of participatory activities, achieved either by exercising its authority using threats of relocation or through the complicity of the few favoured members of the communities, with whom the frontline shared a long-standing relationships.

In terms of participation, the Department was clear that the role of the communities should only be restricted to participating in the local level implementation of the Project and not in the management aspect of the Reserve. In practice, however, participation was reduced to itemized, measurable, achievable goals of establishing local institutions, infrastructure development and contributions. The pre-determined process of instituting local institutions through which the Project activities was to be undertaken at the village level, depoliticised the process and reinforced the existing social hierarchies and exclusionary practices inherent in the communities. Also through obligatory 'reciprocal commitments' to be made by the EDCs, in return for the benefits provided by the Project (construction of water bodies, wage earning opportunities, distribution of gas burners and LPG cylinders) the Department abrogated the access to key resources like grazing and fuel wood collection. While the Project provided some short-term material and monetary benefits, because of delayed implementation, lack of interdepartmental cooperation and lack of specialist inputs, the Project failed to develop any long-term alternative livelihood options for the community.

In terms of conservation, while the ecological arguments were constantly employed to justify the participatory approach i.e. to reduce pressure of the people on the forests, the

Department did not undertake any new research towards conclusively establishing whether it was a problem in the first place. Despite the availability of Project resources no research was undertaken towards drafting a new management plan for the area. Some experts commented that the excessive investment of Project funds in constructing water bodies within the Reserve threatened to change the ecosystem of the area with permanent effect. In Kailadevi Sanctuary, inflated tiger census figures were constantly used to leverage funds for additional infrastructure and protection activities. Through construction of guard posts and vigilance towers, the Department created its stronghold in the forest interiors and in close proximity to the forest villages.

The NGOs in Kailadevi, claiming to work towards sustainable development and community forest management, instead worked primarily towards maintaining their system goals of organisational survival and maintenance. The NGOs for their survival and reputation depended on a network of agencies - government, donors, activist groups and NGO-support organisations - that have different and often contradicting expectations. In attempting to maintain their multiple and contradictory self-images for different audiences of the network, they often resorted to role playing i.e. presenting themselves and their work in terms of what was expected of a NGO in the field. In projecting themselves as enabling 'community participation in conservation', both NGOs working in the area attempted to claim the practice of *kulhadi bandh panchayat* as the achievement of their respective interventions in the area. While one NGO claimed to have initiated the *panchayat*, the other claimed to have strengthened it and made it effective.

The local NGOs ability to work in the interest of the community was conditioned by its own need for funding, meeting project targets and prescription of the donors, maintaining solidarity with support organisations, maintaining a reputation of being 'government friendly' and ensuring future work opportunities from the Forest Department. Consequently, it was unable to take up any advocacy issues upfront and skirted confrontational issues. Consequently, it had no real impact either in facilitating a participatory approach or lending support to the communities to resist the Department's restriction on accessing resource and developmental benefits.

The NGO equally (as the frontline staff of Forest Department) constrained by the needs of funding and meeting time bound projects, and maintaining its legitimacy in the multiple-

organisational framework on which it depended, had less than democratic relationships with the communities it claimed to represent. All the processes and norms of participation were adopted in its establishment of local institutions, consultative decision making and recruitment of facilitators from among the communities. Participation was primarily instrumental in nature and most decision-making that was eventually steered to meeting the externally mandated project prescriptions. Unrealistic expectations imposed by funding organisations, based on the expected role of NGOs to being cost-effective and efficient, was eventually met at cost to the communities. Community empowerment was limited to meeting project prescribed objectives and overall the NGO preferred to foster dependency of communities rather than any real empowerment.

While project interventions tend to view conflicts as apolitical and ahistorical, for the communities the past remains firmly entrenched in the politics of the present, and informs their interpretation and response to project activities. The forests of Kailadevi have been under various regimes - the erstwhile state of Karauli, as parts of Forest Division of Bharatpur and Tonk in Independent India and as Sanctuary managed by the Wildlife Wing of the Forest Department. The local communities refer to them as 'Rajan ka Raj', 'Congress ka Raj' and the 'EDC *walle*' respectively. The changing regimes are interpreted in terms of the impacts they have had on their resource use and access activities and the space for negotiation available with the State that has been perceived as the sole authority over forest matters. More than rights, communities have navigated their resource use and access issues through its *de facto* use. Ironically, the EDC phase is seen as most restrictive, intrusive and least relenting in that sense. In this phase the spaces for negotiation is perceived to have diminished by the all prevailing and pervasive idioms of laws and regulations. The Department has become omnipresent by erecting its posts and towers, coming down heavily on all their critical resource use practices. While the presence of wildlife earlier bore the possibility of affording an audience with the King and negotiating their resource access issues, in the EDC phase other than the increase in the dangers it posed it terms of crop-raiding, attacks on humans and cattle-lifting, it threatened their very existence. Wildlife protection to be effective could possibly require their relocation from the Sanctuary, a threat used often used by the frontline staff of the Forest Department.

The co-option of the *panchayat* into the EDC fold, the FD has redefined a means of regulating resource use to one that restricts all forms of extraction - defeating the very purpose of their forest protection activity. Through the process of co-option and imposition of pre-determined structures embodied in EDCs, the Department has usurped the arbitrating authority the communities and has abstracted the significance of the *panchayat* from its wider social and political bearings. It also asserted its claim on the ownership of the process and the resources it regulated.

The intent and the strategic advantage of both the Department and NGO in co-option of their initiative, was not lost on the communities. Nor were the misrepresentations of their initiative. The apparent complicities and affirmation of upholding the co-opted images of *kulhadi bandh panchayat* involved a complex set of strategies and reasoning, primarily of the more dominant members of the communities and brought to bear on those who relied on their ability to deal with the 'outside world' which comprised NGOs, the forest officials and the host of foreigners their respective projects brought to the village.

While opposing the co-option openly would get them no real benefit and instead invite the threats of relocation, upholding the representation of the *panchayat*s as a success of EDC or VDC brought them petty material benefits, much needed wage labour, some infrastructure in terms of the water bodies. The NGOs presence helped them to strategise their covert attempts at opposing the Forest Department and accessing 'free funds' for infrastructural development, otherwise hard come by owing to the regulation of the FD. The compromise with the FD helped to avert the attention of the FD from their *de facto* use of resources. It helped to compromise the hard line stand of the frontline staff for whom, complicity of the communities helped to sustain claims to their seniors. These complicities were also done to avoid the evoking the possibilities of relocation. Most importantly, in the time of fodder scarcity, when it was becoming difficult for the *panchayat* to impose regulation on use of fodder resources, shifting responsibility to EDCs and VDCs absolved the communities, especially the arbitrating head of the *panchayats*, from the responsibility of the futile task of regulation either for self or the others.

Notwithstanding the claims of EDCs and VDCs as community forums for management, for the communities it remained the 'other'- strategic for dealing with issues of project

implementation. Their own *panchayat*, convened separate to the EDC or VDC remained key to regulating the wider social and political functions of *kulhadi bandh panchayat.* Aware of the charade, posturing, corruption among external agencies, the *kulhadi bandh panchayat*, although much diluted in its effectiveness, remained an important forum for forest protection, an activity only which they would undertake honestly as their survival depended on it.

The analysis generates several important insights. The practice of participatory conservation in Kailadevi demonstrates that as a legitimate goal of international agencies, participatory conservation has become a form of symbolic capital serving to advance the needs and negotiating agenda of various agencies. As a result, while policies of community participation embodied in projects (whether governmental or of the NGOs) remain hegemonic, superficial in their scope and unrealistic in their implementation, project processes are largely driven by the need to sustain a coherent *representation* of their 'success.' The pressure of short project cycles and a political context marked by the particularities of local conservation history, the vicissitudes of statist management regimes, forest bureaucracies, the politics of international aid and the growing scope of civil society organizations, make the representation of 'success' vital and, therefore, strategic.

Success, though ubiquitously upheld, serves different purpose for different actors and leverages varying and relative advantages in a contested terrain. It demonstrates effectively the paradox of participatory conservation wherein 'success' of community participation leads to both further entrenchment of an authoritarian regime (undermining community interests in a far more insidious way), and to weakening/destabilizing of the very community-initiative on which various success stories ride. Such representations are maintained by the very systems and relations of power that participatory initiatives claim to challenge and reform. In practice, a project-oriented approach generates its own pressure to demonstrate success within a given time frame. The need to meet financial expenditure targets, administrative exigencies and project outputs within a set time frame leads to implementation practices being governed by the existing organisational cultures, attitudes, interests and social relationships within and between the agencies involved. For instance, eco-development committees are formed more as an 'official mandate' that villagers are compelled to comply with – the underlying threat being a failure to comply

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would result in withdrawal of privileges afforded to the villagers by the Forest Department. Thus, notwithstanding the existing conflicts within the community groups and prevailing confusions regarding eco-development committees, the target of establishing the committees was met in record time.

Looking at the multiple 'networks' and 'partnerships' that the agencies establish between and among themselves, the analysis brings to bear that in the practice of a participatory approach, authority and control is fragmented and narratives of 'success' are achieved through effective collaboration, negotiations and representations. It brings to bear the 'stylized swordplay' and the "subtle shifts of accommodation as groups respond to each other" in trying to arrive at common idioms (of success and participation) amongst varying actors, agendas and interests (Baviskar 2003; 268) It is this need for enrollment that affords negotiating power even to the 'powerless.'

Most significantly, the thesis highlights the implications of reduction of popular participation to formulaic approaches to local institution-building. The study demonstrates institutionalisation of local participation in that it both *necessitates* and *facilitates* the subversion of the participatory ideals through the production of success stories. As has been argued local institution building is a complex political process, especially as it needs to reconcile varying and conflicting interests of its multiple interest groups. Project prescriptions with their time bound targets do not allow time or space to engage with the complexities. Participation is 'depoliticized' by avoiding 'unruly people and awkward places' (Baviskar 2004; Chhotray 2004).   Thus in favour of administrative expedience, communities and institutions are propped up through evoking authoritarian exercise of power and non-participatory methods. The paradox involved in the process and practice of institutionalising participation is well explicated by Mosse's (2004: 665) observation that "the practices of project workers erode the models that they also work to reinstate as representation".

Reduced to formulaic and prescriptive formats, local institutions become the most demonstrable and visible evidence for claiming success. As Mosse (2005) argues that success of policy is claimed by the interpretation of events then the formation and existence of local institution are the most facilitative events, they lend themselves to the most credible interpretations and claims of success. In Kailadevi the mere presence of the

local institutions was the fundamental basis for all claims of participation and empowerment by the various agencies-irrespective of actual practice. It is thus that 'meetings' and 'public events' or as Baviskar (2007) puts it 'spectacles' and 'show places', around these organisations were the most significant and celebrated aspect of the various initiatives. Local institutions lend themselves measurable targets - counting the number of local institutions formed and the amount money transacted through them.

Agrawal's (2005) discussion on the creation of environmental subjects through the technologies of power and technologies of self is perhaps relevant to the context if only to underscore the significance of the issues of resource use, ownership and control in enabling any meaningful participation. This is even if it means communities willingly (as against coercion or imposition) govern the environment as desired by the government. The principal focus of Agarwal was to demonstrate that the variation among residents of Kumaon about their belief of forest protection was related to the extent of their involvement in regulatory practices pertaining to the forests rather than socio-cultural location in terms of caste and gender. The work clearly underlines the role that ownership, use and management of forests by the community plays in the establishment of the forest councils in the first place. The *acceptability* of the forest councils and the *willingness* of the communities to participate in the forest councils are largely due to the fact the rules of establishment of the forest councils "reaffirmed the propriety and legality of villagers' possession of forests. They recognized that villagers have a stake in what happens to forests." (Agrawal 2005: 11)

The case of Kailadevi clearly poses a contrast and counter point to the making of environmental subjects in Kumaon through a government at a distance. The making of environmental subjects (in establishing the community-initiated practice of *kulhadi bandh panchayats*) in Kailadevi was related to a desire on the part of the community (and not government) to protect commonly owned forests with an intention to enhance and maintain their self-interest that was threatened by uncontrolled use by the village, neighbouring villages and Rebaries (the sheep and camel herding pastoral communities) However, the government attempt to enforce environmental protection through establishment of Eco-development Committees that tried to appropriate *kulhadi bandh panchayats,* without due recognition to the resource use needs of the communities and their ownership of resources, led to the breakdown of *kulhadi bandh panchayats* and

rendered the EDCs ineffective. Thus, the attempts at institutionalisation of participation for conservation actually proved counter-productive. The only subjectivities produced were in relation to the politics of participation implicit in the formation of EDCs. Short-term interests of developmental benefits led people to project themselves as conforming to the rules and ideologies of EDCs, especially in the public domain - an instance of use of technologies of self against the technology of power.

Finally, in view of the micro-politics that underpin conservation practices on the ground, this case study underscores the need to question the very intent of external agencies that claim to enable and empower local institutions through participatory processes. Largely driven by the need to meet fiscal needs from donor funding, most of these institutions exist to satisfy project mandates and enable project operations. Their operations are often guided by expediency and quick-fix solutions to prop up success stories.

Participatory conservation, though popular with international policy makers and donors cannot be assumed to be inherently appropriate to fix complex problems. It needs to be analysed in the broader historical and political context of conservation in which the various agencies involved may be implicated. Such an understanding is critical to knowing what can or cannot be achieved by self-proclaimed successful conservation initiatives. In the case of parks and sanctuaries that impinge on local communities', in their differentiated self and dependence, lives and livelihoods, participation has to be defined in terms of addressing the issues of conflicts, contested claims, the issue of rights, of long-term survival as the basis of the models proposed, institutional change and reforms and different episteme, aimed towards long-term solutions. Investing in programmes to legitimize state policies in the name of participation may only provide temporary succour from conflicts that are bound to re-emerge sooner or later and possibly with greater vigour and worse repercussion for both communities and conservation of biodiversity.

The postscript to this entire thesis is indeed tragic. In 2005 (Shahabuddin & Rangarajan eds.) reported the virtual disappearance of tigers from the Tiger Reserves of Rajasthan. All the effort and investment of the government, external donors and NGOs had failed tiger conservation. The response of the government was to set up a Tiger Task Force to examine underlying causes and suggest remedial measures. The Task Force suggested

using a scientific approach to planning PA management, a transparent consultative process to justify relocation of villages from PAs, economic incentives to local communities as a means of ensuring their participation in conservation. There were both supporters and detractors of the Tiger Task Force report.

The situation raises several questions, some of which have been touched upon in this thesis but require far more rigorous analysis. At least two of the key actors – the government and the community – need to be disaggregated for better understanding. There is a need to understand policy imperatives of state and central governments better as to how matters are discussed and decisions taken. The complex of actors engaged with in this thesis allowed only marginal understanding of the differentiated impact of conservation initiatives on communities.

Epilogue

The World Bank-supported India Ecodevelopment Project was operational from 1994 until 2004. Subsequently, significant changes have taken place in the research context, mostly contrary to the expected outcome of the Ecodevelopment Project as a whole. Ecodevelopment was designed to depart from the prevalent exclusionary approaches to Protected Area management in India. The Project acknowledged the existing people-wildlife conflict upfront and an attempt was made, for the first time, to accommodate the interests of the local community impacted by wildlife conservation. However as Shahabuddin (2010:168), concludes:

> Ten years later, the ecodevelopment programme had left little impact in most project sites. The scattered available evaluations (Karlsson 1999, Baviskar 2003, Shah *et al* 2002, Woodman 2002, Sethi 2004, Das 2007, Varma 2009) revealed that most of the official project aims remained largely unfulfilled. In most sites people-management relations seemed as embittered at the end of the ten-year period as at the beginning.

As is evident from the above comments, the implementation of the Ecodevelopment Project from all sites was similar to experiences of Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve, discussed in detail in this thesis. Evaluating the component of economic development and alternate income generation initiated by Ecodevelopment, Gubbi *et al.* (2009) found that most activities initiated during the Project period were financially unsustainable and thus ceased to operate within a few years of the Project's closing (See Sethi 2004). In most sites the Project was characterised by inadequacy of staff numbers, lack of adequate training of implementing staff and an unwillingness of the Departments to adopt a participatory approach. Given the scale of infrastructure development that took place under the Project, many conservationists felt that it did more harm than benefit, to the parks and its ecosystem (Shahabuddin 2010). Local institutions built under the Project suffered from lack of ownership, exclusion of the most marginalised groups and lack of effective participation (ibid.; Baviskar 2003; Shah *et al.* 2002; Pande 2005).

What really made the experience of the India Ecodevelopment Project in Kailadevi distinct was the existence of *kulhadi bandh panchayat*s, prior to the initiation of the Project. Some of the desired outcomes of the Project, especially in terms of community-led resource conservation, were quite similar to what the *kulhadi bandh panchayats* were already achieving in their respective communities. The existence of a local initiative and its subsequent incorporation into the EDC framework followed by its gradual decline in

effectiveness in protection of the forests, demonstrate the counter-productiveness of the project and makes more apparent the statist positions that underlined its implementation.

Shortly after the end of the India Ecodevelopment Project, a series of unconnected events unfolded in Sariska Tiger Reserve in 2005. This led to the resurgence of the exclusionary approach both in terms of policy and practice. Sariska Tiger Reserve, located in the Alwar District of Rajasthan, lies to the north of Ranthambhore and, although not a part of the Ecodevelopment Project, it is considered as significant for Tiger conservation as Ranthambhore. Sariska, like Ranthambhore, has a long history of changing conservation and management regimes, including existence of villages within its core area and relocation of some villages from it in the past (See Johari 2003, Shahbuddin and Rangarajan 2007). The NGO, Traun Bharat Sangh also has a long history of association with the area and had initiated village-based water and forest conservation activities inside and adjacent to the Tiger Reserve. Prior to 2000 TBS was considered as a pro-people and anti-conservation organisation. As mentioned in the thesis, in September 2000 it joined hands with the Forest Department to adopt the agenda of participatory conservation. Among others, one of the most publicised outcomes of this position was the initiative of encouraging 11 poachers in the area to surrender their weapons and give up poaching.

In February 2005, it was widely reported that all tigers in Sariska Tiger Reserve had either died or been killed[155]. While most believed that it was a consequence of excessive poaching, there were others who saw it as a disaster in the making attributed to the gradual degradation of the forests and bad management (See Shahabuddin: 2010). This news was, predictably, received with considerable alarm by the Government and the conservation lobby. A slew of activities ensued in the immediate aftermath in responding to what was considered a crisis, including the bolstering of the protection of the reserve with police and paramilitary forces. Even the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), otherwise meant to handle cases of organised crime, was engaged to investigate the incident (The Hindu, 2005).

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[155] See Shahbuddin and Rangarajan 2007; Hindu, 18 March, 2005; CBI 2005

The events in Sariska demanded a focus on the overall issues of tiger conservation. The Government set up the Tiger Task Force (TTF) comprising a panel of experts. Through wide consultation and debate, the TTF recommended a set of measures for effective conservation of tigers and to prevent recurrence of the situation like Sariska in other Tiger Reserves. The TTF report published in 2005 reiterated the adverse impacts of a 'guards and guns' approach. It also reiterated the need for scientific and social inputs in management of tiger habitats. The report suggested that where the co-existence of human and tigers was found untenable (based on scientific and socio-economic studies), relocation of villages could be considered but based on a participatory and consensual approach (GoI 2005). Based on the popular belief that poaching was responsible for the extinction of tigers in Sariska, the Rajasthan Forest Department had already initiated the plan for relocation of villages from the Reserve (Shahabuddin 2007). The prevention of poaching became the focus for the future action plan for all Tiger reserves[156] that led to a resurgence of the traditional exclusionary practices, notwithstanding the TTF suggestions[157].

Following the recommendations of the TTF, in November 2006 legal amendments were made to the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 also referred to as the 'Tiger Amendments', which enabled the creation of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)[158]. The new amendments also provided for the establishment of Critical Tiger Habitats (CTH) in the buffer zone of existing Tiger Reserves to be managed as inviolate areas. In November 2007 the NTCA issued an order for the notification of CTHs across the country within 10 days. Parallel to the process of notification would be the process of relocation of human habitations from the CTH. Thus, the NTCA also issued guidelines for relocation, resettlement and rehabilitation from Protected Areas.

The process of CTH notification and subsequent ongoing processes of relocation and rehabilitation, led by MoEF and respective State Forest Departments has been done in

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[156] Following TTF suggestions, the Tiger and Other Endangered Species and Crime Control Bureau was established with special powers to investigate to wildlife crime.

[157] It would appear that there was only a selective implementation of the TTF recommendations; primarily those suggestions have been implemented that allowed for greater policing power and exclusion of local communities from Tiger Reserves through the establishment of 'Critical Tiger Habitat'. TTF made several other recommendations aimed at settlement of rights and inclusion of communities in the decision making process.

[158] The Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act 2006

violation of provisions in the Tiger Amendments and the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006. Also known as the Forest Right Act, this legislation also provides for the creation of Critical Wildlife Habitat or CWH (Bijoy: 2011, FCN: 2010, Kalpavriksh 2011), but has rarely been used. The statutory processes to be followed for formation of these habitats and ensuing relocation under both Acts are almost the same, except under FRA no land from CWH can be diverted for other purposes. The same has not been specified in the WLPA 2006. Kalpavriksh (2011: 5)[159] in its legislation brief on 'Recognition of Rights and Relocation in relation to Critical Tiger Habitats (CTHs)' has formulated a checklist based on the mandatory procedures under the WLPA, 2006 and the FRA, 2006.

> As per the WLPA, unless the relocation is voluntary and on mutually agreed terms & conditions, and provided that such terms and conditions satisfy the legal requirements laid down in both the Acts, no Scheduled Tribe or other forest dwellers shall be resettled or have their rights adversely affected for the purpose of creating inviolate areas for tiger conservation. As per the FRA, the forest rights recognized within Critical Wildlife Habitats of National Parks and Sanctuaries, may subsequently be modified or resettled, provided that no forest rights holders shall be resettled or have their rights in any manner affected for the purposes of creating inviolate areas for wildlife conservation except in cases where all the conditions laid out in the Act are satisfied. As per both these Acts, the following conditions must be satisfied before any relocation can take place. (This means that if all the following steps have not been completed then the relocation is in violation of the law).

- The process of recognition and determination of rights and acquisition of land or forest rights of the Scheduled Tribes and other forest dwelling persons has been completed.

- The concerned agencies of the State Government, with the consent of the Scheduled Tribes and other forest dwellers in the area, and in consultation with an ecological and social scientist familiar with the area, have established that the activities of the Scheduled Tribes and other forest dwellers and their presence in the area is sufficient to cause irreversible damage to wildlife and shall threaten the existence of tigers and their habitat;

- The State Government, after obtaining the consent of the Scheduled Tribes and other forest dwellers inhabiting the area, and in consultation with an independent ecological and social scientist familiar with the area, has come to a conclusion that other reasonable options of co-existence are not available;

- The resettlement (or an alternative package) has been prepared and it provides for livelihood for the affected individuals and communities and fulfils the requirements given in the National Relief and Rehabilitation Policy;

- Free informed consent of the Gram Sabha concerned, and of the persons affected, for the resettlement programme, has been obtained in writing;

- The facilities and land allocation at the resettlement location have been provided under the said programme (If not then their existing rights shall not be interfered with).

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[159] http://www.kalpavriksh.org/images/Documentation/Advocacy/Recognition of Rights and Relocation in relation toCTHs.pdf

- If any of the above steps has not been completed then the forest dwelling scheduled tribe or other traditional forest dweller shall not be evicted or removed from the forest land under his/her occupation.

Also, the WLPA 2006 mandates three processes to be followed for the declaration of the CTH (ibid):

- identification /delineation of core or CTHs as per scientific /objective criteria and involving an Expert Committee
- Identification/delineation of buffer or peripheral area in consultation with specific Gram Sabha and the Expert Committee
- Creation of inviolate area on the basis of identified core or CTH through relocation as per the statutory process (outlined above)

Till date 38 CTH's have been notified in 17 States, including Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan. 31 CTH's were notified in December 2007, i.e. within a month of the Order issued by the NTCA for the same. 762 villages are scheduled to be relocated from the notified CTH in phases, affecting over 48,549 families (Kalpavriksh 2011). Under this procedure, relocation has already taken place in Sariska Tiger Reserve. The relocation process is ongoing in several other CTH's including Ranthambhore National Park and Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary (See Shahabuddin 2010; Bijoy 2011; Kalpavriksh 2011).

Independent evaluations (Bijoy 2011) and studies by Future Conservation Network(2010)[160] of the relocation process have established that the Forest Departments across the States are undertaking the process in violation of the provisions of the WLPA 2006 and FRA 2006. In no cases has the notification of the CTH followed the due process outlined above. Also, the prior informed consent of the Gram Sabha, required for the entire process for notification, viability of co-existence and approval of the relocation plan has not been obtained anywhere.

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[160] The Future of Conservation in India (FoC) is a network of ecological and social organizations and individuals committed to effective and equitable conservation of biodiversity. FoC's objective is to foster dialogue and engagement in complex conservation issues, and help tackle the increasing threats that both biodiversity and people's livelihoods face. This includes joint action on areas of agreement, and attempts at evolving common understanding on issues where there are differences. FoC is not an organization, but a forum where organizations and individuals can meet, dialogue, and take joint actions (FoC 2010)

More importantly, relocation has been carried out without the recognition or settlement of rights mandated by the WLPA 2006 that requires the statutory process of the FRA 2006 to be followed. According to Bijoy (2011: 39):

> Completion of recognition of forest rights has not been reported from any tiger reserve till date. Instead the process itself has not been initiated in most cases and where initiated it has been vitiated by violation of the procedures as prescribed in the FRA

However, the Forest Departments have claimed that the requirements of the FRA are being complied with. A detailed study of the relocation process in four PAs - Sariska (Rajasthan), Melghat (Maharastra), Simlipal (Orissa) and Achanakmar (Chattisgarh) by Kalpavriksh (2010: 8), a part of the Future Conservation Network, pointed out the contradictions between the claims of the Departments and actual practice at the field level:

> *Forest Department Claims*: Forest Department has certified to NTCA that rights recognition process has been completed by villages that are to be relocated in Sariska. In Melghat relocation will start once the claim process is completed. In Melghat the Department has also claimed that 5 villages were scheduled to be relocated in the first stage as no claims have come from there under FRA. Relocation is underway in Simlipal and Achankamar also.

> *Observations from the Field*: In Sariska the Forest Rights Act has not been implemented at all. In Simlipal claims have been submitted on which the final decision is pending but relocation has continued. In Melghat though Forest Rights Committees[161] have been formed, nothing has moved beyond that. Some villagers are aware of FRA granting individual *patta*s (land title deeds), most are unaware of any other provisions, particularly related to community rights and developmental facilities. In Achanakmar only individual claims have been filed and granted, there has been no recognition of community rights at all. Where people have received such rights it is being seen as first step towards starting the relocation process rather than giving people an option of continuing to stay if they wished so. Such households are therefore being seen as "legitimate" household who can now be relocated as their FRA claims had been settled.

There are also several problematic issues regarding the relocation package itself. The proposed resettlement package for the communities who chose to be resettled from CTH's has two options as per the format issued by the NTCA (MoEF 2008):

> Option 1: Payment of the entire package amount (Rs.10 lakh per family) to the family in case the family opt so, without involving any rehabilitation/relocation process by the Forest Department.

> Option II: Carrying out relocation/rehabilitation of village from protected area/tiger reserve by the Forest Department. In case of Option II, the following package (per family) is proposed at the rate if Rs. 10 Lakhs (USD 2226.36) per family:

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[161] Forest Rights Committee are set up under the provisions of FRA 2006 are set up at the village level to decide on the claims of rights by individuals or communities of the village.

(a)	Agriculture land procurement (2 hectare) and development	35% of the total package
(b)	Settlement of rights	30% of the total package
(c)	Homestead land and house construction	20% of the total package
(d)	Incentive	5% of the total package
(e)	Community facilities commuted by the family (access road, irrigation, drinking water, sanitation, electricity, tele-communication, community center, religious places of worship, burial/cremation ground)	10% of the total package

As per the statutory process, the compensation was meant to "ensure the agricultural, livelihood, development and other interests of the people living in tiger bearing forests of a forest" (Section 38 (V) 4, WLPA 2006). The Guidelines however stipulate a uniform package across all states, whether or not it adequately meets the need. For instance, the landless do not receive compensation for land. More importantly, most areas are opting for Option 1leaving the villagers to their own fate once they receive the cash amount. The Act also insisted that relocation will take place only when all the facilities have been provided in the identified area for relocation but, as evidenced by the studies mentioned above, this provision has not been met anywhere (Also see Shahabuddin 2007 for relocation in Sariska).

In Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve, following the creation of Critical Tiger Habitat in 2007, almost 1,000 sq km has to be made inviolate. The process of relocation has started but little information is available in the public domain. As of June 2010, there was no official data available on the names and number of villages that are to be relocated. The villagers of Kailadevi have submitted a request to the District Magistrate asking for this information. Aravalli, another organisation supporting peoples need for transparency in the process of relocation and rehabilitation is also filing a Right to Information (RTI) application with the local Forest Department. The information presented in this text has been put together from the information available at the press conferences held by the local Forest Department on different occasions. Some information has also been put together from the first hand data collected by the staff of Aravalli and a local NGO, Gram Shiksha Kendra (GSK), Sawai Madhopur.

According to local reports[162], 66 villages with a population of about 4,000 have been identified for relocation from in and around Kailadevi Sanctuary. Till June 2010 over 20 villages were visited by the forest officials. It is assumed that villages around the Sanctuary that are dependent on the forest resources will also be relocated. 10 other villages have been identified for relocation from the part of the Reserve in Sawai Madhopur District (both Sawai Mansingh Sanctuary and/or Ranthambhor Park).

The details on the extent of relocation are not fully known. According to the information collected by GSK, in Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary 58 families of Machan Ki village have already been relocated The Forest Department has paid out Rs. 2 lakhs[163] per family as the first instalment towards the compensation for resettlement and relocation but no written document has been given to the relocated families so far. According to the local newspaper, so far the Forest Department has distributed a total sum of Rs 1 crore and 54 lakhs According to DFO (Buffer) Mr. OP Gupta, relocation process has been initiated in Sankda and Vishwanathpura villages of Sawai Madhopur District.

According to a firsthand report filed by Mr. Rahul Banerjee, an activist from Madhya Pradesh, a major conflict situation has emerged in the Tiger Reserves in Rajasthan as a consequence of faulty or inadequate implementation of the provisions of Wild Life Protection Act 2006. It seems that the National Tiger Conservation Authority has unilaterally decided, on the basis of research data not specific to the protected areas in Rajasthan, that it is necessary to create tiger reserves of 800 to 1,000 sq kms and make them free of human habitation. The process of declaration of these critical habitats has been done without conducting Gram Sabhas and without consulting the communities likely to be affected by it.

The issue of settlement of forest rights, preparing and implementing a site specific relocation plan and compensation for development facilities have not been considered in the ongoing relocation process in the Reserve. According to some of villagers of Kailadevi Sanctuary area, the local Forest Department staff are unilaterally pressurising the people to accept Rs 10 lakhs per household and vacate their villages.

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[162] These are unpublished field reports drafted by GSK and Aravalli (See Das *et. al* 2010)
[163] One lakh is equivalent to Rs. 100, 000 and approximately £1250.

The Forest Department staff has stopped other state departments like the PWD (Public Works Department) and the cooperative banks from constructing roads and advancing credit to the people. The Rural Development & Panchayati Raj Department has been advised against implementing works under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS). The local understanding is that if they do not relocate now then in the future they will be forced to relocate but without any compensation. Thus, the current resettlement and rehabilitation process in Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve is not only violating the provisions of the WLP Act 2006 and FRA 2006 but also of those of the Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act 1994 and Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas Act 1996 (PESA) and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (NREGA) and Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

The people in Ranthambhore currently face the following problems (Das *et. al* 2010:4) –

> ➢ There is a provision in the WLPA that prevents outsiders from entering the protected areas without the permission of the forest department. This effectively means that the residents in these areas, who are mostly ignorant of the various legal provisions that give them rights as citizens, are being denied an opportunity to secure these rights. Without being made aware of any of their entitlement or rights the people are being made sign a '*shapat patra*'. The *shapat patra* as the name suggests is essentially a declaration of the signatory's consent to relocate by accepting one of the two compensation package being offered. The 'patra' also declares that the signatory has been made aware of the R&R process and its implication by the FD. The official process being undertaken is deceptive and completely unconstitutional.

> ➢ The compensation package currently being offered does not adequately address the livelihood needs of the people of the area. The affected people are agro-pastoralists and are dependent both on land as well as cattle and in turn the forest resources for fodder. The current compensation package Option II, that requires the FD to undertake the resettlement process for the displaced family, offers compensation for land and does not take into account the livelihood afforded by pastoralism. Also villagers are being asked only to opt for Option I of the relocation package outlined above as, by the admission of the Forest Department officials, Rajasthan Government does not have land to offer for the relocation process under Option II.

> ➢ The entire process is being conducted in a non-transparent process and people seem extremely confused, uncertain and agitated.

> ➢ It is not known whether in providing compensation the Forest Department is following the definition of 'family' outlined in the NTCA Guidelines. According to the information available from local agencies, the compensation is being provided only to the head of the household, irrespective of the other adult members residing in the household. This does not follow the definition of an eligible family[164]

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164 According to the revised guidelines for relocation issued by NTCA (2008) The following are to be treated as separate families even if they currently live together:

      1. A major (over 18 years) son irrespective of his marital status

      2. Unmarried daughter/sister more than 18 years of age

      3. Physically and mentally challenged person irrespective of age and sex

Nibhera is among the 20 villages that have been identified for relocation. No relocation has taken place yet. Over the years I have been in touch with many families in Nibhera telephonically as well as with staff that worked in Society for Sustainable Development. According to my long time host, Masterji, in the last 2-3 years several families from Nibhera have moved out to Kailadevi town. He along with his wife and children now live in Kailadevi while his parents continue to stay in Nibhera village as they are hoping to receive the relocation compensation package. According to him the older Gujjar and Brahman generation will continue to stay till they are physically moved out. The younger generation is willing to take cash compensation and move out. The implication of the cash compensation means that the families and the different communities that comprised Nibhera will be scattered; each having to find their own place. Perhaps in a couple of years the village of my research work will no longer exist. The cultural and social displacement is bound to take a huge toll on the lives of people who will thus be dislocated. Economic impoverishment is sure to follow as it has done in the case of Sariska and in case of earlier relocation that took place from Ranthambhore National Park (Shahabuddin 2007; also see Shahabuddin 2010 on the impacts of relocation from PAs).

Given the current situation in the Tiger Reserves one is compelled to ask -what the India Ecodevelopment Project achieved? The extinction of Tigers in Sariska and the ensuing shifts in the policy and management of Tiger Reserves has, once again, brought back the conservation and co-existence debate to centre stage. Since it followed soon after the completion of the India Ecodevelopment Project, the extinction of tigers from Sariska has lent legitimacy to the advocates of the exclusionary management approach to debunk the participatory and co-existence approach, sought to be espoused by the Project. In the wake of the debate, the former Deputy Conservator of Forest of Ranthambhore wrote an article (Reddy 2008: 259) focussing on the absence (what he called 'unreported extinction') of tigers in Kailadevi, based on the findings of Wildlife Institute of India (David *et.al* 2005)[165]:

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4. Minor orphan who has lost both his/her parents

5. A widow or a woman divorcee

165 The officials of the Tiger Reserves in India are responsible for conducting and reporting the annual tiger census. However the official reporting failed to detect the disappearance of the tigers in Sariska and thus brought into questioning the basis, validity and

> The WII study results clearly highlight that Kailadevi WLS is an 'empty forest' devoid of wildlife and recommends that it could be termed as a paper sanctuary as whatever remains of wildlife populations found here seem to be based on 'chance survival'. The people's institution (*kulhadi bandh panchayat*s), the government's effort of provisioning for alternate economic development, the active involvement of civil society and the amicable working relationship between various partners played very little role in preventing the ecological extinction of prey and predators from the Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary

This thesis, focussing on how the project worked, becomes extremely relevant in countering the co-existence argument based on Ecodevelopment experience and the resurgence of the exclusionary practice as evidenced in the select implementation of the recommendation of the Tiger Task Force. The above argument is not only a misreading of how the project worked but also the misreading of the conservation and management history of Kailadevi. As outlined in the thesis the loss of wildlife in the area has its antecedents in sport hunting by the British, the erstwhile state of Karauli and the unregulated sport hunting after World War II almost until 1970. Also, as concluded in the thesis Kailadevi was a 'paper sanctuary' from its inception. It suffered inadequate management focus and resources. It was never managed for co-existence; Ecodveleopment extended to take advantage of *kulhadi bandh panchayat* , more in the interest of the project success rather than facilitating better conservation. Most importantly, as the thesis has shown notwithstanding the project policies on participation and co-existence, the implementation of the project continued to be underlined by statist exclusionary policy; that neither enabled effective participation nor economic alternatives. This observation continues in the vein of the Departments traditional approach of ahistorical and apolitical analysis of 'people-wildlife' conflict and holding the presence of people in the PAs as the sole cause of loss of wildlife.

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reliability of the assessment and reporting of census data by the Forest Department. Consequently, the TTF assigned the WII the task of assessing wildlife populations using state of the art techniques (Reddy 2008)

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